# Gypsy Fingers are Unique!

## Identity Politics and Romani Musical Performance in Vranje, Serbia

BY

ALEXANDER MARKOVIĆ
B.A., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2005
M.A., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2007

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2017

Chicago, Illinois

Defense Committee:

Mark Liechty, Chair and Advisor
Molly Doane
Gayatri Reddy
John Monaghan
Carol Silverman, University of Oregon

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Cristina Ocón, who has seen me through this process from its inception, offering tireless support and encouragement—without her, this work would never have been accomplished.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Research for this dissertation was generously supported by funds from the Charles Reed Memorial Fund (UIC Anthropology Department), the Provost Award (UIC Graduate College), and by a 2009-2010 Individual Advanced Research Opportunities grant from the International Research Exchanges Board. I am also grateful for funds from the Dean's Scholar Award (UIC Graduate College) and the Graduate Fellowship for the Study of Eastern Europe (University of Illinois Foundation) to support dissertation writing.

My dissertation committee members have been staunch supporters and exceptional intellectual mentors in this endeavor. My thanks go to Mark Liechty for agreeing early on to guide me on this journey with insightful clarity and gentle direction; to Molly Doane for her sage advice on the pragmatics of professional development in anthropology, constructive critiques on my work at various stages, and heartfelt encouragement; to Gayatri Reddy for thorough readings and stimulating provocations about broader conceptual and theoretical connections; and to John Monaghan for encouraging me to address the "so what" questions for my wider audiences as well as for his generous support, as Department Head, of my needs over many years as a graduate student. Last but not least, I am profoundly grateful for Carol Silverman's incisive mentorship, critical engagement with my work at all stages, and genuine warmth and support throughout this journey—since our first phone conversation in 2007, her work and guidance have been an inspiration.

Many other colleagues have contributed immeasurably to this project through stimulating conversations, provocative critiques, and moral support along the way. I am grateful for myriad exchanges with Jane Sugarman, Donna Buchanan, Sonia Seeman, and Margaret Beissinger, colleagues whose phenomenal research in Balkan music and culture continue to inspire me. At

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (continued)**

the University of Illinois-Chicago, I would like to thank many colleagues for their intellectual and moral encouragement over the years: Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz, Neslihan Şen, Luisa Rollins, Laura Nussbaum Barbarena, Nicola Sharratt, John Michels, Evin Rodkey, Paul Bick, Caleb Kestle, and Jim Meierhoff. Outside of UIC, I have also benefited immensely from camaraderie and intellectual exchanges with Siv Lie, Owen Kohl, Ian Macmillen, and last but not least Ioannis Tsekouras—thank you! My thanks go also to Kathleen Rizzo and Melanie Kane in the Anthropology Department at UIC for their never-ending logistical support during my graduate training and dissertation-writing, and for their warm friendship throughout.

Ethnographic research is inevitably a collaborative endeavor. This project would never have been possible without the generous help and active involvement of many people in Vranje and in Serbia more generally. Many thanks go to Grgur, Radmila, Dragan, Tanja, Jelena, and Milica of the Milićević family, and Aleksandar and Djurdja Marković and their family for opening their homes and extending support and friendship during my many trips. I would also like to thank Belgrade-based colleagues Sanja Zlatanović, Biljana Sikimić, Selena Rakočević, and Mirjana Zakić for their assistance and intellectual support of my project. Additional thanks are due to Mile and Ankica Stevanović, who made initial connections on my behalf and helped me to find good hosts in Vranje. In Leskovac, I remain grateful to Joca and Sladja who made me feel welcome in their home and helped make connections for me, and to Mustafa Šabanović and family in the Romani community for giving me entree and (indirectly) turning my attention to Vranje. In Vranje, many, many people graciously allowed me into their homes and lives to help me better understand their world. My deepest gratitude and heartfelt thanks go to: Dejan Bajramović and family; Goran Silistarević and family; Miroslav and Nedžipa Jašarević; Staniša

"Šmeker" and Martin Ibišević; Alija and family; Fabijan Selimović and family; Esad and Zlatko Jašarević and family; Ivan Ramčić; Boban Ćerimović and family; Asan and Jemka Bećirović and family; Selistar Demirović and family; Avdija and his family; Sara Asanović and Anica; Zoran, Olga, Sladjan, and Lidija Stojmenović and family; Dejan and Saša Stanković and family; Zoran and Katarina Dimić; Bane Kace Stošić; Bane Mitrović; Suki and Smilja in Vranjska Banja; Nebojša Stančić; Perica Janković and family; Slobodan Stamenković; Maja Bulajić; and Ivana and Jelena. I remain eternally grateful to my landlord Pera Dinić, his wife Mikica, and their family for their warmth, their help with my work, and for providing a wonderful home away from home during my extended stay. I owe an immeasurable debt to my colleagues Iva Laković and Jelena Ničić at the Ethnographic Museum in Vranje, who helped me with key connections, important information, insights into my ongoing research, and offered genuine friendship and camaraderie over endless coffees—and to Danijela, who offered many critical insights into music and culture in Vranje while hearing about my work.

Boundless thanks go to the amazing Romani brass musicians who gave generously of their time and wisdom over countless hours to provide me with key insights into their world: Nenad Mladenović, Ekrem Mladenović, and Stefan Mladenović and family; Ekrem Mamutović and Dobrivoje Mamutović; Aca, Zvezdan, and Adam Ćerimović; Demiran and Novica Ćerimović; Ekrem Sajdić and family; Jovica Ajdarević and family; Dejan Avdić and family; Sladjan Bakić; and Negovan Redžepović and family. My good friend and staunch advocate in Vranje, Nebojša Selistarević, and his family opened many, many doors for me in the area and facilitated my research in countless ways, while constantly providing important insights and always making me feel at home with them—I owe them an enormous debt. Likewise, I cannot

even begin to repay the kindness, support, and guidance offered to me by Gordana Stojmenović and Siniša Petrović, who provided my first home in Vranje and became my closest friends. Gordana and I spent many hours watching wedding videos, discussing Vranje culture and social life over coffees and homecooked meals—many of her insights decisively shaped my work. Last, but certainly not least, enormous thanks are due to Denis Ćerimović and his family: his father Miroslav, mother Neviza, and brother Robert. Serendipity brought Denis and I together within minutes of my first visit to Vranje, when he selflessly accompanied me to the first two Romani weddings I ever attended in town. Over the years, we developed a close friendship that bordered on brotherhood, and his family became among my closest friends and best interlocutors in Vranje. They took care of me like family, and ceaselessly explained the fine nuances of their cultural world to me over endless meals, coffees, and teas; they also connected me with countless others in the community and constantly advocated on my behalf. Without them, none of this would have been possible. Oven saste! Hvala vam od srca!

Closer to home, I would like to acknowledge the loving support of my mother, Mary Marković, who always believed in my work and my academic dreams. And most importantly, mere words cannot adequately express my deep gratitude and love for my wife, Cristina Ocón, without whom this dissertation certainly would never have come to pass. She has stood beside me since my first days in graduate school, offered good advice and intellectually rigorous debates that helped me to constantly refine my research questions, and provided immeasurable mental and emotional support throughout the long and often arduous process of researching, writing, and defending this thesis. I am privileged to have her by my side. ¡Te quiero!

AM

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)**

## LIST OF TABLES

## SUMMARY

This dissertation explores the nexus of ethnic identity politics, performance and performativity, and music among Romani ("Gypsy") musicians in Vranje, Serbia. The work intervenes in anthropological debates about the analytical usefulness of ethnicity by interrogating how ethnic identities are produced as social fact through cultural performance. I show how Romani and Serb identities in Vranje are dialogically enacted between popular discourse and the performance practices that mark Romani musical labor.

Chapter Two of this thesis addresses the link between the historical background of Romani musical practices in Vranje and regional discourses of musical identity in Serbia today. I show how Roma have long dominated professional musical performance, outlining the specific role of Roma in producing, innovating upon, and maintaining musical genres in the region. Chapter Three examines how the historical legacies of Romani musical performance situate Roma between narratives that on the one hand see them as "cultural intimates" of Serbs by maintaining and performing regional music. Because Romani culture and professional musical performance closely connect them to Ottoman legacies, Roma are important figures for Vranje Serbs attempting to maintain living links with an Ottoman urban cosmopolitanism and "safe exoticism." These same elements may render Romani brass music from Vranje suspicious in the context of nationalist constructs of homogeneous Serbian culture, however, as Romani bands become increasingly visible on national and international stages like the Guča Brass Festival.

Chapter Four turns to an analysis of the musical centrality of Romani musicians in wedding celebrations in Vranje. I show how local notions of gender, family, and tradition are (re)constituted and (re)negotiated through embodied practices of music and dance, where the affective import of music and dance consolidates identities and social relations in the ritual

moment. Building from this analysis, in Chapter Five I turn to the performative politics that shape relations between Romani musicians and celebrants during local musical events. I show how conventions that mark performance interactions with musicians draw from stigmas that characterize professional entertainment as low-class work. Celebrants use personal access to musicians and their services to claim power and prestige at celebrations, drawing from implicit notions of the relatively lesser status of Romani musicians. I analyze how ritualized interactions between Serb patrons and Roma in particular, such as extravagant tipping practices and dramatized power plays, both build upon and reconstitute the unequal status of Roma vis-à-vis majority Serbs in the region. Romani musicians must navigate (and sometimes can contest) a double burden of professional and ethnic stigma, despite widespread demand and acclaim for their musical services.

In Chapter Six, I analyze how the post-socialist economic transition and post-Yugoslav nationalism have affected the professional prestige and livelihoods of Romani musicians in Vranje. Rampant privatization, widespread poverty, and rising nationalism in this period have undermined Romani domination of the local musical market, and Serb nationalists may increasingly reject Romani entertainers as undesirable ethnic others. Roma deploy nostalgic narratives of the "golden years" of Socialist Vranje to critique economic inequality and ethnic intolerance in the present moment. Chapter Seven of this thesis builds upon my analysis of post-socialist decline in Vranje to consider how Romani musicians increasingly strive to place themselves on expanding global markets for their music. I argue that Roma must engage with romantic stereotypes popularized by the global hype for "Gypsy Brass." While many Romani musicians reproduce essentialisms to garner popular interest, they also strategically manipulate

performances to resist clichéd impositions of Gypsyness, coding their practices as sophisticated artistry or inherent musical talent. I argue that popular demand for Gypsy "authentic hybridity" silences critical economic, cultural and historical specificities of Romani musical performance, however, re-embedding Romani performers within transnational power relations that deny them full agency over self-representation and musical choices.

My analysis articulates how musical interactions entail the performative (re)production of ethnic power relations through conventionalized practices and dynamic acts enacted between Roma and non-Roma. I argue that the interplay between reiterative performativity and the transformative potential of performance spaces continuously reconstitutes the balance of agency and power in ethnic relations between Serbs and Roma. My work contributes to anthropological understandings of identity by pointing to the importance of embodiment and affect for naturalizing—or contesting—particular configurations of ethnic identification and power relations in performance spaces.

# 1.

## Introduction: Conceptualizing Ethnic Identity Politics and Cultural Performance

This dissertation explores the nexus of ethnic identity politics, performance and performativity, and music among Romani ("Gypsy") musicians in Vranje, Serbia.[1] By analyzing interactions both among Roma and between Roma and non-Roma, my project sheds light on the ways that ethnic identification is signified and (re)shaped in order to navigate particular relations of power and inequality in specific contexts (Duijzings 1997; Ellis 2003; Hayden 1996, 2000; Silverman 2007; Zirbel 2000). My thesis links scholarly understandings of ethnic identity to theoretical perspectives that explore how cultural performance creates spaces for articulating social relationships and the (re)production of networks of power (Bovin 1998; Butler 1988; Cowan 1990; Davies 1998; Maners 2006; Schieffelin 1998; Sugarman 1997).

To contribute to anthropological understandings of agency and power in the performative deployment of ethnicity, I examine how Romani musical performances are situated within—but also constitute—larger social frameworks of identity performance (Pettan 2002; Rice 2002; Seeman 2002; Silverman 1996, 2003, 2007; van de Port 1998, 1999). By investigating how global markets and mass media commodify ethnic identities while marketing local musical

[1] In this work, I use Roma (noun) and Romani (adjective) to refer to the actual people and practices of communities colloquially known as "Gypsies." Doing so privileges the emic terms used by Vranje Roma to refer to themselves, in their own dialect of the Romani language. It also acknowledges that Romani intellectuals and political leaders in the 1970s embraced these terms as appropriate and respectful for Romani political and cultural representation. I use the term "Gypsy" throughout the thesis only to denote or reference non-Romani tropes about Romani life and culture. Gypsy is a misnomer resulting from European beliefs that Roma originated in Egypt, and carries highly pejorative connotations. The equivalent of Gypsy in Serbia is "*Cigan*" (pl. *Cigani*), derived from the Byzantine Greek term *athinganoi* originally describing a reviled, "heretical" sect (derivations of this term are also used for "Gypsy" in many other Balkan languages). *Cigan/i* is pejorative in Serbia, used to insult others or mock dysfunctional, primitive, or "ridiculous" people or scenarios. Following other scholars (i.e., Silverman 2012), I prefer to use Roma in order to prioritize Romani self-description and to avoid derogatory ethnonyms for Romani peoples. I do so despite the fact that Romani peoples are quite diverse in terms of language, culture, and historical experiences, and some groups do not agree with the blanket identification of Roma/Romani. Context remains important for the name issue, and scholars must be attentive to power inequalities and representational legacies associated with these various terms.

traditions (Aubert 2007; Causey 2003; Feld 2001; West and Carrier 2004; Silverman 2007; Zirbel 2000), furthermore, my project also applies understandings of transnational political and economic shifts to the cultural dynamics of ethnic identification. This dissertation points to the continued salience of ethnicity as a social reality in a globalizing world, probing how social actors strategically utilize ethnic identification via performance practices deployed on local, national, and global stages. I argue that the affective and embodied dimensions of cultural performances (like music) lend critical semiotic weight to the discursive politics of ethnic identification, either reproducing hegemonic constructions of cultural boundaries and power structures—or (potentially) resisting the status quo in embodied, performative ways. This dissertation probes the intersection of performance and performativity, affect/embodiment, power, and ethnicity through an investigation of Romani musical practices and livelihoods in Vranje.

## 1.1 Theorizing Identity: On Ethnicity, Nation, and Identity Politics

I came to focus on ethnic identity as a core question of my dissertation research project while reflecting on stories told by family and friends about their encounters with brass bands in Serbia. My father told one particularly compelling anecdote to illustrate his impetuousness in his youth; the account caught my attention, however, because of the way that he treated a group of Romani brass musicians at a musical event. He gave the following account of a saint's day celebration held in his village in southeastern Serbia during the 1950s, when he was a teenager:

> My father never really came back to the village after being taken as a prisoner of war in WWII. From Germany he went to the U.S., to Cleveland, to work, and he would send money back home to us. It was good money, and the village was jealous of our family. People gossiped about us all the time—they whispered that I was an unfortunate orphan because my father was not around. So this one year I decided to show them all at the village *sabor* [church patron saint celebration]. I took a good amount of money from my

> mother without her knowing, dressed up smart, and went up to the churchyard where the villagers were gathering to celebrate.
>
> A Gypsy brass band had come to the village to play for the event. I managed to get their attention, and gave them a really big tip to play a few dance tunes for me while I led the dance line. I kept giving them good amounts of cash, and kept asking for my favorite songs and dances. They were all over me because I was giving so much money, and all of the rest of the villagers couldn't do anything about it! I was totally in control, and all the others were just eating themselves alive with envy. And I really wanted to show them, to stop their mouths with all their talk of my bad luck and our family's broken status. So at one point I command all the musicians to lie down on their backs and play for me. It was a rainy day, with a drizzle still falling, and the men ended up lying down in soggy mud and puddles. But I was holding a big tip in my hand, and they wanted that money. They played a few tunes for me like that, and then I got a really grand idea. I decided I would kick the head of the big drum with my foot to emphasize the beat, and really prove my power to everyone there.
>
> But my foot went right through the skin of the drum! The music came to a screeching halt of course. The men got up, angry now. They marched me back to my house, and demanded from my mother payment for the drum. "This is our bread, our livelihood…your son has ruined us! You need to pay us to fix this drum," they told her. My mother gave them a reasonable sum. She wasn't happy about it, but she said: "He is my only son, what can I do?"

I was struck by the ways that my father's claim to power in this situation was bound up with the use of money, performance conventions, and (implicitly) ideas of ethnic difference. I knew that when Serbs spoke about brass bands in southeastern Serbia, for the most part they were always referring to "Gypsy" musicians. It seemed clear that there was an ethnic undertone to the kind of interaction my father described—that the "Gypsy" status of the musicians made this kind of tableau possible. Certainly, I had never heard of (or seen) anything like this being done with musicians who were fellow Serbs. I began to wonder: what does it mean when an ethnic minority monopolizes the performance of a genre that is highly valued by an ethnic majority? How does the "Gypsy" ethnicity of Romani performers affect their relations with Serb patrons? In what ways do the wider historical, political-economic, and social contexts of Romani-Serb relations shape the performance practices of Romani brass bands?

As a diaspora child, raised in the Chicago Serbian community, I have long been fascinated by how identity is manifested and performed. Growing up, being Serbian seemed to mean being able to practice "Serbian-ness" in some way: by speaking the language, attending church, participating in the folk dance group, and knowing the proper rituals at community events. There was always much debate in our circles about the right way to be Serbian, and the extent to which one needed to "live Serbian" in order to fit the bill. The anxiety of being away from the homeland—existing in a small community exposed to a larger non-Serb world that potentially undermined people's adherence to a Serbian way of being—was palpable. These experiences sensitized me to questions of ethnic and national identification, and fostered my burgeoning interest in the ways that cultural practices are mobilized as people perform their belonging.

I formulated my dissertation project as a study of how ethnic relations are constructed via cultural performance both in the social (i.e., performative) and musical sense. In my project I conceive of ethnicity as an analytical concept that best encapsulates the politics of identity and community relations in southeastern Serbia. In Vranje, locals most often use the term *narod* ("a people" in Serbian) to distinguish between cultural groups (see pp. 14-15 below for a discussion of Yugoslav categorizations of national and ethnic groups). These groups are generally understood to have distinct origins and thus shared histories that differ from other communities, and they are differentiated by specific ethnonyms (i.e., *Srbi* for Serbs, *Cigani*/*Romi* for Roma, etc.). Cultural practices are used to define group boundaries and indicate belonging, with distinctions in language, religion, dress, and other ways of being used to differentiate peoples of one type from others.

I have chosen to discuss these processes of categorization under the rubric of "ethnicity" because of this local concern with shared origins and cultural practices as markers of difference. Popular understandings in the region often treat ethnic identification as different from national, racial, class, or other identity formations in sometimes subtle, but always significant, ways. The popular concept of differences between "peoples" in Serbia is not necessarily predicated on their belonging to discrete territories or their political representation by a specific government. As such, "ethnicity" remains distinct from nation and nationality; many in Serbia would not acknowledge Roma as a nationality, for example, because they are not thought to be rooted in one homeland/territory nor look to a government "of their own." Political power and national spaces inevitably become critical arbiters of these ethnic processes, and the lines between "people" and "nation" (or *nacija* in Serbia) are often blurred. Yet these intersections do not collapse the distinctions between national and ethnic affiliations in popular discourse.

The scope of ethnic identifications also means that they are not reducible to other forms of social identification, such as gender, class, and race—although these phenomena do crosscut and inform ethnic identifications. Ethnicity in Vranje may map onto questions of class, for example, with Serbs generally enjoying a higher economic standing and access to resources than marginalized Roma. At the same time, class lines also differentiate individuals and families who otherwise consider themselves as members of the same "people" (i.e., wealthy Vranje Roma who live in the Western European diaspora in contrast with the poorest Romani families who reside in Vranje). Ethnic affiliations posit the existence of distinct groups who share certain cultural forms and histories through relations that are not fully encapsulated by other phenomena or categorizations, even though ethnic differentiation is heavily informed by the dynamics of nation-state formation, politics, economics, class, gender, and kinship.

Because of these complex intersections between various types of identification—rooted in specific conditions shaped by history, culture, economics, and power—some scholars have questioned the usefulness of academic interest in "ethnicity" (Banks 1996; Cooper and Brubaker 2005). These critiques often point to the nebulous and shifting dynamics of ethnic identification, arguing that the concept is often too amorphous to be analytically useful. Moreover, they claim that a focus on ethnicity may lead scholars to essentialize the socioeconomic and political specificities of human communities. In other words, these critics argue that scholarship should focus on political, national, economic, regional, and other more "tangible" forms of belonging to circumvent the abstract (and perhaps imagined) dimensions of studies of ethnicity. While I acknowledge critiques of the analytical usefulness of ethnicity as a scholarly concept, I argue that widespread popular use of ethnic identification in Vranje (and Serbia as a whole) behooves scholarly inquiry into how discourses of ethnicity structure social relations and hierarchies. I note that national, class, and gender identities (among others) are also context-specific, dynamic social constructs—yet scholarship has shown that these constructs nevertheless have real power to shape social relations and individual agency in practice. Ethnicity, in other words, is also a social fact that has real discursive and material consequences and therefore deserves scholarly attention.

I am inspired however by Cooper and Brubaker's call to refine our analytical vocabulary. They advocate for the term "identification" to emphasize that the discourses and practices used to characterize belonging and difference are best conceived of as ongoing and dynamic processes, not as static or distinctly delineated entities. I argue that maintaining an analytical focus on "identities as processes" helps scholarship avoid the essentializing pitfalls that Cooper and Brubaker critique in their assessment of scholarly approaches to studying cultural identity.

Cultural life is multiple, fragmented, ambivalent, often contradictory, and constantly negotiated in many spheres (both in terms of ideology and practice). All anthropological analysis needs to accommodate the messiness of lived experience and its contingent effects on processes of identification and social relations. Scholarship therefore must address the disjuncture between reified notions of identity and the strategic, shifting, and contextual dynamics of identity-work in practice. I maintain, however, that the dynamic fluidity and contextual re-shaping of cultural identities (such as ethnic affiliation) do not *a priori* invalidate the analytical value of scholarly inquiry into ethnic identification (or identity processes in general).

Because of the often polemical construction of ethnicity in practice, I have chosen to use the concept of *identity politics* to situate my discussion of ethnic identification within a wider matrix of political, classed, gendered, racialized, and other social processes. I use the term *politics* not to suggest formal political action or activism vis-à-vis the state ("Politics" with a capital P, as it were). Instead I use identity politics in a broader sense to consider how identity processes are marked by the constant, discursive struggle of particular interests over political, economic, and cultural resources—essentially making identities a battleground of contested meanings and practices.

By focusing on identity politics (with a small "p"), I argue that discussions of ethnicity need to address questions of power and agency in identification processes. Celebratory narratives of ethnicity that privilege notions of ethnic self-ascription or praise benign cultural diversity obscure how such identifications are shaped by extant power structures, where specific identities (and unequal status) may be imposed by better-situated actors and their interests. Tropes of ethnic difference are deployed to justify unequal access to economic resources, while nationalism and state politics at times define ethnic minorities as threats or foreign elements in

order to justify their exclusion from the centers of power. Ethnic essentialism on the other hand may provide marginalized actors with certain means to assert agency and resist impositions of an underdog status. In other words, I see identity politics as a fruitful lens with which to attend to the often-contested processes of ethnic identification and relations, considering how ethnicity mediates unequal struggles to access political, economic, and cultural capital within a complex matrix of potential social dispositions.

The story of "ethnic conflict" in the Balkans aptly illustrates the strategic and contextual crux of ethnic identification. Historical, media-generated, and popular discourses about the "Balkan powder-keg" often claim that ostensibly intractable, firmly fixed ethnic divisions of the region are deeply rooted in centuries of tribal and national conflict. Yet, ethnic and national identification only became the preeminent form of designation in the region through exposure to Western European nationalism during the gradual overthrow of Ottoman rule and consolidation of new national states in the 19th century. During the Ottoman Empire, by contrast, Balkan communities often prioritized religious affiliation over the particular linguistic and cultural characteristics cement ethno-national discourses of belonging in the present (Duijzings 2001; Ellis 2003; Hammel 2000; Karakasidou 1997; Karpat 1985). This is not to imply that communities did not mobilize around notions of cultural difference and distinct political interests prior to the end of Ottoman rule. But historical (and ongoing) shifts in the primacy of *particular* forms of identity since the 1800s have bolstered the sociopolitical significance of ethnic identification within the context of nation-states. In the post-Ottoman Balkans, the religious identities prioritized by older systems of classification were often harnessed to projects aimed at bolstering newer ("clearer") ethno-national affiliations by emerging states. Ambiguities and slippages between questions of religion, language, cultural practices, class, rural-urban divides,

and other dimensions of social differentiation inform the sometimes fractious, often shifting polemics of identification in the region (Duijzings 2001; Ellis 2003; Hammel 2000; Karakasidou 1997; Poulton 1993). These processes illustrate how ethnicity functions as a contextual phenomenon of identification that is shaped by the interests of state power and nationalism.

As such, I follow from instrumentalist theories of ethnic identification to interrogate ethnic identity politics in Vranje, Serbia. Instrumentalist theorists of ethnicity (Banks 1996) emphasize how social actors strategically construct ethnic difference to claim and maintain resources and power (Avruch 2003; Fenton 2003; Nagel 1994; Peiterse 2004; Roosens 1989). They owe a debt to Barth (1969), who critiqued notions of the inherent nature of ethnic identity by arguing that ethnicity primarily serves to maintain boundaries between competing groups. Anthropological studies have shown how cultural practices and forms provide the material with which ethnic boundaries are continually redrawn, and indicate how social actors use such boundaries to naturalize and primordialize ethnic affiliation (Nagata 1981; Nagel 1994). Ethnicity therefore constitutes a social process that is situated and confirmed by cultural practices and discourses (Motfazi-Haller 1998; Astuti 1995). My project focuses on the use of musical practices to structure ethnic interactions between—and delineate spaces of identification among—Roma and Serbs in Vranje.

Important scholarship argues that ethnic identity is not merely a voluntary form of self-identification (Cornell and Hartmann 1998; Jenkins 2003), but rather that ethnic constructs are often externally imposed (Avruch 2003; Brodkin 1998). This means that the formation of ethnic identity is often connected to questions of power in society. Instrumental processes of ethnic identification may allow communities to use self-ascriptions to claim resources or attempt to resist domination, but we must remember that externally-imposed categorizations are just as

"productive" for identity politics when more powerful groups use ethnicity to structure unequal access to political, economic, and social capital in society. Articulations of ethnic identity are shaped by state institutions and policies (Clammer 1986; Nagata 1981; Gladney 2007), politics (Sithole 1986), economic inequality within the state (Thomas 2004), and colonial intervention (Campbell 1999; Salamone 1986). Because ethnic identity is not innate, individuals continuously reconstruct ethnic boundaries by emphasizing (or denying) group differences within the space of national/state territories (Clammer 1986; Elwert 1997; Fenton 2003; Karakasidou 1997; Nagata 1981). Stereotypes of ethnic difference often provide important tools to generalize distinctions between ethnic groups and to structure ethnic relations, both via state policy and politics and through mundane interactions at the local level (Hayden 2000; Silverman 2012; van de Port 1998; Weismantel 2001).

Yet despite the perpetual construction of ethnicity, social actors regularly characterize ethnic affiliation as inherent or primordial. The paradox of primordial perceptions of ethnic identity and the phenomenon's continual re-articulation makes ethnicity a powerful tool for navigating and structuring social relations—essentially, such discourses naturalize ethnicity as a concrete and unassailable reality despite its continuous reconstitution in practice. Ethnic majorities often essentialize minority differences in order to justify their exclusion (Brodkin 1998; Hayden 2000; Neuberger 2004; Weismantel 2001), even as minority groups use essentialisms and marginality strategically in order to navigate power structures (Mallon 1996; Song 2003). Critical scholarship must examine how perceptions of ethnicity's inherent nature are utilized to relocate actors within broader political-economic contexts of power and agency. This thesis investigates how Romani musicians in Vranje strategically negotiate ethnic essentialisms, performing their identities within larger power structures re-shaped by post-socialist economic

transitions and political upheaval since the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Global flows and disjunctures create new spaces and possibilities for the articulation and hybridization of identities (Appadurai 1996, 2001; Cunningham 1999; Chavez 2007; Giddens 1991). However, these global phenomena simultaneously facilitate how social actors become embedded in new configurations of power that influence identity (re)construction (Avruch 2003; Fenton 2003). Global forces affect national and local contexts in ways that sometimes encourage rising nationalisms and increased "ethnification" in the face of new social and economic anxieties (Appadurai 2006; Friedman 1998). The "friction" produced through global interactions with local contexts produces new configurations of power and agency (Tsing 2005), and individuals use local and national identities in diverse ways to accommodate transnational existences (Ong 1999). In this context, local culture and identities are increasingly commodified for global consumption (Aubert 2007; Feld 2001; West and Carrier 2004; Zirbel 2000), in a process that often produces new essentialisms (Doane 2007; Hervik 2003). Significantly, actors must strategically engage simplistic images of local identity and culture in order to successfully market themselves to global audiences even as they are simultaneously situated within new relations of power (Causey 2003; Silverman 2007; Zirbel 2000).

For Balkan nations struggling in the wake of post-socialist neoliberal transitions, cultural heritage and identity are at the center of national branding projects that seek to secure transnational capital and international visibility (Graan 2010, 2013; Kaneva 2011; Mijatović 2011). Recent iterations of global capitalism (characterized by the increased deregulation of capital flows), coupled with geopolitical shifts related to European Union membership, encourage nations like Serbia to use cultural identity as a critical commodity for placing the nation within international markets and alliances. My dissertation investigates how Romani

identity is increasingly commodified through music and media, and examines the how global and national spaces construct perceptions of Romani ethnicity and social "place" through the frame of musical performance. Contrary to analyses of global flows that predict the gradual erasure of ethnic (and even national) differences, this dissertation illustrates how transnational geopolitical interests and global marketplaces utilize ethnic identification to commodify local spaces and cultural difference. Alternative prospects for wealth and power offered by global processes also engender new webs of power and access, re-articulating ethnic politics via transnational "frictions" (à la Tsing 2005) instead of undermining the salience of ethnic identification.

## 1.2 Examining Ethnicity and Identity Politics in the Balkans: Situating Roma in the Post-Yugoslav Space

Despite popular rhetoric that stresses the "ancient ethnic hatreds" behind the Yugoslav wars, critical scholarship indicates that ethnic violence in the region during the late 20th century was politically promulgated to un-mix heterogeneous populations and consolidate political control (e.g., Duijzings 2000; Hammel 2000; Hayden 1996; Karakasidou 1997; Poulton 1993). Ethnic difference and favoritism comprise tools to direct flows of political and economic capital since the fall of state socialism, but they are not new phenomena in the Balkans at large. Important scholarship has shown that emergent Balkan nationalisms of the late 19th century and early 20th century sought to create homogeneous ethno-national spaces firmly situated within new political regimes in the post-Ottoman period (e.g., Clark 2006; Duijzings 2000; Gerolymatos 2002; Karakasidou 1997; Mazower 2002). Much scholarship has shown how political and intellectual elites subsequently promulgated national historiographies that naturalized connections between territory and particular "national" groups that ostensibly shared a common culture and history (e.g., Blumi 2011; Gerolymatos 2002; Karakasidou 1997;

Todorova 1997).

Essentialist constructions of the innate differences of ethnic minorities have also been used by nationalist politicians in the post-socialist Balkans to justify the "purification" of territories for majority groups (Bowman 1994; Hayden 2000; Neuberger 2004). Prior to 1989, socialist rhetoric in much of Eastern Europe strove to downplay ethnic identifications altogether in favor of class unity, and attempted to transform ethnic minorities into productive members of society (Barany 1994; Guy 2001; Stewart 1997; Verdery 1998). While some governments tried to forcibly assimilate minorities like the Roma (Neuberger 2004; Silverman 1996; Stewart 1997; Zang 1991), Yugoslav Socialist policies instead fostered official state designations of ethnic identification in order to monopolize political power and control the heterogeneous citizenry of the nation (Hayden 1996; Kenrick 2001). In Yugoslavia and its successor states, ethnic realignment and new ethnic affiliations were sometimes utilized to gain political or economic status and stability (Duijzings 1997, 2000; Ellis 2003). After the collapse of socialism, however, minority groups in the area have generally experienced increasing racism and marginality in the context of economic privatization and new nationalisms favoring ethnic majorities (Barany 1994, 2005; Boscoboinik 2006; Poulton 2003).

In this context, ethnic minorities like the Roma must navigate new sets of identifications and interactions in order to manage the radically altered political and economic conditions of the post-socialist present. Roma have been marginalized in Europe since their arrival via the Balkans in the 14th century. Their perceived difference—phenotypic, linguistic, and cultural—led European societies to exclude Roma from political and economic resources and fostered discriminatory practices such as expulsion, enslavement, or forced assimilation (Hancock 1987; Keil and Vellou Keil 2002; Silverman 2012). Even under the relatively more tolerant Ottoman

Empire, Roma were relegated to undesirable low-class forms of work, while Romani religious identities (especially in the case of Muslims) and claims to political belonging were often dismissed (Keil and Vellou Keil 2002; Seeman 2002; Silverman 2012).

Under East European Socialist regimes, Roma were often seen as social problems. State policies sought to incorporate them into new regimes of worker identification and class solidarity through institutionalized employment opportunities while attempting to minimize their ethnic difference (Guy 2001; Stewart 1997). Some Balkan Communist regimes (for example in Bulgaria) attempted to eradicate Romani difference through forced assimilation and suppression of cultural performances of difference (Marushiakova and Popov 2001; Poulton 2003; Silverman 1996, 2012). In Socialist Yugoslavia, by contrast, Romani ethnicity and culture were officially recognized—although this did not mean that they were on equal political and social footing with other groups in the nation.

The Yugoslav Socialist system maintained an official hierarchy of recognized cultural groups where political representation was contingent upon a group's claim to indigenous standing within given territories, or to connections with other nation-states and governments (Kenrick 2001; Pettan 2002; Poulton 1993). Any group categorized as a *narod* of Yugoslavia (literally meaning "people" in Serbo-Croatian, but essentially connoting a "nation") was positioned at the top. *Narodi* comprised those peoples (such as Serbs and Croatians) thought to be indigenous to the constituent republics of the Yugoslav federation; in other words, they were privileged as core founding groups of this "land of the South Slavs." After the *narod* groups came peoples who constituted a *nacionalnost* ("nationality" in Serbo-Croatian). The "nationalities" of Yugoslavia were groups who had "national homelands" outside of Yugoslavia, such as Albanians, Hungarians, and Romanians. They enjoyed certain privileges of

representation, education, and status because they lived within Yugoslavia's borders, but they had less political power than members of core nations for whom the federation "was created."

The final and least powerful category comprised "*etničke grupe*," or "ethnic groups," peoples who were thought to be neither indigenous to Yugoslavia nor groups that could claim other nation-states as homelands. Roma in Yugoslavia were an *etnička grupa*, meaning that although they were recognized and represented in certain ways, they did not enjoy the more extensive political rights afforded to "nations" and "nationalities" (Kenrick 2001; Pettan 2002). Roma were placed at the bottom of the ethnic power hierarchy because they could not call upon the support of any established nation-state in the larger world. Despite significant tolerance for cultural difference in Socialist Yugoslavia (relative to neighboring Communist nations), power and representation within the country ultimately remained closely tied to groups' purported connections to territory or governments that might speak for a people. Barring such connections, groups were categorized as "ethnicities" whose difference was marked by the state (and its citizens) primarily in terms of "culture" and not through status as separate national entities.

The socialist system of categorizing groups has lapsed in post-Yugoslav Serbia, but Roma are still perceived as a different people from Serbs in terms of origins, culture, and language. Roma born in Serbia are citizens (*državljani*) of the state just like Serbs, yet this official parity with Serbs does not translate into beliefs about their similarity or complete integration as "co-nationals" of Serbs. For example, I once witnessed a telling exchange between several Romani men and a Serb shopkeeper in Vranje. "I am a Serb," one of the Romani men told the shopkeeper. "How can you be a Serb when you are a Gypsy (*Cigan*)!" retorted the Serbian storeowner. "How not—look, it even says so in my passport," the Romani man rejoined, attempting to argue that being a citizen of Serbia made him a Serb like any other. The Serbian

man would not accept this logic, however, and maintained throughout the conversation that the Romani men in the store were evidently a different people from the Serbs, citizenship aside—essential belonging for the Serb man was measured along linguistic, cultural, and perhaps physical/racial lines, and on all of these levels Roma simply could not be seen as Serbs.

Despite enjoying relatively better economic standing and political visibility in Yugoslavia, Roma were still subject to discrimination and prejudice throughout the Socialist period. With the collapse of socialism and the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia, Romani ethnic difference and marginality became even more salient in the context of surging nationalism and economic turnover. Roma were caught between warring factions (Kenrick 2001; Pettan 2002; Poulton 1993), and often strategically shifted or masked their ascriptions to Romani identity in attempts to navigate volatile ethnic politics and economic crisis (Duijzings 1997; Kenrick 2001; Poulton 1993). In the post-socialist context, Roma are often scapegoats in national discourses about rising crime and poverty, and flows of Romani refugees to Western Europe have heightened xenophobia and discrimination directed against Roma (Barany 1994; Verdery 1996; Guy 2001; Silverman 2007, 2012; Stewart 2013). This dissertation explores contemporary Romani identity politics within the context of these historical, political, and economic processes—particularly Serbia's ongoing post-Yugoslav transition. My ethnographic analysis of identity politics in Vranje contributes to understandings of ethno-national identity in the Balkans in light of the volatile ways that ethnic and cultural difference have been mobilized by competing nationalisms in the region since the late Ottoman period—processes that remain active even in the present geopolitical moment.

## 1.3 On the Power of Performance: Music and Identity as Performative Spaces

In popular discourse, Romani musical performance and talent are positive dimensions of their ethnic difference in Serbia, diametrically opposed to stereotypical assertions of "Gypsy" criminality or cultural backwardness. How can we understand the seeming paradox between Romani marginality in society and their centrality as beloved performers of culturally significant musical genres? What can spaces of musical practice tell us about how Romani difference is configured? How is the status and "place" of Roma articulated through discourse and practice in the context of cultural performance? How seminal are inter-ethnic relations to musical performance practices, and how might Serb identities in turn be shaped by engagement with Romani musicians and their music? This dissertation focuses on Romani musical performance in Vranje, particularly within the popular brass band genre, to explore the connection between performance politics and identity politics. Theories of performance and performativity constitute the other main conceptual pillar of this research project.

I have long been aesthetically drawn to the brass music repertoires that I came to research, finding the music stirring and exciting in a variety of ways. Furthermore, brass music is prominent in the regional dance repertoires and folk culture of southern Serbia, the region from which my paternal family hails. This fact, together with my ongoing interest in how identity is performed through cultural practices, further piqued my interest in how brass music is linked to questions of identity in southern Serbia. I gained additional critical insights into the intense power of music for cultural performance and identification only after attending musical events in the field, however. Perhaps one of the most significant experiences came after I had finished my ethnographic fieldwork in Serbia—in a moment when I myself became the subject of wedding rituals set to live brass music.

For my wedding in 2013, held in Chicago, it was logistically impossible to invite a full Romani brass band from southern Serbia. I hired the New York-based brass band "Zlatne Uste" instead. The band has performed Serbian-style brass music for over 30 years. They were a good fit because they are familiar with the south Serbian regional repertoire and styling with which my family identifies—many band members have even spent time studying with Romani brass musicians in the Vranje area. In particular, they already knew some of the ritual wedding music and were willing to learn other pieces in order to perform for the necessary customs at my wedding.

At seven o'clock in the morning on my wedding day, the band joined my close family and friends at my parents' home to play for important rituals that mark the start of wedding celebrations. The first was the ceremonial "shaving of the groom," a custom (largely defunct in present-day south Serbia) which symbolically marks the groom's maturation, initiating separation from his previous status as a youth and formally transforming him into a man ready for marriage. I joined our guests outside on the back porch for the ritual. A chair had been set out for me, and a side table held the shaving accoutrements, including a large bowl of hot water, shaving cream, a lather brush, the razor, and a white towel. After a quick toast with plum brandy, I sat in the chair while my friend George draped the towel across my chest and shoulders, arranging it about the base of my neck. George, assisted by my cousin Davor, would shave me while the other guests arranged themselves around us.

Once George began to prep the lather, the band started to play the tune *Turski Mekam*.[2] I had specifically asked the musicians to perform this number during this ritual—in Vranje, it is usually performed at the very beginning of wedding celebrations and often accompanies major

[2] See this recording of *Turski Mekam* (from the 2003 album "Rivers of Happiness") by the *Zlatni Prsti* ("Golden Fingers") brass band from Vranjska Banja, led by Ekrem Sajdić: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfb8HLAGMTc (accessed January 3rd, 2016).

ritual moments like this one. As the melismatic notes of the clarinet washed over us, in the form of a melodic solo executed over a resonant drone held by the remaining instruments, I felt goosebumps and my heart began to beat slightly faster. George tilted my head back, and my vision was filled by the clear blue sky above as I felt the first rasping strokes of the razor gliding across my neck. I was deeply moved by the combination of the music, by the presence of those around me, and by the ritual drama that centered on me—the moment we had been preparing for so intensely this past year had finally come, and for the first time I felt my status as "the groom" really explode into my consciousness.

I found the ritual music to be the most powerful part of this visceral experience. Yet it also framed and dramatized the symbolic elements of the wedding, my changing status, and the relationships that linked me to all of those present. My mother's tears of joy and sentimental nostalgia upon hearing the first notes, the guests buzzing with excitement while watching the ritual, and even the way that my friend and cousin fussed over me while finishing the shave by wiping my neck clean of the lather—the intense affect and emotion I experienced was rolled up in the crush of people, of sounds, and of ritual action that led me to have the powerful feeling of really being in the moment. At the same time, I implicitly sensed and processed the multiple layers of significance that the moment encapsulated. This musical performance was not just an accompaniment or sonic backdrop for ritual and social processes. The music and musicians' practices were seminal for constituting these dynamics and producing meaning.

This experience speaks to the evocative power of performance spaces for shaping individual subjectivities and social identities. Visceral, affective dimensions of musical performance fundamentally heighten the embodied and performative dynamics of identity processes. My investigation into the ways that Romani and Serbian identity politics are

constituted through musical practices draws from extensive scholarship on performance and performativity. Cultural performances, as practices marked off from everyday life in time, space, and activity, constitute key sites of social interaction and the (re)production of identity. They are closely linked to everyday "performances of self" (Goffman 1959), as participants manifest and re-work myriad elements of their identifications, subjectivity, and relations with others within the special "frame" of performance events. Performance contexts engage social actors as participants and thereby forge and reconstitute social relations through participatory practice.

Performance events are aesthetically marked and heightened modes of communication addressed by performers to specific audiences (Bauman 1975, 1992). They constitute "extra-ordinary" events precisely because they enable individuals to objectify and step back from elements of their social existence in order to reflect upon them (Bauman 1992; Guss 2000; Kapferer 1984). Palmer and Jankowiak (1996) argue that performance contexts are doubly reflexive because performers become both self-reflexive and receive commentary from others that may compel further reflexive contemplation. Performances are essentially a form of metacommunication, as performers and participants exchange information and evaluations concerning social realities (Bauman and Briggs 1990). While the communicative nature and reflexive potential of performance contexts means that the events generally reflect the social realities of participants (Turner 1986; Bauman 1992; Bauman and Briggs 1990; Kapferer 1988), performance interactions also actively constitute social reality as much as mirror it (Guss 2000; McKenzie 2001; Schieffelin 1998). Cultural performances must therefore be evaluated in terms of their "efficacy" to re-shape sociocultural realities (Kratz 1994; McKenzie 2001).

Cultural performances (such as musical events) may also be read as performative in terms of how they reconstitute the social relations and identities of participants through practice.

Following Butler (1988, 1990, 1993), scholarship often differentiates deliberate, dramatized acts (performance) from reiterative practices that collectively and through time enact a normative, discursive cultural script (performativity) (Liechty 2003:23; Mckenzie 1998; Theodosiou 2011). In her analysis of gender, Butler argues that performativity is "a reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler 2011[1993]:xii). As such it cannot be reduced to individual, original acts alone but rather entails conventionalized, repeated enactments shaped by scripts that precede particular actors (Butler 2002[1990]:xv, 2011[1993]:xxi). Unlike the transgressive and transformative potential of liminality and "extra-ordinary frames" in theories of performance (e.g., Guss 2000; McKenzie 2001; Palmer and Jankowiak 1996; Schieffelin 1998; Turner 1986), performativity describes the normative, collective reproduction of power through patterned performance acts.

In this dissertation I will suggest fruitful points of contact, or convergence, between performance and performativity (see chapter 4 and conclusion). While Romani musical performance and musician-patron interactions are indeed emergent and dynamic "acts" framed by particular moments, I also show how they are embedded in long-standing cultural scripts and images of proper or good performance practices. As "conventional" or "traditional," even ritualized, ways of performing, each act cites previous iterations and reproduces particular bodily modes of performative engagement (and embodied interpretation). In these ways they become part of a "compulsory routine" shaped by normative expectations—emblematic of performativity, in other words (McKenzie 1998:222). My aim is to expose how Romani performance practices are shaped by discourses of power, effectively re-enacting and confirming social inequality through bodily acts—veritably constituting ethnic relations in practice. I am inspired by scholarship that deploys performativity to understand power and agency in identity

processes beyond the scope of gender (see Liechty 2003 on class; Theodosiou 2011 on "ethnicity"; Butler 2002[1990]: xvi on its application to questions of race).

My work situates performance practices squarely within power relations and the maintenance of social inequality. Butler (1988) reminds us that performance is always-already imbricated in relations of power, even as performances may provide spaces (and sometimes the means) for resisting hegemonic realities (McKenzie 2001). The meaning of performative acts is the result of their mutual interpretation—and contestation—by observers and performers alike (Bauman 1992). Performative acts are akin to signs, communicative representations that are subject to an ongoing dialectic of semiotic struggles between diverse actors. Performance contexts are important as discursive spaces where actors may use practices to negotiate or challenge existing social forms and relations (Bauman 1992; Guss 2000; Herzfeld 1985). Yet more privileged actors often control the discursive signification and validation of communications entailed in performative acts, imposing certain "ideological accents" upon practices as exercises of power that seek to privilege the reproduction of certain social realities (Voloshinov 1973[1929]).

This dissertation approaches musical events as performative contexts wherein different interest groups struggle to impose meaning and articulate relations through marked, symbolic, and embodied practices. I argue that musical events, both as "extraordinary frames" of formal performance and as performative spaces of the self, are fruitful contexts within which to explore identity politics and the dynamics of power. Much scholarship has shown how musical performances are important spaces for participants to recognize, articulate, and potentially contest various social identities (in the case of the Balkans, for example, see Beissinger 2001; Buchanan 2006; Caraveli 1985; Cowan 1990; Keil and Vellou Keil 2002; Pettan 2002; Seeman

1990, 2002, 2012; Silverman 1996, 2003, 2007, 2012; Sugarman 1997, 2003; and Theodosiou 2011). Musically-mediated affect heightens the experiences of participants in extra-ordinary performative spaces (deChaine 2002; Feld 1982; Gregg and Siegworth 2010; Grossberg 1984;Thompson and Biddle 2013). I contend that musical affect critically galvanizes the identity politics enacted in musical contexts, as particular constructions of identity and social reality are articulated through participant interactions intensified by embodied performances.

This visceral power of music to drive performative struggles over meaning makes musical practice an important domain for (re)constituting ethnic identity politics. Stokes (1994) points to the ways that musical practices allow participants to manipulate meanings, while also evoking collective experiences of identity and place that galvanize sentiments of belonging. In the Balkans, the construction of ethnic, religious, and gendered identities is particularly dynamic during musical events because of the highly communal, often public setting of musical and celebratory practices (Cowan 1990; Seeman 1990; Silverman 2003, 2012; Sugarman 1997; van de Port 1999). At the same time, musical practices in the region often code for ethnic and cultural differences in ways that privilege certain forms of representation over others. In the case of the Balkans, critical scholarship has shown that music is easily politicized and harnessed to power projects (Buchanan 2006; Mijatović 2003, 2011; Rasmussen 2002, 2007; Silverman 2012). Music of ethnic minorities has been censored and banned on the grounds that it is foreign to the national cultural majority, as was the case for Romani music in Communist Bulgaria (Silverman 1996, 2012). Political and cultural elites deride genres like “turbo-folk” in the former Yugoslavia and “chalga” in Bulgaria as too “oriental,” for epitomizing kitsch and low-class culture, or as the pernicious products of ethnic and national enemies; at the same time, they enjoy great popularity among masses and circulate widely across national borders, undermining

hegemonic constructions of national and ethnic musical "purities" (Baker 2010; Beissinger 2007; Buchanan 2006, 2007; Čvoro 2014; Gordy 1999; Silverman 2012).

I explore the links between performance politics and identity politics among Roma and Serbs in Vranje in light of the visceral power and performative potential of musical practices for realizing cultural politics and power struggles. Older scholarship concerning Romani music in the Balkans and Eastern Europe often dismissed or derided the place of Romani musicians in society. Some such works argued that Roma possessed no music of their own, instead merely performing the music of majority groups among whom they lived; others claimed that professional Romani musicians degraded the music of national majorities through inappropriate improvisation and innovation, pandering to tastes of the masses out of economic greed and lack of education (Bartok 1947; Djordjevic 1984[1933]:36-39). More recent scholarship concerning Eastern European Romani music has rightfully pointed to the effects of nationalism and legacies of discrimination against Roma to understand their musical roles in society (Pettan 2002; Seeman 2002, 2012; Silverman 1996, 2012). These scholars argue that Romani musical practices must be analyzed in terms of their marginality in majority societies, where Romani musical labor is desirable but remains embedded in broader gendered, ethnic, and national power structures (Beissinger 2001; Pettan 2002; Seeman 2002; Silverman 1996, 2003, 2012). Silverman (2012) cogently argues for recognizing all music performed by Roma as Romani music, pointing to the integral role of Romani musicians (historically and in the present) for producing, innovating upon, transmitting, and preserving diverse regional, ethnic, and national musical repertoires. Roma have been important musical brokers in the Balkans and much of Europe for centuries, such that the musical practices of this wider region are as much the result of Romani cultural input as that of any other community.

This dissertation builds from scholarly attention to questions of power in Balkan Romani musical production, representation, and performances by investigating one particularly "visible" Romani musical genre. Romani brass band music from Serbia has surged in popularity since the 1990s, even as the genre has become strongly identified with Serbian national culture. An emerging body of scholarly work has sought to understand the political, nationalist, and global dimensions of the representation, circulation, and commercialization of Romani ("Balkan Gypsy") brass (e.g., Gligorijević 2014; Kuligowski 2011; Hofman 2014; Lukić-Krstanović 2006; Marković 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Mijatović 2011; Silverman 2012, 2013; Timotijević 2005). Where this work has primarily explored the political economy of brass music and representational politics of Balkan Romani brass among non-Romani consumers and producers, however, my dissertation explores how Romani brass musicians themselves articulate (and navigate) the discursive and performative dimensions of their musical labor. My project interrogates the localized performance politics of brass music and Romani identity in Vranje, Serbia, contributing important historical and political-economic perspectives to investigations of the relatively recent hype surrounding Romani brass music.

Moreover, my thesis argues that analyses of power and representation in the context of Balkan Romani musical performance would benefit from greater attention to the grounded nuances of musical performative politics. Although some work has explored the importance of phenomenological dimensions of musical interactions between Roma and non-Roma (Theodosiou 2011), much scholarship has not analyzed in greater depth how performance practices articulate relations of power via notions of regional, ethnic, and national identity. My work argues for the importance of critically interpreting the bodily politics of performative scenarios, exploring how musical contexts become places where Romani identity becomes

embodied and where bids for power or agency are naturalized—or mediated—through musical affect. This dissertation therefore expands upon understandings of how Romani identity is powerfully (re)constituted through music by focusing on the performative dimensions of bodily engagement within musical practices—all while situating identity and performance politics within the broader sociocultural, political, and economic contexts that shape the extant discourses and practices of ethnic identification.

## 1.4 Methods

I conducted 17 months of ethnographic research in Serbia as part of this dissertation project. Shorter stays of several weeks in the summers of 2006, 2007, and 2008 allowed me to meet locals, establish rapport, document several musical events such as weddings, and conduct early interviews of key informants such as well-known musicians. These early stays allowed me to develop initial impressions, refine my research questions, and provided initial data that guided more in-depth research that followed. I conducted the bulk of my dissertation research in an extended stay between July 2009 and August 2010; I then returned in the summer of 2011 for several additional weeks of follow-up research.

My research involved extensive participant observation, including a great deal of informal conversation with locals, over the course of my fieldwork. I cultivated relationships with roughly equal numbers of Serbs and Roma to obtain perspectives from both ethnic communities in Vranje. I also took care to contact people across the spectrum of socioeconomic/class standing (from politicians and businessmen to working class and impoverished families), generational groupings (from elders to youths in their late teens/early twenties), and genders (interacting with both men and women). Aside from attending musical events, I spent long hours socializing with Roma and Serbs at home, talking about a wide range

of topics and following the flow of social interactions. I spent considerable time socializing in community public spaces and neighborhood hangouts in Romani settlements, too, following conversations and debates, strolling with youths at evening gatherings, and observing daily goings-on in the community. I conducted some 50 semi-structured interviews with key informants in later phases of my research stay, after I had identified key persons and established good rapport with an appropriate range of interlocutors who could offer important insight into specific research questions. I prioritized open-ended questions in both informal conversations and later in more formal interviews, striving always to allow my interlocutors to direct my attention to issues and interpretations that they found important in order to best understand their lived realities.

In order to document musical practices and interactions, I attended portions of roughly 20 weddings in the wider Vranje area, as well as various smaller family celebrations and other social gatherings involving music/dance; I photographed these events extensively and took video whenever possible. I gave copies of photographs and video recordings to family members after events. To supplement this material, I also made copies of professional wedding videos and family recordings of musical events; as part of this process, I was often able to view videos with the family and obtain commentary on social practices, rituals, and music at a wide variety of events. Similarly, I collected family photographs of musical events like weddings, and juxtaposed older photographs with those that I took at contemporary celebrations to elicit commentary on changing trends in music, wedding rituals, and community values.

My position as a Serbian-American with family roots from southern Serbia and fluent knowledge of Serbian facilitated my research in many ways—Vranje locals anticipated that I would understand their regional culture and values, and in many ways they saw me as a “native

son." However, I also faced a good amount of initial caution (and even outright suspicion) from some who questioned my real motives for conducting research in a border region of Serbia, particularly in light of my American citizenship (with memories of the 1999 U.S.-led NATO bombing still fresh in locals' minds). This dynamic meant in part that I often had more difficulty seeking out and attending Serbian celebrations, unless I was introduced to host families well in advance by other Serb friends. Roma, on the other hand, were often interested in obliging a non-Romani person who evinced genuine interest in Romani culture; many believed that my American-ness would make me less likely to be prejudiced against Roma than local Serbs. At the same time, both my gender identity and research interests inevitably shaped other dimensions of the demographic breakdown of people with whom I interacted. While I was able to build relationships with some older Romani women and obtain critical information from them about even relatively sensitive topics (such as sexuality), I was not able to interact very freely or frequently with young women (particularly unmarried young Romani women). On the other hand, many of my contacts were men, from youths to elders, in part because men monopolize musical work and are seen as the primary repositories of musical knowledge in the area—this fact inevitably skewed the gender representation in my pool of social contacts, and in the ethnographic materials from which I have drawn my conclusions.

## 1.5 Chapter Overview

Chapter Two of this thesis addresses the link between the historical background of Romani musical practices in Vranje and regional discourses of musical identity in Serbia today. This chapter situates Roma within the political, economic, and social context of the Vranje region more broadly, and explores how Romani identity has become linked to tropes of inherent musical talent. I show how Roma have long dominated professional musical performance,

outlining the specific role of Roma in producing, innovating upon, and maintaining musical genres in the region.

Chapter Three examines how the historical legacies of Romani musical performance situate Roma between narratives that on the one hand see them as "cultural intimates" of Serbs by maintaining and performing regional music, and on the other hand characterize Romani practices as "foreign" and threatening to a homogeneous Serbian national tradition. I explore how Ottoman legacies of musical aesthetics, repertoires, and performance practices are sources of cultural capital that can subtly undermine national narratives that deride Vranje's provincial place. Because Romani culture and professional musical performance closely connect them to these legacies, Roma are important figures for Vranje Serbs attempting to maintain living links with an Ottoman urban cosmopolitanism and "safe exoticism." These same elements may render Romani brass music from Vranje suspicious in the context of nationalist constructs of homogeneous Serbian culture, however, as Romani bands become increasingly visible on national and international stages like the Guča Brass Festival. This chapter uses the concepts of cultural intimacy (Herzfeld 2005) and nesting orientalism (Bakić-Hayden 1995) to analyze the ambivalent discourses and politics of representation that surround Romani brass musicians.

Chapter Four turns to an analysis of the musical centrality of Romani musicians in wedding celebrations in Vranje. Here I explore how affect is produced through the intersection of traditional brass band repertoires, ritual practices, and memory during weddings. I show how local notions of gender, family, and tradition are (re)constituted and (re)negotiated through embodied practices of music and dance, where the affective import of music and dance consolidates identities and social relations in the ritual moment. I argue that these dynamics

place Romani brass musicians at the center of myriad processes of identification in Vranje, as professionals whose musical services and skills heighten the import of these experiences.

Building from this analysis, in Chapter Five I turn to the performative politics that shape relations between Romani musicians and celebrants during local musical events. I show how conventions that mark performance interactions with musicians draw from stigmas that characterize professional entertainment as low-class work. I explore how celebrants use personal access to musicians and their services to claim power and prestige at celebrations, drawing from implicit notions of the relatively lesser status of Romani musicians. I analyze how ritualized interactions between Serb patrons and Roma in particular, such as extravagant tipping practices and dramatized power plays, both build upon and reconstitute the unequal status of Roma vis-à-vis majority Serbs in the region. This chapter illustrates how Romani musicians must navigate (and sometimes can contest) a double burden of professional and ethnic stigma, despite widespread demand and acclaim for their musical services. My analysis articulates how musical interactions entail the performative (re)production of ethnic power relations (as instances of both performance and performativity) through conventionalized practices and dynamic acts enacted between Serbs and Roma.

In Chapter Six, I analyze how the post-socialist economic transition and post-Yugoslav nationalism have affected the professional prestige and livelihoods of Romani musicians in Vranje. I consider how relative economic and political stability in Socialist-era Vranje supported greater demand for Romani musical services, in turn allowing for more intimate relations with local Serbs and garnering Romani performers increased social as well as economic capital. I then turn to the economic and political shifts in Vranje since the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. I show how rampant privatization, widespread poverty, and rising nationalism in this

period have undermined Romani domination of the local musical market, and I consider how Serb nationalists may increasingly reject Romani entertainers as undesirable ethnic others. I explore how Roma deploy nostalgic narratives of the "golden years" of Socialist Vranje to critique economic inequality and ethnic intolerance in the present moment.

Chapter Seven of this thesis builds upon my analysis of post-socialist decline in Vranje to consider how Romani musicians increasingly strive to place themselves on expanding global markets for their music. I argue that Roma must engage with romantic stereotypes popularized by the global hype for "Gypsy Brass," characterized by two interrelated complexes: one conferring "authenticity" by depicting Roma as pre-modern and passionate, and another connoting "hybridity" through assertions of Romani rootlessness and perpetual musical borrowing. The juxtaposition of these tropes produces much-desired "authentic hybridity" for international fans (Taylor 2007). While many Romani musicians reproduce essentialisms to garner popular interest, they also strategically manipulate performances to resist clichéd impositions of Gypsyness, coding their practices as sophisticated artistry or inherent musical talent. I argue that popular demand for Gypsy "authentic hybridity" silences critical economic, cultural and historical specificities of Romani musical performance, however, re-embedding Romani performers within trans-regional and transnational power relations that deny them full agency over self-representation and musical choices.

# 2.

# "Gypsy Fingers are Unique!" Ethnic Relations, Musical Performance, and Romani Identity in Vranje, Serbia

## 2.1 Introduction

One winter evening in 2009, I sat in the comfortable warmth of the Ćerimović family's living room in Vranje, sipping Turkish-style coffee and chatting with their oldest son. Denis, an accordion player, recalled some of the most difficult situations he had encountered while performing for non-Romani patrons. He and his friends, all young men in their early twenties, formed a semi-professional ensemble that occasionally performed at small family events and for holidays around Vranje, primarily for non-Roma. On one occasion, they ventured opportunistically to Bujanovac, about 20 minutes south of Vranje by car. Entering a cafe, they asked the proprietor if they could play for some of the customers. Denis described the ensuing scene:

> Some Serbs there asked us for a traditional song from Vranje. As we wrapped up the song, though, Albanian men at a nearby table flagged us over. We approached them, and they ordered us to play the [Albanian] dance tune *Shota* while throwing a glance at the Serb table. We played it for them, but as soon as we were finished the Serbs called us over again. "Play *Moravac* [a central Serbian dance tune]!" they commanded us, looking over at the Albanians. Men on both sides started to get really worked up, I tell you, and we were getting worried. Then when the Albanians started to call us over again, some of the Serbs tried to keep us from leaving them. It looked like it would come to blows, when suddenly here comes the proprietor—and he starts blaming us, calling us good-for-nothing Gypsies, and throws us out of the place for causing problems!

Denis's account struck me because it vividly illustrates how music is coded as ethnic (and/or national) difference in multiple, layered ways when embedded in identity politics in this region. The men at the café manipulated metamessages attached to specific melodies in order to assert ethnic distinctions and perform power vis-à-vis ethnic others.

Yet many of the "ethnic" meanings attached to music in this incident were situationally contingent. For example, the Romani youths played a version of the "Albanian" *Shota* that was actually popularized by non-Albanian performers, who recorded a particular arrangement with Serbo-Croatian lyrics during the 1970s in Socialist Yugoslavia. Popular throughout the ex-Yugoslavia, this version of *Shota* differs in subtle but significant ways from the Kosovar Albanian forms from which it borrowed (such as the Albanian wedding song *Ani mori nuse*).[3] On the other hand, *Moravac* is a dance tune from central Serbia, a region popularly associated among Serbs with standardized national heritage that is "indisputably" Serbian. Yet the musical aesthetics of *Moravac* differ significantly from repertoires traditionally played at Vranje events, making the tune sound foreign in many ways to the regional Serb community (see chapter 3). In both scenarios, patrons chose musical selections for their politicized symbolism as representations of essentialized ethno-national identities, while the more complex dimensions of regional identities—and blurred boundaries surrounding musical aesthetics and cultural production—were completely sidelined.

At the same time, the Romani youths were positioned as musical mediators in this ethnic "cultural battle" (Pettan 2002; Peycheva and Dimov 2004). The café patrons expected Romani musicians to perform music that is intimately associated with Albanian and Serbian communities respectively, despite the musicians' own ethnic otherness as "Gypsies." The youths provided their patrons with a powerful platform to perform patriotism and ethnic competition through Romani musical services. But the performers' Romani ethnic identity also remained salient throughout—while their Gypsy identity was acceptable because it confirmed their role as

[3] The popular version of the song in Serbo-Croatian, better known as "Šote mori, Šote (Šote mašala)," can be heard here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMCF391pcj8. By comparison, see this instrumental rendition of the Albanian melody *Ani Mori Nuse*, identified here as a dance from the Rugova area of western Kosovo: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqebZM1eDtI. Note the slower tempo, and the sounds of the small *fyell* flute and two stringed, mandolin-like *qifteli* associated with Albanian musical culture in Kosovo.

professional specialists who perform the music of all local communities, it was also invoked to scapegoat them in a tense situation between more dominant ethnic parties.

Below I examine the wider ethnographic and historical context that has shaped Romani relations with non-Roma in Vranje, as well as key aspects of the role of Roma as professional musicians in the regional musical context. This background informs the diverse connections between the musical practices and Romani identity politics that I examine in the remainder of this dissertation. I interrogate how stereotyping and narratives of Romani difference inform the lived realities of inter-ethnic interaction between Serbs and Roma in Vranje, and in particular how notions of Romani "inherent" musicality position Roma vis-à-vis Serbs. I then discuss the musical history of Vranje Roma to illustrate how Romani musical labor and professional strategies have long shaped the seminal genres of Vranje's regional musical culture, particularly local brass band music, deeply rooting Romani communities in the wider socioeconomic and cultural context in Vranje.

## 2.2 Situating Roma: Ethnicity and Narratives of Difference in Vranje

Vranje is a town in far southeastern Serbia with roughly 80,000 inhabitants. Serbs make up the majority of the current population, and most residents trace their roots back to villages in the surrounding Pomoravlje, Pčinja, and Poljanica areas. As late as the mid-19th century, however, after centuries of Ottoman rule the ethnic composition of the Vranje area was quite diverse. While Orthodox Christian peasants formed a relative majority in the villages of the region, there were also significant numbers of Muslims in the area: Albanians (both rural and urban) and Turks (primarily urban) (Jagodić 1998:3; Trifunoski 1951, 1960a; Vukanović 1978).[4]

[4] While most Turks were concentrated in towns such as Vranje, Surdulica, or Bujanovac, there were a few compact communities in villages, particularly south of Vranje (see Trifunoski 1951 on the ethnic composition of the Preševo region). Biljača, a village in the Pomoravlje valley south of Vranje, was once home to a large community of Turks in addition to Serb peasants and some Roma. The Turkish community in the village (and throughout the wider region)

Turkish and Albanian Muslims in the town of Vranje lived alongside a compact community of urban Serbs, as well as smaller numbers of Jews, Greeks, Aroman-speaking *Cincar*-s, and Roma (Vukanović 1978).[5] Muslim communities departed en masse during the Serbian state's conquest of the region in 1878, fleeing into Ottoman-held areas just to the south, while new waves of Serbian (Orthodox Christian) peasants relocated to the region from those areas still under Ottoman control (see chapter 3, pp. 77-81; also Jagodić 1998; Malcolm 1998:228-230; Trifunoski 1951, 1960a; Vukanović 1978). These demographic shifts produced a substantial Serbian majority in the Vranje area by the early 20th century.[6]

Today, Roma comprise practically the only non-Serb community residing in Vranje. Largely exempt from state efforts at demographic restructuring in the late 19th century because of their marginal socioeconomic and ethnic status, communities of Romani Muslims continued to reside in local towns and villages (see Chapter 3, pg. 79; also Malcolm 1998:208, Trifunoski 1960b). These Muslim Roma are sometimes called *Gurbeti* or "Turkish Gypsies" (*Turski Cigani*) by Serbs, while older Roma use the term *Kor(ah)ani* (the Romani equivalent of "Turkish Roma,"

---

slowly dwindled after the turn of the 20th century, fleeing the Balkan Wars which saw the region annexed to Serbia, then World War I, and later in response to pressure from the Socialist Yugoslav state to emigrate to Turkey during the 1950s. Albanian Muslims make up the majority in the village of Biljača today (continuing to use the old mosque and graveyard established by the Turks, for example, but building a new mosque in the lower village to accommodate a growing population).

[5] Various communities of Aroman-speakers were once widely settled throughout the Balkans (see Poulton 1991:95-96 on communities in the former Yugoslavia; Malcolm 1994 and 1998 for the history of communities in Bosnia and Kosovo, respectively). Their language is derived from Latin, a holdover from Roman times and akin to modern Romanian. They are also known as "Vla(c)hs" in many areas, more rarely as Cincari/Tsintsars. In many places over time they assimilated into the ethnolinguistic majority groups among which they lived, although in some contexts they have retained their own language and customs, for example in parts of Greece, Albania, and in eastern Serbia. There were small communities of Aroman Cincar merchants in Vranje and regions just to the south by the late 19th and early 20th century (Hadži Vasiljević 1909; Trifunoski 1951; Vukanović 1978).

[6] There are still Muslim Albanians living in villages of the Pomoravlje region south of Vranje today. Many *muhadžir*-s (Muslim refugees) who left the Vranje area in 1878 resettled in this area, or in nearby Kosovo and northern Macedonia—all regions which remained under Ottoman control until the First Balkan War in 1912 (see Trifunoski 1951, 1960a; see also pp. 70-75 below). The population of Bujanovac, some 20 minutes south of Vranje, is roughly half Albanian and half Serbian; from Bujanovac south to the Macedonian border, most villages in the valley are predominantly populated by Albanians today, and the town of Preševo near the border is roughly 90% ethnic Albanian.

referring to their Muslim faith) (Trifunoski 1960b).[7] A significantly smaller number of local Roma are Orthodox Christians, known either as "Serbian Gypsies" (*Srpski Cigani*) or *Djorgovci*. These Roma are mostly rural, primarily speak Serbian instead of Romani, and share similar customs and material culture (such as traditional folk attire) with local Serbs (Trifunoski 1960b; Zlatanović 2006).[8]

In 2009, unofficial estimates loosely based on earlier census data placed some 5,000 to 7,000 Roma in Vranje and surrounding villages, although in all likelihood their numbers are greater (cf. Trifunoski 1960b for similar Vranje Romani population estimates in the 1950s).[9] In Vranje proper, Roma reside in three *mahala*-s (the Ottoman-derived term for residential quarters). Roma also make up a significant proportion (likely half) of the population in Vranjska Banja, a settlement some three miles east of Vranje, residing in four *mahala*-s. The village of Pavlovac southwest of Vranje has one Romani *mahala*. Most of the Roma in these communities have traditionally identified as Muslims, and the vast majority of Romani musicians reside in these settlements. Orthodox Christian Djorgovci are less numerous, living primarily in villages of the Pomoravlje (Morava river valley) area around Vranje, such as in Gornje Trebešinje and Tibužde.

---

[7] *Gurbet* in Ottoman Turkish refers to travelling abroad, often for economic reasons. The name may reflect (perceived or actual) patterns of Romani nomadism among certain communities in the region at an earlier period. Sedentary communities of Roma have been documented in Vranje since the 16th century, however, and all Roma in the area today are settled—I never heard local Roma talk about nomadism in present-day or past practice.

[8] Generalized divisions of local Roma along a binary axis between Muslim/Turkish and Orthodox/Serb cultural forms are problematic and too reductionist, however. For example, Muslim Romani women in Vranjska Banja and Pavlovac (rural settlements on the outskirts of Vranje) use the woolen *futa* skirt associated with Serb/Orthodox peasant attire as their traditional dress at weddings. By contrast, Muslim Roma in Vranje proper use attire based on Ottoman urban styles as their traditional clothing. The urban-rural cultural divide is a significant dimension of community identification among various groups of Vranje-area Roma.

[9] Accurate census information on numbers of Roma in the region (as elsewhere in the Balkans and Europe) is difficult to compile. Roma generally lack resources and state support to participate in (or respond to) census-taking. Moreover, they are often subject to exclusion or indifference as a marginalized ethnic group, or hesitate to self-identify as Roma on censuses to avoid stigma and potential political repercussions (see for example Duijzings 1997 on Egyptians in Kosovo and Macedonia). See also Zlatanović (2006) for an analysis of the identity politics of Vranje-area *Djorgovci*, who may identify as Serbs publicly and are not considered by Muslim Roma to be "true Roma." At the same time, local Serbs reject their claims to Serbian-ness and insist that they are actually "Gypsies."

Because Roma reside in most of the major settlements of the region, they visibly figure in the local economy and society despite their minority status. Historically Roma specialized in specific labor and craft niches including blacksmithing, horse-trading, rope-making, basket- and mat-weaving, and entertainment, providing services to non-Roma in exchange for goods or money much like their counterparts throughout the Balkans and Europe more broadly (Djordjević 1984[1933]; Keil and Vellou-Keil 2002; Seeman 2002; Silverman 2012; Pettan 2002; Vukanović 1983). They have also traditionally participated in seasonal agricultural labor, working as fieldhands (particularly during the harvest) for local peasants. Under Yugoslav Socialism, Roma were incorporated into the mainstream economy through state-sponsored quotas that aimed to encourage integration of minorities and promote ethnic diversity in the workforce (see chapter 6; see also Barany 1994; Guy 2001; Ladanyi and Szelenyi 2006). In Vranje such policies saw Roma working primarily in local factories and for streets and sanitation. Roma have also traditionally sold produce and other goods in open-air markets, a practice which continues in the present. Many Romani women served as domestic help for Serbs in Vranje, too, cleaning private residences and maintaining the public areas of larger apartment buildings. Some Serb families even hired Romani women as nannies for their small children.

Roma primarily interact with local Serbs for economic reasons, in other words, selling skills or goods to Serb customers (see also Pettan 2002). Yet Romani relations with Serbs are also strongly shaped by legacies of discrimination and exclusion, processes which continue in the present. Most contact occurs within the circumscribed realm of economic exchange and work, or else when Roma interact with Serb functionaries in government, social services, or healthcare. Roma are residentially segregated, and most of their social connections and community life occur within the confines of the *mahala* among other Roma. While *mahala*-s are an extension of

urban Ottoman residential practices (which generally grouped occupational and cultural communities into distinct quarters), Romani spatial segregation is also an outgrowth of their ongoing exclusion in society and reinforces their marginality. Romani *mahala*-s in Vranje suffer from poorer infrastructure than Serb sectors (such as lack of proper sewage, water supply, electricity, etc.), and the muncipal government is often lax in attending to the needs of Romani residential areas.

Yet Serbs often dismiss poor conditions in Romani settlements as the result of Romani cultural dysfunction. One Serb interlocutor glibly assured me that "the most interesting thing you'll find up *there* [i.e., in the Romani mahala] is hepatitis!" Stereotypes about Roma abound in Serb circles, generally dismissing Roma as uncouth, untrustworthy, lazy, and uncultured Gypsies. Roma are criticized for their proverbial disinterest in "proper work," ostensibly preferring to steal or work odd jobs instead. Their endemic poverty is held to be the result of haphazard lifestyles that are blamed on genetic (i.e., racial) predispositions. Serbs claim that Roma "live only in the present," spending carelessly and never saving for the future; furthermore, they hold that Roma are uninterested in formal avenues for social betterment. Poor performance in schools is often attributed to Romani disinterest in education instead of structural inequalities. One Vranje schoolteacher laughed dismissively when I opined that Romani children faced challenges because of a lack of resources and insufficient attention from educators. She maintained that Roma simply could not care about schooling because it was not in their "nomadic" nature. She refused to believe that Romani children who move to western Europe, for example, are more successful in school than those in Vranje because they have better access to resources and help. While Romani and Serb children officially enjoy equal rights to attend integrated schools in Vranje, in reality Roma are regularly tracked into special schools for

developmentally challenged students because Serbian is their second language. De-facto, this segregation leads many Roma to fall behind in early education for lack of bilingual assistance, and further entrenches their disadvantage in the educational system (see European Roma Rights Centre Report 2003; Open Society Institute Report 2010; Roma Education Fund Report 2007).

Entrenched racism and prolific stereotyping of Roma in Vranje, as elsewhere in Europe, justifies their socioeconomic exclusion. Serbs turn to essentialist tropes to explain the social distance between Roma and Serbs. Many of my Serbian informants used racialized language to explain why they did not visit Romani homes ("they have that strange, wet smell"), eat or drink with Roma ("you'll get sick…they are so dirty!"), or interact with Roma socially or romantically ("I just cannot be physically attracted to Roma"). Discourses stress the essential genetic and cultural difference of Roma to naturalize their position within local society, while ignoring the historical legacies and structural inequalities that have marginalized Roma for centuries.

Serbs also deploy reductionist stereotypes of Romani cultural difference to legitimate binary claims of their ethnic "otherness" in juxtaposition with Serbs. "They do not have a sense of color coordination…you'll see that they are always wearing bright but mismatched colors and patterns," one middle-aged Serb woman told me. Serbs claim that inevitably Roma have a kitschy sense of style, preferring whenever possible to decorate their homes in overly ornamented ways, for example. Serbs also criticize what they see as a Romani predilection for parties and fun, pointing to loud music blaring from homes in Romani settlements day and night, elaborate weddings that commandeer public streets for hours on end, and much more. As a people Roma are defined as the essential opposites of Serbs along multiple registers of cultural, racial, and socioeconomic difference.

Yet similar stereotyping characterizes the performative politics of regional, ethnic, and national identification in Vranje more broadly, pointing to the discursive salience of tropes of difference for positioning people within local society. Locals strategically negotiate narratives of cultural difference to situate various groups vis-à-vis political, economic, and cultural capital. Town residents attribute similar "boorishness" and lack of culture to Serb villagers (*seljaci*) migrating into Vranje. They often claim that rural people are destroying the genteel culture of urbanites and usurping local political power. One of the worst insults in Vranje, for example, involves calling someone a *Šopčina* ("a giant *Šop*"); *Šopovi* are rural Slavic-speaking Orthodox Christians who live in mountainous areas along the border with Bulgaria. Locals claim that you can tell a *Šop* from far off by the mismatched colors of their outfits, "hick-like" rural dialect, uncouth mannerisms, and so on. *Šopovi* are not seen as non-Serbs by Vranje residents, however. Their difference only becomes significant in circumstances that necessitate residential and class differentiation between local (Serbian) interest groups.

Although no Albanians live in Vranje or nearby villages at present, they periodically visit Vranje from areas further south on business or to seek health care. Several Vranje Serbs told me that Albanians are also immediately recognizable to the trained eye. They claim that they have quite distinctive physical features, such as large heads and big noses. One middle-aged Serb woman told me she knew them from their dress: "Albanian men always wear white socks with their dress shoes!" She later commented however that Serbs from Kosovo were also recognizable for wearing white socks, as was her brother's father-in-law who had lived (until recently) in a predominantly Albanian village south of Vranje. She insisted that wearing white socks with dress shoes was an Albanian cultural marker absorbed by Serbs who lived in heavily Albanian-

populated areas, acknowledging the blurriness of cultural practice even as she attempted to salvage the validity of binary constructions of ethnic difference along cultural lines.

Slippages between assertions of clear-cut difference and actual practice in Vranje point to the relatively arbitrary nature of this discursive process. Before the 2009-2010 New Year's Eve celebration in Vranje's town center, a Serb sound technician told me that in previous years he led a crew of men in efforts to "drive off" Roma who attempted to attend public events such as these. In response to my startled queries, he claimed that Roma were too uncouth and ruined the experience for Serbs. "Roma blow their noses into their bare hands and spit on the ground," he contended. When I pointed out that I had not personally seen Roma behave in these ways, but that I *had* seen older Serb men occasionally blow their noses into their hands and shake the excretions onto the ground, he dropped into a stunned silence. He quickly admitted that Serbs were also guilty of such practices, but immediately qualified that these were villagers who were less cultured than true urbanites. Such blurred lines of practice threaten to expose the cultural proximity of Roma and Serbs in Vranje, overturning ostensibly neat delineations of ethnic difference.

What does the disconnect between messy, complex processes of identification along regional, ethnic, and national lines on the one hand, and reductionist tropes of essential "difference" of others on the other, mean in Vranje? Stereotypes of cultural and ethnic difference are deployed within broader contexts of political, economic, and cultural power. Serbs, as the politically and economically privileged group, possess greater discursive agency and control over how the cultural differences of others are signified. Despite myriad (and often intimate) connections to Roma with whom they work or from whom they buy—engagements that frequently belie simplistic stereotypes of a uniform Romani "nature"—most Serbs regularly

return to essentialist assertions of Romani otherness to position Roma in society. Serb actors have the cultural and political capital with which to prioritize these narratives when they are expedient to justify (or re-shape) social realities—in other words, Serbs have much greater power to control representations as the majority, dominant community. The discursive power of these tropes lies in downplaying the effects of economic and political exclusion, and ubiquitous racism, leveled against Roma. Stereotypes that appear to logically explain the lived realities of Roma constitute powerful tropes to confirm Serbian claims for the validity of the existing ethnic status quo.

## 2.3 Music in the Blood: Musical Performance as Romani Ethnic Marker in Vranje

One of the most dynamic nodes of Romani cultural identity and ethnic status in Vranje revolves around musical performance. Music is valuable to local Serbs, deeply embedded in community life and identity, and therefore provides a prime platform for constructing relations between Serbs and Romani performers. Professional musical performance has long been one of the most respected and lucrative occupational niches available to Roma throughout the Balkans (Brandl 1996; Keil and Vellou-Keil 2002; Pettan 2002; Seeman 1990, 2002, 2012; Silverman 2012; Sugarman 2003). Romani domination of most professional musical niches stems in part from their long-running socioeconomic exclusion, however (see chapter 5). Under the Ottomans, professional entertainment was considered low-class and morally compromising work, and not undertaken by high-status groups. By the 19th century, Roma filled many professional music and dance performance niches in (post-)Ottoman contexts (Seeman 2002:139-143; Sugarman 2003).

Because musical work was the most desirable in a limited range of occupations available to marginalized Roma, professional musicianship became closely associated with Romani identity and lifestyles. Throughout the Balkans specific instruments and musical genres

(particularly those associated with paid performance) are coded as "Gypsy," such as double-reed shawm and drum ensembles (*zurna/davul* or *zurla/tapan*), the clarinet, or the violin (Djordjević 1984[1933]; Keil and Vellou-Keil 2002; Seeman 2002; Silverman 2012). These are often contrasted with "pure" folk instruments and repertoires performed by non-professional (generally rural) non-Romani musicians at community events. Even musical scholarship has often sought to differentiate Romani musical practices from that of national majorities in Europe and the Balkans. Scholars have often claimed that Roma perform purely out of economic self-interest, do not possess their "own" music but rather perform that of others, possess little knowledge of musical theory, and even "corrupt" the national musical traditions of others through hybrid practices and out of a desire to please the masses (Bartok 1947; Djordjevic 1984[1933]:36-39; cf. Silverman 2012). Nationalist detractors cynically criticize the authenticity and value of Romani music-making by exploiting essentialisms that link Romani professional musical practices with inherent Romani ethnic or racial inferiority.

Despite the stigma surrounding professional musical entertainment, however, many non-Roma nevertheless praise Romani musical skill. In contrast with derogatory and dismissive stereotypes of Romani sloth, cunning, or lack of culture, popular narratives attribute to Roma an inherent talent for music and dance (Pettan 2002; Seeman 2002; Silverman 1996, 2012). In Serbia, I was often told that Roma had music "in their blood." Roma and Serbs alike pointed to music and dance skill among young Roma as evidence of an inherent, genetic predisposition. One schoolteacher in Leskovac complained to me that Serbian children were inevitably passed over during a musical competition held at a local school: "They never stood a chance next to their Gypsy classmates, who were born with this talent!" Friends often encouraged me to film or photograph young girls dancing "just like adults" at Romani weddings. On the feast day of Saint

Nicholas in Vranje in December of 2009, Serbian friends bustled me onto the street as a Romani brass band of pre-teen boys made its way up the main thoroughfare. “Take a picture of these kids!” they urged, adding that this was proof that Romani talent was instilled “from birth.” A local Serb politician enthusiastically told me about his weakness for young Roma from Banja who often played for tips at a local crossroads: “They even move like adult brass musicians, with the same gestures and poses! It’s amazing!” Tropes of Romani genetic talent for music are powerful and pervasive, and often support some of the only positive evaluations of Romani culture by local Serbs. But they also ignore the important historical and economic factors that drove the development of a community culture whereby Romani children are consistently exposed to music and dance in order to ensure performative competence from a young age.

Roma also assert that musical ability is a genetic, innate characteristic of their people. Many of my Romani contacts in Vranje dismissed the idea that Serbs could ever rival even the least gifted of Romani musicians. “How could a Serb ever play like one of us (*kude be Srbin k'o naš će svira*)!?”, exclaimed one popular Vranje brass bandleader. “Gypsy fingers are unique (*Ciganske prsti su čudo*),” another middle-aged Romani man enthusiastically told me to explain why Roma had long dominated professional musical performance in Vranje. For Roma, the idea that musical ability is inherent in their Romani blood bolsters their claims to prestige and status in the face of otherwise pervasive socioeconomic marginalization and cultural derision in majority Serb society. Among Serbs, Romani musical abilities are one of the few domains of practice where Roma are seen in a positive light. Roma can therefore tap into a privileged domain of cultural superiority over Serbs through narratives that assert a genetic basis for their musical skill. Moreover, Roma mobilize these narratives in attempts to defend their monopoly

(and "rightful claim") on professional musical performance, allowing them to dismiss the legitimacy of any prospective musical competition from local Serbs.

Yet these tropes also further entrench the essentialist connection between Romani identity and musical practices. Praise for Romani talent implies that they are uniquely, but moreover perhaps *only*, suited for musical labor. While pervasive discrimination long meant that musical work was a preferred economic niche, claims that entertainment is in Romani blood are also used to overlook, or justify, their lack of achievement in other sectors such as school, mainstream work, civic engagement, and political representation. As one elderly Romani man commented to me at a community wedding banquet: "This is nice, eh, all this gorgeous dancing and good music? But we [Roma] need to be able to do more. More of our children need to succeed in school. There's been enough of just making music and dancing (*dosta je više samo muzika i igranje*)!"

In short, local constructions of Romani ethnicity are deeply informed by musical performance. Yet these narratives must be interrogated for the cultural work they perform to delineate the place of Roma within structures of power and agency in society. Specific historical, socioeconomic, and cultural processes that produced particular forms of Romani musical labor in Vranje shaped the discursive paradigms that hinge on romantic tropes of inherent Romani musicality. Below I examine the history of Romani musical performance in Vranje from Ottoman times to the present in order to situate contemporary Romani musical status within the larger material and cultural framework of regional identity politics.

## 2.4 From *Čalgidžije* and *Surlaši* to *Trubači*: Romani Professional Legacies and Musical Adaptation Since Ottoman Times

Throughout the Balkans, Roma have long dominated the professional performance of various musical genres (Brandl 1996; Keil and Vellou-Keil 2002; Pettan 2002; Seeman 1990, 2002, 2012; Silverman 2012). Roma served as professional musicians in Vranje at least since the early Ottoman period. An Ottoman document from the reign of sultan Selim II (1566-1574) specifies that 16 households and "2 unmarried men" formed a *džemat* (official grouping/settlement) of Muslim Roma *mehter* musicians in Vranje. The community provided musical services to the town's military garrison in return for certain tax exemptions (Vukanović 1978, 1987).[10]

By the late 1800s, Romani professional musicians in the region performed in two distinct ensemble types geared toward slightly different performance niches: *čalgija* (*čalgidžije*) orchestras and bands of *surla* and *goč* players. Romani *čalgija* musicians performed in a predominantly urban musical style similar to that seen in other Ottoman Balkan towns.[11] Known as *čalgadžije* or *čalgidžije* in Vranje, these ensembles featured clarinet (*grneta*), violin (*ćemane*), and frame drums with zils (*dajre*);[12] it is probable that they also included the *ut* (oud, a short-

[10] See Seeman (2002:146-152) for a more in-depth discussion of the institution of *mehter* music in the Ottoman military. She shows that Roma in many places were organized in an auxiliary military capacity by the Ottoman state, dragging cannon or readying roadways in advance of the Ottoman army, for example, in addition to performing in military bands. Officially, Roma were entitled to tax exempt status like other Muslims in the Empire who were expected to serve in the military on a conscription basis (as opposed to non-Muslims who paid taxes instead of military service). Seeman shows however that at times Ottoman officials denied that Roma were "true Muslims" and justified collecting taxes from them in spite of their performance of military duties.

[11] See Seeman (1990; 2012) for a more in-depth discussion of the instrumentation, musical style, and historical development of comparable urban *čalgija* music in Macedonia. Historically ensembles in Vranje were likely quite similar to the ensemble in this video of *čalgija* musicians from Veles, Macedonia: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gz5yJCgQS0s

[12] The root *čalgi-* in the name for the musicians/ensemble type derives from the Turkish verb, "*çalmak,*" meaning to strike or to play, pointing to a clear connection with Ottoman urban culture (Seeman 1990, 2002, 2012).

necked fretless lute) much like urban ensembles in nearby Kosovo and Macedonia.[13] These ensembles performed in taverns (*kafana*-s, literally "coffeehouses") and at family life-cycle celebrations among all resident ethnic communities in Vranje. While instrumentalists were traditionally men, Romani women also performed as *dajre* frame drum players, singers, and dancers. The career of Malika Eminović (popularly known as Koštana), a famous Romani entertainer in late 19th century Vranje, illustrates a typical scenario. She performed with an urban musical ensemble comprised of her male relatives, and was purportedly trained to play the frame drum, sing, and dance by her mother (Stanković 2005[1902]).

As professional musicians, Roma adapted their use of instruments and repertoire to cater to changing popular tastes and contexts for music-making throughout the 20th century. The urban ensemble retained its basic form but slowly older, Ottoman-style instrumentation was replaced by more "modern" instruments in the early to mid-20th century. As most local Muslims left the town after the region's annexation by Serbia in the late 1800s (see chapter 3), the remaining (and newer) residents were also influenced by folk and urban musical styles from northern and central Serbia, such as the *starogradska muzika* ("old urban music") promoted by national radio programs based in Belgrade between the two world wars (Dumnić 2013). In Vranje acoustic guitars eventually replaced the fretless *ut*, and musicians increasingly used the upright (contra)bass (*bas* or *kontrabas* in Serbian) instead of (or alongside) the *dajre* frame drum for

[13] Vukanović does not mention the *ut* in his discussions of Ottoman-era Vranje musical culture, but his writings on the topic (while valuable) are at best cursory treatments of a wide range of historical sources—it may be that he missed key references, or did not consult an appropriate range of sources, and thus failed to reconstruct a more detailed picture of older musical genres and practices. He often refers to the works of playwright and author Bora Stanković, born in Vranje in the late 19th century, as key sources of information about Ottoman Vranje. However, while Stanković was certainly familiar with Vranje's cultural context and by extension local music, we should be cautious about using his literary works as ethnographic "fact." As Zlatanović (2003) reminds us, he left Vranje early in life and only returned periodically, and this meant that at times he inadvertently misrepresented (or omitted) key details of local cultural practices, rituals, etc., in his writings. To date, I am unaware of any study that has attempted to systematically obtain ethnographic data on Vranje's musical history from local Roma. Collecting oral histories from the oldest living Roma, especially members of Romani families who have traditionally been musicians, would shed important additional light on musical genres, instrumentation, repertoire, and performance practices as far back as the early 20th century.

rhythmic accompaniment. Gradually (particularly after WWII) orchestras also incorporated the accordion, as well as the small hourglass-shaped *tarabuka* drum.

From WWII onward, urban ensembles were increasingly known as *kafanski orkestri* (i.e., tavern bands). They remained popular among both Serbs and Roma in Vranje. From the 1950s, *kafana* orchestras were quite versatile in terms of repertoire, instrumentation, and performance contexts, playing everything from regional folk music to commercialized forms of folk and pop music, and even incorporating numbers from international styles like jazz. Romani professionals who performed in such bands considered the *kafana* genre to be more prestigious (because it was "more cosmopolitan") and lucrative, and favorably compared the status of *kafana* performers to musicians in other genres who performed primarily for local weddings.[14]

This same evolving ensemble in turn provided the basis for the amplified Romani wedding bands that became hugely popular beginning in the late 1980s.[15] From the 1970s, new technologies allowed for amplification and electronic instrumentation (Pettan 2002; Silverman 2012). Like their colleagues in nearby Kosovo and Macedonia (Pettan 2002), Vranje Romani musicians began to use electric guitars (for melody and bass lines) instead of acoustic ones, synthesizers instead of accordion, and trap-set drums (*džez bubnjevi*, literally "jazz drums") instead of the upright contrabass. Saxophone also became popular, performing alongside clarinet (or replacing it). The violin on the other hand became increasingly obsolete. By 2010, there were only a few remaining violin players in Vranje, and no Romani youth were learning the instrument for lack of popular demand. *Dajre* frame drums have long fallen out of use as well, replaced entirely by the *tarabuka* drum. In this iteration, amplified ensembles perform

---

[14] See Seeman (2012:300) for a similar distinction between less-prestigious outdoor ensembles, known as *kaba čalgi*, that played for weddings and more highly regarded ensembles that played indoors at urban events (known as *indži čalgi*, or fine/refined ensemble) in Macedonia.

[15] See Pettan (2002) for an analysis of nearly identical trends in ensemble adaptation by Romani professional musicians in neighboring Kosovo from the late 19th century into the last decades of the 20th century.

exclusively for Vranje's Romani community, drawing on contemporary musical styles and songs in the Romani language that have become widely popular among Roma in southern Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bulgaria (see Pettan 2002; Silverman 2012).[16] The older *kafana* ensemble type (and repertoire) have become largely passé since the 1990s, as newer styles of commercialized folk music (such as *novokomponovana narodna muzika*, or "newly composed folk music") and pop become widely popular.[17] All-Serbian orchestras of young musicians have also formed during these two decades, edging older Romani professionals out of the performance niche (see chapter 6).

Romani musicians in late 19th and early 20th century Vranje also performed in ensembles consisting of two oboe-like, double-reed shawms called *surla*-s and one or two large double-headed drums, locally known as *goč*.[18] *Surla* and *goč* were used in Ottoman military *mehter* bands; in turn of the 20th century Vranje, locals also referred to *surla* and *goč* ensembles (or the drum by itself) as *meter* (*meteri* in plural) (Vukanović 1978, 1987). Romani musicians who performed in *mehter*-s likely transferred this instrumental ensemble to civilian musical and celebratory culture, performing regional folk music at public venues and for life-cycle

[16] See this video of a Romani wedding in Vranje for an example of these contemporary, amplified wedding bands: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8CqzwFB9ZU (accessed January 19, 2016).

[17] Newly composed folk music in Yugoslavia first developed in the 1960s out of attempts to harmonize and "enrich" folk music—the genre subsequently became highly commercial, and mediated the cultural transition experienced by rural migrants in urban spaces in the Socialist Yugoslavia. (Mijatović 2003; Rasmussen 2002, 2003). Initially quite similar in feel to folk forms, the genre has gradually grown much closer to pop music, borrowing heavily from other Balkan & Middle Eastern commercial music scenes as well as international pop styles. A branch of the genre known as turbofolk became popular in the 1990s. Cultivated by nationalist interests during the Milošević era to carry political messages, it was derided by liberal opponents to the regime for its kitschy sound and role in propaganda (Gordy 1999; Mijatović 2003). Post-2000 iterations of the genre have again moved away from these roots to a much more pop-inflected sound, and remain popular with large swathes of the population, particularly with working class people, rural communities, and residents of cities and towns outside of Belgrade.

[18] This ensemble type is widespread throughout the southern Balkans, variously known as *zurla-tapan* (Macedonia), *curle-lodër* (Albanian), *zurna-tupan* (Bulgaria), *zourna-daouli* (Greece), and *zurna-davul* (Turkey). See Keil and Vellou-Keil (2002) for a historical overview of this ensemble type in the Balkans, and in Europe and the Middle East more generally. The ensemble seen in this video of a Romani wedding event in Skopje, Macedonia is essentially like those that once performed in the Vranje region: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZAd7C5QTzc (accessed January 19, 2016).

celebrations (Seeman 2002; Silverman 2012).[19] As was generally true throughout the southern Balkans, Roma monopolized professional performance on *surla* and *goč*, so much so that they were often considered exclusively Gypsy instruments (Keil and Vellou-Keil 2002; Rice 1982; Seeman 2002; Silverman 2012). Vukanović, drawing on early 20th century scholarship and accounts, argues that *surla* and *goč* ensembles were most popular among villagers. Roma from the villages of Pavlovac and Jovac just outside of Vranje, and Masurica (near Surdulica to the north) were considered to be the best *surla-goč* musicians in the region (Vukanović 1978, 1987).[20]

In the early 20th century, however, changing demographics and cultural politics affected the demand for *surla-goč* ensembles in the region. Romani professionals continued to perform on *surle* and *goč* until sometime before World War II; a few precious photographs of church festivals and social gatherings in Vranjska Banja and Vladičin Han near Vranje show such ensembles playing for Serbian patrons in the 1910s and 1920s.[21] However, demand for this music among non-Roma rapidly declined by the 1930s. During this period, only some forty years after the region's incorporation into the Serbian state, cultural holdovers of Ottoman rule were fast disappearing (much as they had in newly-independent central Serbia somewhat earlier during the mid-19th century—see Djordjević [1933] 1984:30). Ottoman-era practices became suspect as "foreign" or were derided as "primitive" by officials, intellectuals, and educators working on integrating the local populace into a modernizing Serbia. *Surle* and *goč* were equated

[19] Seeman (2002:146-52) argues that *zurna/zurla* and drum ensembles likely proliferated in popular (i.e., civilian) contexts in the Ottoman Balkans with the decline of the *mehter* institution in the military, following the abolishment of the janissary corps in the 1800s.
[20] Pettan (2002) also describes how urbanites in Prizren, Kosovo, thought of *surle* and drum ensembles as village music even in the late 20th century, in demand primarily among rural immigrants and not considered "good music" by city residents (including Roma).
[21] See Vukanović 1987 for one such photograph.

with Muslim Turkish culture and gradually rejected by Serbs in the region (see chapter 3, pp. 73-75).[22]

Local Roma, on the other hand, continued to appreciate *surle-goč* music for several more decades, likely because of their Muslim identity and stronger orientation toward older, Ottoman forms. As a marginalized minority, moreover, their cultural practices were less visible and largely ignored by cultural reformers. Roma in Vranje told me that although local musicians no longer performed on these instruments, *surle-goč* musicians from Bujanovac came to Vranje well into the 1970s to perform for Romani patrons. Neviza, a middle-aged woman, fondly remembers that her grandparents were always excited by the arrival of *surle* and *goč* musicians during the *Vasuljica* holiday (January 13-16). She recalls that they would even run out into the snow in their indoor slippers to dance the older "heavy" dances of their youth to the treasured—but by then rarely heard—sound of these instruments. By the late 20th century, *surle* and *goč* were a thing of the past even for most Vranje Roma, however; no one I spoke with in 2010 could remember hearing these instruments perform live in the last twenty years, and most doubted that any Roma would want to hire such an ensemble today.

*Surle* and *goč* ensembles were also displaced by the formation of local brass bands (*trubači* in Serbian, from *truba* for trumpet), a new ensemble type that came to fill the same performance niche.[23] The first brass bands formed in the region around 1912. Oral histories indicate that a few enterprising Romani musicians assembled the earliest ensembles after

---

[22] See Pettan (2002) for the situation in Kosovo in the late 20th century, where *surle* and *goč* bands were primarily associated with Muslim communities and not hired by Serbs in the midst of rising political tensions with Albanians. Compare this with the accounts of Serbian dance researchers Danica and Ljubica Janković (1951) whose fieldwork in eastern Kosovo during the 1930s demonstrates that local Serbs regularly hired Romani *surla* and *goč* musicians to provide dance music at their celebrations. According to Robert Liebman, older Serbs in this region still preferred such ensembles as late as 1972, when villagers from Koretište asked him to hire such bands so that he might film the community's dance repertoire (personal communication).

[23] In Serbia, *trubači* is the most common designation for brass band musicians; other names include *duvači* and *duvački orkestri* (from the Serbian verb *duvati*, "to blow," roughly meaning "wind" bands or musicians), and *limeni orkestri* or *bleh/pleh orkestri* in reference to the metal/"tin" instruments in use in these orchestras.

learning to play brass instruments in the military during the Balkan Wars (1912 and 1913) and World War I (Babić and Milovanović 2003:103-104). On returning home they experimented with these new instruments, transferring the local repertoire of ritual music, songs, and instrumental dance tunes from *surle* and *goč* to the brass idiom. Brass ensembles were also loud and highly mobile like *surle-goč* ensembles, making them ideal for large outdoor functions before the advent of amplification.

This continuity with *surla-goč* performance contexts means that Vranje brass bands historically were entirely comprised of Romani musicians. Some musician family histories indicate that former *surla* players took up trumpets in response to growing local demand (Babić and Milovanović 2003). According to local histories among the first to experiment with brass instruments were Fejza Bakić in Vranje, Čerim Rašitović (son of Malika Eminović, "Koštana," the famous singer and dancer from Vranje) in Vranjska Banja, and a certain Dene from Vranjska Banja. These men were roughly contemporaries, born sometime around the turn of the 20th century.

For a time, emergent brass ensembles coexisted with *surle-goč* bands. Musicians switched between *surla* and trumpet or performed in mixed ensembles. Brass bandleader Ekrem Sajdić from Vranjska Banja remembers that his grandfather Bektaš (born c.1900) spoke of playing the trumpet in an otherwise typical *surle-goč* company early in his career (Milovanović and Babić 2003:112). Elements of older brass band styling in the region indicate how early brass musicians built upon the *surla-goč* musical legacy to shape emergent musical practices. For older regional dance tunes the mid-brass instruments often drone while the leading flugelhorn (trumpet) and clarinet players perform melody and improvise—much like the respective roles of droning (second) and leading (first) *surla* musicians (see Keil and Vellou-Keil 2002; Rice 1982;

Silverman 2012). Echoes of the *surla-goč* sound resounded long afterward in regional brass band practices. Some ensembles used a shortened, folk-type clarinet whose higher pitch evokes the sound of a *surla*. Vranje's famous Bakija Bakić brass band long featured a clarinetist who performed on such a shortened instrument—he can be heard on some of the band's earliest commercial recordings from the 1970s, particularly on tracks of older dance tunes like *Vranjanka* and *Preševka*.[24]

By the 1930s and 1940s, brass bands had definitively become the preeminent musical ensemble at life-cycle celebrations among both Serbs and Roma. Vranje locals were consistently exposed to military brass bands during the several wars of the early 20th century. Descendants of well-known Romani brass musicians note that their fathers and grandfathers learned to manage large ensembles and adapt musical arrangements to brass while serving in the army (see also Babić and Milovanović 2003:101-104; Golemović 2002). This assocation with the national military may also have lent significant cultural cachet to brass bands in periods when Serbian and (later) Yugoslav national identity were being intensively cultivated in post-Ottoman Vranje. Moreover, brass bands may have been seen as more modern and "European-sounding" than the *surle-goč* ensembles of the Ottoman past.

The interwar period saw an intense proliferation of brass bands, as local Roma gradually consolidated the form and performance roles of the ensembles. Early ensembles were smaller and more malleable than in the present. The afore-mentioned Bektaš Sajdić of Vranjska Banja formed a relatively small orchestra once baritone horns entered the local scene: two trumpet players (rotary valve flugelhorns), two baritone (*mali bas*, or "small bass") horns, and a goč drum. According to family history he did not perform only at weddings, either, but also accompanied singers in hotels (Babić and Milovanović 2003:112). Several other Roma from

[24] See for example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieC6JcAZsJM (accessed December 29, 2015).

Vranjska Banja also remember that their early trumpet-playing grandfathers and great-grandfathers performed in quite diverse contexts and styles, ranging from playing folk music at local celebrations to dabbling in jazz in diverse venues as far abroad as Belgrade.

By the mid-20th century, most of the core elements of Vranje brass band culture had come together. Ensembles were larger and more or less consistently featured the standard instrumental line-up seen today: one clarinet (*grnata*) or (later) saxophone, two to four rotary valve flugelhorns (*trube*), two to four baritone horns (*mali basovi*), one tuba (*veliki bas*, literally "large bass"*)*, a snare drum (*doboš*), and the large double-headed *goč* drum with a cymbal (*sahan* or *činela*) mounted on top.[25] Demand for brass bands was widespread, resulting in large numbers of brass musicians in Vranje, Vranjska Banja, and Pavlovac. By the 1950s and 1960s, there were reportedly close to thirty standing brass bands in the Romani community in Vranjska Banja alone, and the *Karanfil Devojče* festival there hosted a brass band competition to which local ensembles flocked in the years before the (national) Guča Brass Festival was formed (see chapter 3).

The working culture of local brass bands congealed around strong kin networks and family training, both consolidating and perpetuating the genre's domination by Romani professionals. Many brass ensembles formed around core groups of related musicians, and this pattern continues into the present. Elder men work closely with sons and grandsons to groom them for eventual leadership of ensembles, while uncles and cousins often fill out the ranks of mid-brass and percussion instruments in ensembles. Most of the best known Romani brass musicians in the Vranje region today are third, fourth, or even fifth generation brass performers.

[25] Smaller and often more ad-hoc ensembles performing for local Serb weddings at times also incorporate the accordion to fill out their sound.

The case of Vranje's famous Bakija Bakić ensemble aptly illustrates the centrality of kin groups—and the prestige that accrues to professional brass lineages. Locals remember that Fejza Bakić, a hemp merchant from Končulj who settled in the Romani quarter just before the first Balkan War, was the first to take up the trumpet in Vranje proper. Family history has it that his son, Bakija Bakić (1923-1989), surpassed him in the quality of his trumpet-playing. He subsequently assumed command of the band and led it to national fame in Yugoslavia beginning in the 1960s. Bakija later recognized great talent in his nephew Ekrem Mamutović (his sister's son), and passed over his own son Fejza to name Ekrem leader of the ensemble. Ekrem Mamutović's three sons Miša, Dobrivoje, and Nenad in turn all became musicians in the ensemble, and he favored his son Nenad to assume command. Today, two ensembles in Vranje continue the legacy of Fejza and Bakija Bakić: one led by Nenad and his son Stefan, who is being groomed for leadership, and the other led by Nenad's nephew Ekrem Mamutović (Jr.). alongside his father Dobrivoje. Ekrem (Jr.) has two young sons of his own, and both have already begun to learn the trumpet. Both orchestras proudly and frequently refer to their family lineage and connections to Bakija Bakić, perhaps the most venerated brass musician in Vranje's history. Among other things, in 1963 Bakija and his ensemble were the first local brass band to win at the national brass competition in Guča, leading to multiple commercial recording opportunities for the band and earning the group great renown throughout Yugoslavia.

Romani brass bands became central to local wedding culture in Vranje, cultivating specialized knowledge of the vast repertoire of ritual and dance music specific to important life cycle celebrations. Wedding music until recently was practically synonymous with brass music—locals often cannot imagine performing key wedding rituals without brass bands, for instance (see Chapter 4). In 2009 I attended a shortened, one-day Romani double wedding in

Vranje, held by a family currently living in Austria. The host's sons (the grooms) insisted on having an amplified Romani wedding band, and the family thought it was too expensive to hire a brass band to accompany the ritual dancing at the very start of the event. Many relatives and bystanders complained however that the ritual dances fell flat to the music of the amplified band. In another example, a middle-aged Romani woman recalled her mother's heartbreak in 1989 when her son insisted that an amplified wedding band (with which he performed at the time) play his entire wedding instead of brass. Such amplified ensembles were newly popular in the Romani community at the time, and it was still practically unheard of to have anything but a brass band play for a wedding. The groom's mother was devastated that she would not have the proper musical sound to mark the ritual events and celebratory dancing that she had so anticipated at her only son's wedding.

Brass bands have thus become synonymous with local musical tradition and community celebrations in the Vranje region as the culmination of decades of musical experimentation and standardization by Romani brass musicians. Romani brass ensembles are repositories of older musical repertoires, and cultivate the distinctive musical aesthetics shaped by centuries of Ottoman rule and cultural diversity in the Vranje region. Their central role in local musical culture positions Roma as "middlemen" whose musical practices link local communities to a distinctive regional history and cultural heritage within Serbia.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Roma in Vranje today form an ethnic minority in a predominantly Serbian space, marginalized in most political, economic, and social contexts as a result of centuries of discrimination. Essentialist discourses of ethnic difference in Vranje underlie tropes that depict Roma as culturally distinct from local Serbs in myriad ways, legitimating and naturalizing the

ethnic status quo. Yet Romani musical labor and traditions of professional performance also serve to deeply root their community in the cultural and economic life of the Vranje area. Romani expert musical skills and specialized knowledge of regional music, dance, and rituals make them invaluable to local Serbs despite assertions of inherent Romani otherness. The remainder of this dissertation examines how musical performance shapes Romani ethnic identity and relations with others on regional, national, and even international scales. In the next chapter, I explore how local Roma function as musical mediators of ambivalent identity politics situated between Vranje's Ottoman cultural heritage and reified visions of Serbian national identity.

# 3.

# Roma as Cultural Intimates: Romani Musicians Between Ottoman Cultural Legacies and Serbian Nationalism

## 3.1 Introduction

*DUM-ta-DUM-ta-ka…DUM-rakka-DUM-ta-ka*. I hear the distinctive drum pattern of a tune in 9/8 meter drifting through my apartment window as I diligently type up the day's field notes. The sounds float out of a courtyard overhung with leafy grape vines on this summer night in Vranje, signs of an intimate gathering of family and friends at a Serb neighbor's home. The hosts have hired a small group of Romani musicians to entertain their guests for the evening. Quickly, the percussive pops and taps of hands striking the small *tarabuka* drum are joined by the strains of clarinet and accordion. As the music picks up, my brain identifies the tune: *Sobinka,* a melody specific to Vranje, named after the Sobina neighborhood on the town's periphery.[26] I hear various guests burst out in appreciative whistles, exclaim "op!", and begin to clap to the beat. *Sobinka* is an old favorite, a melody that many in Vranje associate with the authentic, traditional repertoire of local music. The tune's additive 9/8 meter (divided 2+2+2+3) marks it as a form of *čoček* that is closely associated with Vranje. As I lean on the windowsill to listen, my landlady emerges from her apartment to stand on the porch and take in the music. She winks at me as she enthusiastically hums the familiar melody with a soft smile on her face.

On another summer night earlier that month, I found myself ducking into a large tent to escape the cacophonous throng clogging the street at the Guča Brass Festival in western Serbia. It had taken me some 30 minutes to navigate less than a quarter mile stretch of the roadway, pressed between countless people moving between various tents, beer stands, and trinket stalls. I

[26] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5txVVdgXNo for a recording of Sobinka from the 1960s, performed by locally-renowned Romani clarinetist Kurta Ajredinović (accessed July 1st 2016).

had managed, somehow, to avoid being sprayed by fountains of beer unleashed from cans shaken by excited young men along the roadside—youths swept away by the recorded music blaring from beer stands and the effects of copious amounts of alcohol.

Inside the tent, most of the tables and chairs were occupied by large groups of festival-goers, many of them young men and women in their late teens and twenties. The smells of grilled meat, roast lamb, and wedding-style boiled cabbage mingled with the odors of spilled beer and cigarette smoke. Three brass bands were performing under the tent at the same time, thunderously competing for the attention—and tips—of seated guests. In the middle of the tent a Romani brass band played a lively central Serbian *kolo* dance tune in a driving 2/4 (duple) time, as several young women vigorously danced with interlinked arms. Nearer to me, another Romani orchestra fielded a request for a southern-style *čoček* number from another group of guests. They launched into an upbeat tune in 2/4 meter with a rumba-like swing.[27] Their patrons shouted their appreciation and whistled loudly—several young men raised their hands high above their heads, pointing their index fingers and rocking their bodies side to side in typical responses to high energy music. For the most part at Guča, revelers want fast-paced and dynamic brass band performances to correspond with popular visions of the festival as the wildest party in all of Serbia.

In both of the above scenarios, Romani musicians perform *čoček* music for non-Romani patrons. Yet the form and style of the music they perform, the expectations of their audiences, and the cultural import of the musical numbers—and of the men who play them— speak to radically different articulations of musical and cultural identity. In the first case, Romani musicians in Vranje help evoke a sense of place and local tradition through musical aesthetics

[27] For a similar style čoček tune, performed here by Vranje Romani brass band "Lane Moje" on a local TV show, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1Xcvwe1KCw.

anchored in cultural legacies of Ottoman rule. Locals take pride in this distinctive heritage, laying claim to a regional cultural identity that they hold to be unique in Serbia. In the latter case, Romani musical performances in Guča contribute to the raucous party atmosphere billed as the major claim to fame of Serbia's national brass festival—and, by extension, Serbian brass band culture in general. For Guča audiences drawn from all over Serbia, ex-Yugoslavia, or further abroad, Romani musicians primarily perform upbeat music with a more generic—or familiar—feel for non-locals. When not performing an iconic Serbian folk dance tune or a popular song, they may play a *čoček* whose dynamism easily supports the party feel—while tacitly eschewing the stylistic features associated with an Ottoman past (or contemporary Muslim neighbors) often derided in Serbian nationalist discourses.

In this chapter I interrogate how Roma figure as key players in the "social poetics" that variously appropriate, reject, or play tropes of Ottoman cultural legacies and Serbian nationalism against each other to negotiate regional and national identity politics (Herzfeld 2005:32, 183-199). My analysis draws upon the concept of cultural intimacy—the at-times embarrassing disjuncture between complex social realities and official narratives—to explore how actors strategically deploy of tropes of Ottoman/"oriental" culture and Serbian national heritage to garner sociocultural capital (Herzfeld 2005). I argue that Roma are "cultural intimates" of Serbs in Vranje because Roma are deeply imbricated in the performative reproduction of the Ottoman musical and cultural practices that are central to (often ambivalent) formulations of regional, ethnic, and national identities. I draw upon Herzfeld's argument that the social poetics of cultural intimacies—as strategic manipulation of essentialisms to claim agency or reposition groups vis-à-vis others—must be understood as dynamic processes with multiple trajectories (Herzfeld 2005:16-17, 32). Furthermore, these processes entail the constant construction and

(re)negotiation of relationships between interest groups, utilizing both discourses of difference and recognition of mutual resemblances (however rueful) (Herzfeld 2005:26-29, 56-57). I analyze here how tropes of cultural heritage constitute "practical orientalisms" that use aesthetics and performance practices to support discursive claims for cultural status within the nation—where the "discourse of cultural difference enters the encompassing realm of everyday sociality and sensual habit…colors the visual, flavors the olfactory, and tempers the emotional" (Herzfeld 2005:132; see also Bakić-Hayden 1995, van de Port 1998, 1999). This is a process where Serbs must engage Roma as intimates despite having ambivalent feelings about them.

I first consider how romanticized tropes of Ottoman legacies in Vranje constitute important cultural capital, in turn positioning Romani performers as essential cultural mediators who tangibly connect Serbs to an Ottoman "Old Vranje" through music and dance. In the context of contemporary nationalism, however, those same cultural practices may render Roma suspect as purveyors of "tainted" Muslim Turkish holdovers in predominantly Serbian Vranje. I then turn to a critical discussion of Romani brass bands and regional musical genres in the context of the national brass music festival in Guča. I explore how Romani musical practices figure within the rubric of homogenized visions of Serbian national culture, reshaped by contemporary nationalism in the wake of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Highly visible on the national stage at Guča, Romani musicians unsettle reified visions of national identity as members of a non-Serb ethnic minority, especially when performing regional music that reminds listeners of Serbia's "oriental" Ottoman past. Moreover, the exigencies of Romani musical labor complicate romanticized tropes of amateur folk musicianship as typical of Serbia's national brass culture.

## 3.2 Pusto Tursko—Cursed Turkish! Ottoman Echoes, Roma, and Regional Pride in Vranje

Vranje's Ottoman past is central to local narratives of regional pride and cultural uniqueness within Serbia. Tropes of Ottoman Vranje carry considerable cultural cachet by legitimating claims to urban cosmopolitanism and historical continuity for Vranje residents. Locals can easily trace cultural ties to the late Ottoman period in local dialect, cuisine, architecture, and music and dance practices. At the same time, discourses that focus on the Ottoman roots of Vranje's cultural distinctiveness are linked to stereotypes that see Vranje as Serbia's most exotic, proverbially Eastern cultural space. Narratives of regional pride provide cultural capital within the nation by engaging with the romantic, positive valences of these tropes, at times effectively countering commonplace narratives in Serbia that lament the history of Ottoman colonization and "the oppressive rule of the Turks." I consider here how Vranje's music and dance constitute potent cultural nodes around which these narratives coalesce, and examine how Roma are central to the discourses and performative practices that connect Vranje's Ottoman past to its contemporary place within the nation.

The romanticization of Ottoman Vranje can be traced back to the early 20th-century literary works of Borisav (Bora) Stanković. A native of Vranje (born in 1876, two years before the end of Ottoman rule), Bora penned several works set in late Ottoman Vranje. His most famous pieces include the play *Koštana* (1902), based on the career of Vranje Romani singer-dancer Malika Eminović, and the novel *Nečista Krv* ("Impure Blood," 1910) which describes the declining fortunes of a Serbian merchant family after the passing of Ottoman rule. His literary opus quickly became popular in Serbia, and has since entered the canon of classical Serbian literature.

Bora's often-nostalgic, sentimental treatment of the Ottoman look and feel of turn of the century Vranje shaped subsequent characterizations of the town's "local color" in Serbia at large. Popular narratives evoke "Bora's Vranje," depicting an exotic town still deeply marked by the Ottoman Turks—narrow streets, enclosed gardens, melismatic song and the crooning of the clarinet, the rustling of women's silken *šalvare* pants, and above all the purportedly passionate, highly emotional temperament of the locals. These images are so pervasive in Serbia that people are often disappointed by the contemporary appearance of Vranje. One elderly Serb woman from Belgrade lamented to me: "I was heartbroken when I first traveled to Vranje several decades ago and saw large concrete apartment blocs in the town center, just like we have here in New Belgrade…Bora's Vranje was totally gone!"

Even Vranje residents cling to romantic images conjured by Bora's writings. The phrase "Borino Vranje" (Bora's Vranje) is often used interchangeably with "Staro Vranje" (Old Vranje) in nostalgic talk about the beauties of the old town and its culture. A Facebook group dedicated to Old Vranje sees its members posting many old photos of the town from the late 19$^{th}$ and early 20$^{th}$ century. Users' responses vacillate between enthusiastic praise for the way the town once was, and impassioned laments about the gradual disappearance of authentic landmarks and the old ambience in the present. Local pride in Vranje's Ottoman heritage is further legitimated by its popularization within a wider Serbian national imagination. Ottoman legacies provide symbolic capital to Vranje residents by painting the town as an exotic and unique cultural space—and not, by contrast, merely an impoverished peripheral outpost of contemporary Serbia (Zlatanović 2008).

Locals are thus keen to emphasize links to old Ottoman Vranje through extant cultural practices and traditions. Serbs and Roma point to Vranje's cuisine, language, traditional attire,

material culture, and architecture as proof of genuine cultural continuity with the late Ottoman period. Music and dance practices provide a particularly powerful link to the Ottoman past. People express affectionate pride in Vranje's older songs, music, and dances by describing them as "old Turkish things" ("*to su stare Turske stvari*") or "*pusto Tursko*" ("cursed Turkish"), contrasting them with more "Westernized" repertoires associated with other regions of Serbia.[28] Folk songs from Vranje are performed in stage presentations and film adaptations of Bora Stanković's works, and quickly became popular throughout the former Yugoslavia. Well-known Yugoslav-era folk singers, such as Staniša Stošić, helped place Vranje's musical heritage on the national stage through recordings and performances for national radio and television. While most commercial recordings of Vranje music were stylized in ways that altered important aspects of local musical aesthetics (effectively making them more "palatable" for consumers from regions to the north who were unfamiliar with Ottoman-influenced musical aesthetics), nonetheless the popular acclaim and visibility that these genres obtained nation-wide boosts the symbolic value of Old Vranje for locals.

Vranje residents locate Ottoman elements of the region's musical heritage in the use of specific instruments, particular repertoires, and a distinctive style. People point to the popularity of the clarinet, *tarabuka* drum, and (in the past) *dajre* frame drum as holdovers from "Turkish times." Brass ensembles are also connected with the traditional sounds of Old Vranje (despite their relatively recent origins) because they perform the older dance and ritual repertoires once associated with Ottoman-era *surle* and *goč* ensembles. Brass musicians play tunes like *Turski*

[28] *Pusto* in Serbian literally means "deserted" or "abandoned," but in a colloquial sense the word can be translated as "cursed." For English speakers the translation may seem anything but affectionate. However, there is a bittersweet connotation in Serbian when it is used to modify things that stir intense emotions in people. The negative dimensions of the term serve to heighten the emotional import of something that is seen as highly desirable. For example, older Vranje residents often talk about one's "*pusta mladost*", or "cursed youth," to reflect on the beauty of younger days, gone too quickly and missed very much. Because this intensity of feeling is valued, when Serbs apply the term *pusto* to old "Turkish-era" songs and dances they do so to emphasize how deeply they enjoy them.

*Mekam* ("Turkish Mekam"), *Gelj bana* (an older song with Ottoman Turkish lyrics), and the instrumental tune *Sulejman Beg Iz Rataja Ide*, said to commemorate the departure of local Muslim landholder Sulejman Beg from his home in Rataje village during the Ottoman retreat in 1878, among others.[29]

Multiple aspects of musical style and aesthetics in Vranje draw from late Ottoman musical practices. Additive meters such as 7/8 (3+2+2), 9/8 (2+2+2+3), and 12/8 (3+2+2+3+2 or 3+2+2+2+3) are common, and rhythmic syncopation is highly prized for creating the distinctive groove of local music. Additive, asymmetric meters are generally ascribed to southern Serbia's Ottoman past, in contrast to the "even" meters (particularly 2/4) associated with musical traditions in Serbia's (central) heartland. Vranje's local musical style is also marked by extensive microtonality, i.e., the use of smaller intervals than is typical in Western classical music. Romani musicians comment that these "*polutonovi*" (literally "half-tones," but in practice meaning semitones) are key elements of the distinctive sound and improvisational potential of Vranje's music. They are aesthetically pleasing to locals, and many stress that this microtonality makes Vranje's music—and particularly Romani musical tastes—"like that of Turks."

Ottoman musical echoes also mark local conventions for soloing and improvisation. Romani musicians call instrumental solos during musical numbers *gazel*-s, which in Ottoman parlance often referred to a vocal improvisational solo. *Gazel*-s are highly prized in Vranje, with superb improvisations instantly drawing intense responses from listeners and dancers (see chapters 4 and 5). Alternatively locals also speak of *mekam*-s, unaccompanied (meterless) solo

[29] The tune is always played with a rubato drum solo at the outset, (i.e., unmetered, not following a specific rhythmic pulse), which locals say is meant to evoke the hoof beats of the caravan transporting Sulejman's family and goods across the newly established border with Ottoman Turkey (then running just to the south of Vranje). To hear the tune, performed by Vranje's Bakija Bakić brass band, see this YouTube video (from 0:00-3:50): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wakePeeB75Q. Local legend has it that Sulejman Beg was a beneficent landlord, and Serbian peasants from his holdings turned out en masse to see him off in a spectacle that led to his commemoration in this tune (see Vukanović 1987).

melodic improvisations. The term comes from the classical Ottoman *makam* system of melodic modes (from the Arabic *maqam*) that guides compositional and improvisational practices. While most Vranje locals are not familiar with Ottoman *makam* theory, older informants wax poetic about the aesthetic beauty and emotional power of *mekam* improvisations. People fondly remember the superb *mekam*-s of Romani clarinetist Kurta Ajredinović, for example, which consistently moved listeners to tears. Locals also value *mekamlijsko* musical styling (i.e., playing "in mekam fashion"). Playing *mekamlijsko* can refer to microtonal improvisation, but it also denotes a "soft" and "mellow" style that avoids excessive volume. Legendary brass bandleader Bakija Bakić is still remembered in Vranje for his *mekamlijsko* sound—people explain that the trumpet's sound is not soft by nature, yet Bakija developed a crooning style that meant he could play into patrons' ears without causing them discomfort.

Ottoman legacies are also traceable in traditional dance repertoires of the town. Dance tunes like *Pembe* (from the Turkish for "pink"), *Serez* (the Turkish name for a district in today's northern Greece), and *Djošino Tursko Kolo* ("Djoša's Turkish dance") are older dances whose names suggest origins in the Ottoman period. Perhaps the strongest association with Ottoman culture coheres around *čoček* music and dance. The term is derived from the Ottoman Turkish *köçek*, professional male dancers who performed in a solo fashion at court celebrations and public entertainment venues until the mid-1800s (see Chapter 5). In the Balkans at large, the term *čoček* (or *qyqek, kyuchek*) may indicate dance forms, metric patterns, or repertoires of tunes depending on the specific region and ethnic group in question (see also Silverman 2012). In Vranje, *čoček* refers to a large repertoire of tunes, often in highly syncopated 4/4, 2/4, or 9/8 meters. *Čoček* also refers to two distinct types of line dance with set footwork (for tunes in 4/4 &

2/4 versus in 9/8), as well as solo dancing where dancers perform subtle movements of the hands, arms, shoulders, and abdomen.

Local discourses explicitly situate *čoček* music and dance within the urban culture of Old Vranje. While *čoček* is particularly associated with Romani culture and aesthetics (comprising the bulk of the repertoire at Romani events), Vranje Serbs also embrace *čoček* as part of their own traditional music and dance culture. Serbs imbue *čoček* with romanticized and Orientalist notions of Ottoman Turkish legacies, often highlighting "sensual" dimensions of the solo form of dance. "Every woman in Vranje knows how to dance with her hips and belly," one young Serbian woman earnestly told me while we discussed *čoček*. Even as she claimed to possess an inherent ability to dance solo-type *čoček* because she was a local, she also emphasized an exotic link between *čoček* dance and belly dance to bolster the connection to an Eastern, Ottoman past.

One form of *čoček* is particularly important for securing cultural connections to an Ottoman Turkish past. *Čoček* in 9/8 is specifically called *Vranjski čoček* (*čoček* from Vranje). *Čoček* in 9/8 is closely linked to Turks and Turkish legacies throughout the Balkans, particularly in Turkish Thrace, Bulgaria, and parts of Macedonia (Seeman 2002; Silverman 2012). Both Serbs and Roma dance *Vranjski čoček*, but Serbs consider it to be the most authentic (oldest) style of *čoček* in their community; on the whole it is also the only form that Serbs refer to as *čoček*.[30] *Čoček* in 9/8 has also become popularly associated with Old Vranje's Ottoman heritage throughout Serbia. *Vranjski čoček* is danced in a stylized fashion at the end of choreographed suites of "dances from Vranje" as performed by nearly every dance ensemble in Serbia and the

[30] Serbs also dance to tunes in 4/4 or 2/4, but most call the dance (and associated music) *Sa*, or sometimes *Šota* (after a melody and song that was popular in Yugoslavia in the 1970s, based on Kosovo Albanian folk music). Roma on the other hand always refer to these tunes as *čoček*, by contrast, sometimes qualifying them as *Romski* (Romani) *čoček* to differentiate them from *Vranjski Čoček* in 9/8. As such, they also claim the former dance/style of *čoček* as distinctively Romani.

Serbian/Yugoslav diaspora.[31] Women performers dressed in the brightly-colored pantaloons, short vests, and silk blouses of older Ottoman-style attire dance *čoček* in 9/8 while tapping elbows, knees, and hips with a tambourine (*dajre*). Officially, this segment of the choreography represents the Ottoman-era *čengije* or *čoček(inj)e*—Romani women who sang, played the *dajre*, and danced for pay in Vranje taverns (Sugarman 2003; see also Seeman 1990, 2002 and Silverman 2012). Performances of this now-canonical choreography illustrate the popular connection between *čoček*, Romani entertainers, and romantic stereotypes that stress the Eastern flavor of Vranje's music and dance.

### 3.3 Roma as Ottoman Proxies: Valorized Tradition-Bearers or Suspect Others?

Because Ottoman-derived musical/dance forms are central to Romani cultural practices (and performances) in Vranje, Roma also figure prominently in romantic constructions of Old Vranje. Romani musical and dance practices effectively bridge the temporal and cultural gap between the Ottoman era and the present-day in local narratives of regional identity. Roma liberally pepper the pages of Bora Stanković's classic works, generally appearing as musicians and singers entertaining fellow townspeople with masterful skill. The plot of Stanković's play *Koštana* revolves around a Romani heroine who sings and dances professionally (i.e., as a *čengija*), beguiling the town's elite Serbian youth with her talent and exceptional beauty. Stanković consistently ties the emotional depth and passion of his characters to their appreciation, even need, for music provided by Romani artists. Romani musicians help locals to cultivate the archetypal temperament and lust for life commonly attributed to people from Vranje. Because many popular stereotypes concerning Vranje draw from Stankovic's works,

[31] See for example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWvNqGadYDc (ensemble "Branko Krsmanović"), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tae1GuzUccY (ensemble "LOLA"), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Z3d8Cr_7kU (National Ensemble "KOLO"). Clips accessed December 10, 2015.

they also reinforce the close connections between Roma, musical practices, and Ottoman Old Vranje.

In practice, too, locals see Roma as culture-bearers who continue older, Ottoman legacies. People in Vranje argue that Roma retain traditional practices to a much greater extent than Serbs, pointing out for example that most Roma still hold extended three-day weddings with the full gamut of rituals and customs. Romani women attend weddings in a form of folk attire derived from Ottoman-era urban clothing: silk blouses with wide sleeves, short vests, and most importantly the wide, baggy pantaloons known as *šalvare*. Throughout Serbia, this sartorial ensemble represents (Ottoman) Vranje, familiar to all who have seen dance performances or theater productions of Stanković's plays. In Vranje, Serbs living near the town's Romani quarters regularly see Romani women dancing in such attire, strengthening perceived links to Ottoman Old Vranje.

Romani professional musicianship and performance practices provide local Serbs with still more tangible connections to Old Vranje. Vranje's Roma are the musical specialists of the region, making them *de facto* tradition-bearers who preserve the older music associated with the Ottoman past. Romani brass bands maintain the key ritual and dance repertoires performed at life cycle celebrations whose cultural scripts can be traced back to the late Ottoman period. Romani-style *čoček* dance makes for yet another valued link to the Ottoman past. At Romani events, *čoček* comprises the vast majority of the dance repertoire. *Romski* (Romani) *čoček* (most often in a highly syncopated 4/4 meter) is the most common form seen at Romani weddings today, performed both as a line dance and in solo form. Romani *čengije* or *čočekinje* (female professional entertainers) performed similar solo *čoček* in taverns during the Ottoman period (see chapter 5; see also Seeman 1990, 2002; Silverman 2012; and Sugarman 2003). Solo Romani

*čoček* connotes a deep, ongoing cultural link with the Ottoman past both because of perceived similarities to Middle Eastern folk styles of "belly dance" (albeit comprising a subtler movement style) and the association with *čengije* entertainers.

Romani musical aesthetics and performance practices are therefore seen as the living continuation of Ottoman Turkish cultural sensibilities in Vranje, positioning Romani entertainers as cultural bridges that connect Roma and Serbs to the town's Ottoman past. Roma essentially figure as proxies who allow Serbs to tap into a cosmopolitan and urban cultural identity represented by late Ottoman Vranje. Ottoman urban lifestyles historically connoted higher socioeconomic status and conferred greater cultural capital by virtue of their connection to imperial centers of power (Seeman 2002, 2012). Throughout the Ottoman-controlled Balkans, town-dwellers often emphasized their privileged status by contrasting urban lifestyles with rural, peasant practices. By the 19th century, growing numbers of non-Muslims residing in Ottoman towns and cities readily adopted the hallmarks of Ottoman urban culture to confirm their place as cosmopolitan townsfolk—many spoke Turkish in addition to their mother tongue, cultivated distinctively Ottoman urban forms of dress (such as baggy *šalvar* pants for women), and so on (Hadzi Vasiljević 1932; Pettan 2002; Seeman 2002).

Music and dance practices were no exception. Urban musical ensembles of the *čalgija* type were considered more prestigious in part because of their connections to Ottoman court and high art music, as opposed to *zurla-tapan* bands and other forms of music associated with rural communities (or the "raucous" outdoor celebrations of commoners) (Pettan 2002; Seeman 2002, 2012:300). The Ottoman associations of *čalgija* music continued to connote prestige and cosmopolitanism for patrons in Macedonia and Kosovo well into the 20th century (Pettan 2002; Seeman 2012:299-301). Similarly, narratives that link Ottoman-influenced local music and dance

traditions with urban Old Vranje attribute key cultural capital to present-day Vranje residents. Romani musical services allow Vranje Serbs to maintain direct contact with Ottoman urban culture, and to perform (often in visceral, embodied ways) a prestigious cultural cosmopolitanism rooted in valued historical legacies.

Yet attempts to garner cultural cachet by claiming Ottoman cultural heritage also run counter to national narratives of Serbian cultural identity actively promulgated by elites since the second half of the 19th century. Serbian politicians and intellectuals sought to distance themselves from Ottoman political, economic, and cultural legacies in order to validate claims for the nation's independence from the Empire. Nationalist narratives stressed the distinctly European cultural and historical nature of the Serbian people, unjustly subjugated by Muslim Turkish oppressors for centuries. Throughout the Balkans, Ottoman rule was recast by emergent 19th century (Christian-dominated) nation-states as both despotic and stagnating, while the social and cultural conditions of life during the Ottoman period were characterized as backward and primitive because of the ostensibly oriental character of the ruling Turks (Bakić-Hayden 1995:924-926; Neuberger 2004:18-41; Todorova 1997:161-183). These tropes remain firmly entrenched in national historiographies and popular discourses in Serbia today. Balkan political marginality and lack of civilization is often explained (or defended) as the inevitable consequence of centuries of Ottoman domination—an enduring effect of life under "the Ottoman yoke" (Bakić-Hayden 1995:924-926; Neuberger 2004:18-41; Todorova 1997:161-183).

Ottoman cultural holdovers in Vranje imply that locals are culturally different from the normative standards of Serbian national identity based on cultural forms from central Serbia and Belgrade. As such narratives that romanticize Vranje's Ottoman heritage comprise a classic form of cultural intimacy as theorized by Herzfeld (2005), and Roma figure as important "cultural

intimates" for Serbs in this discursive project. Locals in Vranje can invert state-sponsored nationalist derision of Turkish holdovers by claiming Ottoman practices to be proof of a long legacy of cultural, urban cosmopolitanism. In this way they exploit the "disemia" between official and local narratives of identity to defend their claims to authenticity and status within the nation (Herzfeld 2005:14-17). Romantic stereotypes that link the Ottoman past to local assertions of exotic culture and passionate temperament enhance the prestige of Vranje residents despite their relatively marginal political and economic standing within the nation. In times of political stability people from Vranje were able to safely harness pro-Ottoman oriental tropes, subtly complicating black-and-white narratives of Ottoman-derived backwardness without overtly threatening their belonging to a "European" Serbian (and/or Yugoslav) national identity (Herzfeld 2005:17). Elements of self-exoticization in these narratives also depict Vranje's people as deeply emotional and possessed of an inherent zest for life, a positive but also purportedly Eastern subjectivity that Romani entertainers bring out during musical events (see also van de Port 1998, 1999:177-206). Romani performers and performances allow local Serbs to safely access Ottoman cultural forms in order to stake claims to both regional cultural authenticity and passionate (or exotic) ways of being.

Yet since the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s the same musical threads that connect Vranje Roma to the Ottoman past also render them suspicious to Serbian nationalists.. The wars in Bosnia, and more recently in nearby Kosovo, were marked by political rhetoric in Serbia that re-cast contemporary Muslim neighbors (Bošnjaks in Bosnia and Albanians in Kosovo) as essential enemies of Orthodox Christian Serbs. Ottoman legacies have come under fire yet again, rejected as foreign impositions resulting from centuries of Turkish occupation—and not, therefore, authentic cultural traditions that might equally belong to the Christian

populace. Seen as the most salient living connection to Ottoman cultural practices, Roma are now (in the post-Yugoslav context) vulnerable to nationalist derision as purveyors of quintessentially Muslim traditions considered antithetical to pure Serbian culture.

Despite local pride in Vranje's distinctive regional culture, an underlying ambivalence about Ottoman cultural legacies in Vranje can be traced back to the region's incorporation into the expanding Serbian state in 1878.[32] The ruling Obrenović family (soon to be monarchy) and the political elite in Belgrade heralded the 1877-78 military campaign against the Ottomans as a significant victory for "reuniting" Serbian lands and peoples lost centuries ago. The Serbian defeat of the Ottoman army in 1878 in turn led to the expulsion of most Albanian- and Turkish-speaking Muslims living in the region (Blumi 2011:128-31, 2013:47-54; Jagodić 1998; Malcolm 1998:228-230; Stefanović 2005:469-471; Stokes 1990:165-67; Vickers 1998:42-43). Nationalist elites in Belgrade actively promoted the ethnic homogenization of the so-called "newly acquired territories" (*Novi Krajevi*), espousing a de-facto colonialist mission that sought to consolidate power by removing non-Serb populations deemed foreign and unsympathetic to Serbian rule (Blumi 2011:128-31, 2015:47-54; Đorđević 2005:464-469; Jagodić 1998; Malcolm 1998:228-230).[33] Most accounts indicate that a mixture of fear and force uprooted Muslim communities in

---

[32] Serbia obtained autonomy as a vassal state under Ottoman suzerainty in 1830 (see Stavrianos 2000:238-260 for a detailed account). In 1876, Serbia declared war on the Ottomans in an attempt to achieve full independence and obtain additional territory, but was defeated. In 1877-1878, Serbia again attacked the Ottoman Empire (encouraged by Russia) during the Russo-Turkish war, achieving full political independence and annexing much of present-day southeast Serbia in addition to portions of today's Bulgaria and eastern Kosovo. However, the Treaty of San Stefano that ended the war awarded much of this territory to a greatly expanded Bulgaria, with Russian support. The subsequent Treaty of Berlin (also in 1878) saw other European powers re-drawing those borders in order to thwart Russian interests in the Balkans by diminishing the size of Bulgarian territory; Serbia regained much of its initial acquisitions in the southeastern region at this time, including the Vranje area. See Stavrianos 2000:393-412 for a detailed accounting of political and military developments in Serbia during this period.

[33] Note however that most local Serbs (and some officials and intellectuals) criticized or refused to participate in harassment and expulsion of local Muslims (Blumi 2011:128-131; Malcolm 1998:229). Army General Jovan Belimarković, who led the conquest of the Vranje region in 1878, later resigned in protest over forceful expulsions of Muslims in the area (Stefanović 2005:469). Directives to cleanse the region came primarily from the political establishment in Belgrade and were generally carried out by military leaders and bureaucrats from the north (Blumi 2011:128-131, 2013; Malcolm 1998:229; Stefanović 2005:464-469). Moreover, elites in Belgrade were also derisive

the area; many fled ahead of the advancing Serbian army (in the Leskovac area, for example), while in other regions (such as in Toplica, Grdelica, and Vranje) Albanian villagers in particular joined Ottoman forces or formed local guerilla units to actively fight Serbian forces (Jagodić 1998:5-6; Malcolm 1998:228-230**;** Stokes 1990:165-167). Following a succession of defeats, however, even the most active resistance was crushed and most Muslim fighters withdrew with their families alongside Ottoman forces into northern/eastern Kosovo.

Although the scale of these demographic upheavals is still debated (with scholars struggling to parse incomplete census records from the period and navigating nationalist biases in the various historical accounts), most reliable estimates indicate that anywhere between 70,000 and 110,000 Muslims were displaced into Ottoman-held Kosovo and Macedonia from the territories acquired by Serbia (Đorđević 2005:470; Jagodić 1998:6-9; Malcolm 1998:228-230). In the town of Vranje, only 878 of the estimated 6,690 urban Muslims (compared with some 5,085 Serb townspeople) remained after the town's occupation in 1878—the vast majority left with the Ottoman retreat, fleeing ahead of the encroaching Serbian army (Jagodić 1998:10; Trifunoski 1960a:165-168; Vukanović 1978:146-147). Within months, that number halved again as still more Vranje Muslims emigrated across the new Serbian-Ottoman border, then running just south of the town.

Throughout the newly-acquired territories, the properties of Muslims were often immediately appropriated by the Serbian military. Muslim homes were either demolished or sold off (as were Muslim landholdings) for a fraction of their worth (Malcolm 1998:228; Stokes 1990:166; Vukanović 1978:138-147). Such tactics, along with the fear of reprisals and

---

toward local Serb communities (ostensibly their co-nationals) in the new southern regions—they saw them as culturally uncouth, too tainted by the "oriental" conditions of Ottoman rule (for example, see the quote on pg. 75). In other words, the attitude of the northern elites towards most elements of the local populace (irrespective of faith or ethnicity) was decisively colonialist.

discrimination under the new Serbian regime, inhibited most Muslim refugees (known as *muhadžir*-s in Ottoman Turkish) from returning. In turn, destitute and frustrated Muslim refugees in highly concentrated settlements in the border regions of Ottoman Kosovo engaged in reprisals against local communities of Serbian Orthodox Christians. Some 60,000 Serbs fled from Ottoman Kosovo into Serbia's newly acquired territories over the next few decades (Jagodić 1998:11-12; Malcolm 1998:228-230). Serbian authorities, seeking to secure the new regions with sympathetic subjects, readily re-settled these refugees in southeastern Serbia (along with Serbs from eastern Serbia whose properties had been devastated by Ottoman reprisals after an earlier Serbian-Ottoman war in 1876) (Jagodić 1998:11-12). In this way Serbia's new regions acquired a more homogeneous population, one that authorities hoped would readily look to the Serbian state for protection and citizenship.[34]

Only Roma remained as a (relatively) small, concentrated Muslim community in Vranje after 1878 (Malcolm 1998:208; Trifunoski 1960b).[35] Presumably the marginal socioeconomic status of Roma, coupled with popular tropes about the haphazard (and thus less serious) nature of Gypsy cultural identity, made them less problematic for nationalists than Albanians or Turks (Malcolm 1998:208). Paradoxically, this meant that the Romani community also became one of the strongest remaining cultural links to the Ottoman past in Vranje, maintaining older cultural traditions, dress forms, and musical practices while physically occupying a main town square of the Ottoman period (the *Gornja Čaršija* mahala today).

---

[34] Ottoman authorities used similar strategies in Ottoman regions bordering Serbia after 1878, where Muslim refugees from Serbia were often deliberately settled/retained in hopes of strengthening a loyal constituency in this now-strategic border zone (Blumi 2011:128-31, 2013:47-54; Malcolm 1998:230).

[35] Malcolm indicates that nearly half of Serbia's registered Roma in 1910 lived in the Vranje area, numbering some 6,000 people, making Vranje a major center for Roma in the nation (1998:208). Trifunoski gives a similar population estimate for Roma based on fieldwork conducted in the region in the 1950s (1960b:16).

Even after 1878, Serbian political and bureaucratic elites continued to use discriminatory policies and harassment against remaining Muslims in the wider region, pushing remaining pockets of (predominantly non-Romani) Muslims to relocate into Ottoman territories (Blumi 2011:128-31; Malcolm 1998:228-30). Yet physically removing Muslim populations was only one part of a larger project to re-make the new regions into "European" Serbian (i.e. Christian) spaces. As in other emergent 19th century Balkan Christian nations, the cultural legacies of Ottoman rule were also subject to derision and erasure as Belgrade Serb elites sought to instill new national consciousness among local Serbs and reinforce Serbia's claims to expanded territory (cf. Neuberger 2004:33-41; Stokes 1990:166; Todorova 1997:181-183; Sugarman 2003:101-102).

New narratives about the Ottoman past in Serbia discredited the legitimacy of Turkish rule, validating the expansion of the Serbian state as a means to liberate oppressed Serbian Orthodox Christians in the region. Serbian politicians also claimed to represent the arrival of a progressive European-style state that would undo the backward stagnation inflicted by the Ottoman Empire (Stokes 1990:166). They justified the erasure of Ottoman cultural landmarks and practices as a necessary means to modernize the new regions. All of the mosques in Vranje were torn down either during the military offensive, or shortly after the Serbian occupation (Vukanović 1978:90-98). In 1881 a new urban plan was proposed to modernize the town by updating its oriental appearance and layout (Vukanović 1978:98; see also Stokes 1990:166 for similar processes in Niš). Urban Serbs increasingly turned to *ala franga* ("Western") dress and cultural forms, following contemporary standards from central Serbia and abandoning *ala turka* styles such as *šalvare* pants for women or fez hats for men (Hadži Vasiljević 1932:30).[36]

[36] *Ala franga* in the late Ottoman period meant "in the Frankish style" (*a la franca*), referring to Western European modes of dress and lifestyles—as opposed to *ala turka* (*a la turca*) or "in the Turkish style".

For example, Ottoman-style clothing was explicitly targeted by northern Serbian elites as visible evidence of the cultural backwardness of local Serbs, who needed to be rid of such trappings as soon as possible in order to progress. Lory (2015:379-380) gives the following translation of Belgrade Serb Sreten Popović's diatribe on Serbian women's attire in Niš during his travels there in 1879:

> It is Sunday, and the women are standing in front of their doors or sitting by the enclosures…dressed in short waistcoats and *šalvars* of different colors. If their faces had not been uncovered, I would have taken them for Muslims. The *šalvars* appalled me immediately. If I had had the power, I would have ripped them off, so as not to see what I have not seen for a long time in Belgrade…the women of Niš must give up their *šalvars* as soon as possible, because they symbolize Turkish domination and are humiliating for Christians; may the foreigners coming to our city today no longer think they are on Turkish land or in a Turkish city.

Even certain Ottoman-influenced music and dance forms were gradually marginalized and discarded (or altered), reminiscent of the rapid Serbianization of musical culture in central Serbia after "emancipation" from the Ottomans earlier in the 19th century (see Djordjević 1984[1933]:34). As I discussed in Chapter 2, *surle-goč* ensembles (increasingly seen as a Turkish/Muslim style) lost popularity among Serbs in the decades following Vranje's incorporation into the expanding Serbian state. Moreover, music and dance forms associated with *čengije* performers—consisting of "oriental-sounding" musical accompaniment and solo dance movements increasingly associated with Ottoman sensual (or lascivious) dance culture—were criticized by northern Serbian elites (Djordjević 1984[1933]:34; Sugarman 2003:101-102). As Serb locals began to reject these forms or lost interest, they gradually began to fade from public entertainment contexts (Djordjević 1984[1933]:34; Sugarman 2003:101-102).[37] By the 1930s, concerted efforts on the part of politicians, intellectuals, and educators meant that Vranje

[37] See also Vukanović (1987:19) for the growing role of Vranje schools in shifting local musical interests toward Western European musical values during the post-Ottoman period.

locals had shifted away from certain Ottoman forms in clothing, speech, and musical aesthetics—and those elements which they retained were sometimes modified in ways that made them more acceptable to post-Ottoman cultural policies in Serbia (i.e., preferring brass band performances of local, Ottoman-inflected music over older ensembles of *surle* and *goč*).

With recent nationalism on the rise in Serbia during the wars of the 1990s, politically-driven enmity toward Muslims as enemies re-tooled older narratives of cultural purity and the derision of Ottoman legacies born during the late 19th century. While Serbs in Vranje—particularly older generations—still generally embrace the romanticized glamor of Ottoman legacies and take pride in local cultural authenticity, some younger Serbs are increasingly drawn to more black-and-white narratives that reject Turkish trappings in favor of a pure Serbian identity based on Orthodox Christianity and peasant culture. They align themselves with a more homogeneous vision of Serbian national culture promulgated during the dissolution of Socialist Yugoslavia, seeking to validate Vranje's proper place within a newly re-constituted Serbian nation.

The juxtaposition of nostalgic and nationalist narratives concerning Ottoman Vranje has led to ambivalent, often contradictory discourses that reveal dynamic tensions along generational and ethnic fault lines. Cultural forms that have long served as points of local pride are now vulnerable to derision as the practices of foreign, non-Serbian groups. For example, the women's attire used by Vranje's folk dance ensemble was criticized by some townspeople who rejected the idea that Serbian women ever wore "Turkish-style clothing," in particular the wide *šalvare* pants (see also Zlatanović 2008). In 2009 several locals told me that the ensemble no longer performed in *šalvare*, opting instead to use the *libade* jacket and long dress that became fashionable in the early post-Ottoman period because it looked to the *ala franga* style of central

Serbian cities. This sartorial ensemble is seen as inherently European and Christian as opposed to the "harem-like" *šalvare*. Debates about the issue continue to rage in Vranje (and in Serbia generally). Some users of the Old Vranje Facebook group reject performances of urban Serb dances where dancers wear *šalvare*, pointing to turn of the 20th century photographs of women either in *ala franga* urban dress or the peasant-style woolen skirts of villagers as the true costume of Serbs. Others claim that dance groups in Serbia use *šalvare* only because of the popularity of Bora Stanković's *Koštana*—in effect as part of a Gypsyfication of Vranje dances and culture that erroneously conflates the town's urban cultural history with Muslim Roma.

Vranje's Roma are thus increasingly perceived through anxious tropes fixated on delineating Muslim cultural difference from Orthodox Serbs. Most Roma in Vranje no longer actively practice Islam, but they remember parents and grandparents who considered themselves Muslims and practiced various aspects of the faith.[38] Muslim names and other cultural practices (such as burial customs) have long been important to Romani community tradition and identity. At the same time, these practices flag Roma as others in light of contemporary Serbian nationalist purism. Considering how frequently Roma figure in popularized depictions of Old Vranje in Serbia more broadly, anxieties about the blurry lines between Muslim, Romani, and Serb culture continue to grow in the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars.

---

[38] Many older Roma in Vranje explained to me that they associate Islamic practices with their cultural identity as Roma. However, formal religious practice and Muslim devotion in the community became increasingly rare during the socialist period. There have been no mosques in Vranje to serve a local Muslim populace since the late 1800s, for instance—on occasions when a Muslim cleric was needed during the Socialist period, the community sought one from nearby Bujanovac (south of Vranje). Vranje Roma practiced a Muslim identity primarily through select rituals and customs performed in the home and as part of life-cycle events. During the 1990s, in the midst of the Yugoslav wars, there was a brief spate of Roma converting to Serbian Orthodox Christianity. Some community members told me that Roma converted in fear of potential harassment by local Serbs as anti-Muslim sentiment in the nation was on the rise (see also Zlatanović 2007). At this time, one of Vranje's most famous brass bandleaders converted and changed his name from Ekrem Mamutović to the Serbian (Orthodox)-sounding Milan Mladenović in order to avoid problems while performing in the Serbian Republic of Bosnia (*Republika Srpska*). Over the past two decades, however, many more Romani youth and women have converted to (non-Orthodox) Christian denominations that actively proselytize in the region—most Vranje Romani converts today are Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, or Evangelical Protestants.

Romani music and dance serve as potent flashpoints for such fears. Locals may dismiss Romani aesthetics in music and dance as too Eastern. Several interlocutors told me that they could not stand the vocal and instrumental "wailing" of amplified Romani wedding music, where these sounds are coded as inherently Muslim; one woman pejoratively summed up the clarinet solos she heard at outdoor Romani weddings near her apartment as typical of music broadcast by "Radio Tehran." Others pointed to the sensuousness of Romani solo *čoček* at weddings as evidence of their cultural affinity with Muslims. While watching a Romani wedding video, one Serb friend noted the high leg lifts executed by several Romani men dancing an older, heavy dance—he told me that they looked very Albanian in contrast to Serbian dance styles. In practice, however, this stylistic distinction between Serbian and Romani (or Albanian) dance forms does not hold. Older Serbs enjoy dancing *Pembe* at weddings with high leg lifts, and invariably told me that this is the traditional way of performing the dance. Yet, prevailing assumptions about the inherently Muslim tastes of Roma render their practices much more susceptible to aspersions of foreign influence than those of Serbs.

Romani musicians are left in a vulnerable position as performers of desirable, but potentially suspect, music. Local musical repertoires that long represented regional pride and tradition for Serbs and Roma alike may suddenly engender conflict with certain patrons. For example, one Romani accordion player told me about a nerve-wracking moment during a performance in a Serb patron's home. The band of four musicians dropped in on a family celebrating its patron saint one wintry evening. While playing a local-style dance tune for the seated guests, the clarinetist began a *gazel* improvisation, running through a sequence of drawn-out wailing notes and low-pitched drones while the accordions and small drum maintained the basic melody and rhythm. Suddenly, a Serb guest reached out and forcefully slapped the clarinet

out of the mouth of the young entertainer. He sharply rebuked the youth: "Don't play that Turkish music here! Don't you know any *Četnik* songs?!" He was referring to compositions regaling WWII-era Serbian fighters who fought in the name of the Serbian monarchy that ruled the pre-WWII Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Bewildered, the young Roma apologetically insisted that they don't know any of these songs, while assuring the man that they would try to learn one or two for the next event in order to mollify him. They eventually began to perform the well-known, upbeat song *Djurdjevdan*. Originally a Romani song associated with the springtime holiday *Ederlezi* (which coincides with the Orthodox Christian feast day of St. George), the tune became popular in the 1990s with the films of Emir Kusturica and work of composer Goran Bregović. In response, the nationalist Serb guest sneered derisively, rhetorically asking them: "*This* you know, but *that* [i.e., the Četnik songs] you don't, eh?" His scorn highlighted the inherent otherness of Roma who would readily play "Gypsy music" but did not know (or, worse, were unwilling to perform) recently revitalized anthems of Serbian nationalism.

Whether they are praised or rejected, Romani community traditions and professional musical labor position them as major culture-bearers of Ottoman legacies. For local Serbs, minority Roma can be embraced at times as "ours" (*naši*)—as cultural intimates who provide tangible links to Old Vranje and embody positive valences of regional cultural distinctiveness within the larger national space. Tropes that stress the "mutual resemblances" of Romani and Serbian culture in Vranje, rooted as they are in claims to shared place and history, validate narratives that de-facto sideline official derision of the Ottoman past (Herzfeld 2005:57). In certain contexts, these cultural intimacies position Vranje Serbs as authentic yet safely exotic exemplars of regional difference within Serbia. Such projects engage with the ironic disjunctures

of cultural intimacy to claim local "cultural dignity" in opposition to elite formulations of identity and power in central Serbia (Herzfeld 2005:16-17). This "practical orientalism" in Vranje hinges on strategic choices made by actors who reframe discourses about local practice to gain cultural capital vis-à-vis more powerful interest groups in Serbian national space.

With radical shifts in discourses of national identity in post-Yugoslav Serbia, however, these same musical connections to the local Ottoman past can simultaneously recast Vranje Roma as purveyors of suspect, impure heritage. Anxious Serbs can now reject the taint of the Ottoman past by scapegoating Romani ethnic difference, positioning Roma as more oriental than Serbs in order to qualify (or deny) their own problematic ties to Eastern cultural influences (Bakić-Hayden 1995; see also Zlatanović 2008). In such contexts, Vranje Serbs may mine orientalist discourses to renegotiate their own marginal place in the nation's borderlands. By rejecting intimacy with Romani neighbors in Vranje, they anxiously attempt to reaffirm their rightful place in the national status quo as true Serbs.

### 3.4 Srpska Truba—"The Serbian Trumpet:" Brass Music and National Tradition at Serbia's Annual Guča Festival

Yet ambivalence about the links between music, Roma, and Ottoman legacies is not limited to regional identity politics. Vranje Romani brass musicians also occupy a precarious position in front of a broader national public, ironically fueled by the growing popularity of brass band music in Serbia and the former Yugoslavia. Serbia's annual Guča Brass Festival brings together brass bands from all over the country to compete for prestigious national awards. Since the 1990s, popular narratives have claimed brass music as both Serbian national tradition and authentic cultural brand. Romani participants at Guča become highly visible because of their

musical and professional prowess, but their "ethnic otherness" and distinct performance practices at times belie homogenized assertions of Serbian musical culture and national identity.

The Dragačevo Brass Festival (popularly known as the Guča Brass Festival, or simply as Guča) has been held annually for more than fifty years in the village of Guča in west-central Serbia. A local group of authors, journalists, and educators inaugurated the festival in 1961, hoping to revive the local tradition of brass band music which had declined in popularity since WWII (Milovanović and Babić 2003; Timotijević 2005; Zakić and Lajić-Mihajlović 2012). The organizers also wanted the festival to showcase and restore the vitality of local folk culture in a broader sense. The festival featured various peasant art forms, folk attire, traditional contests of strength such as wrestling, and even a re-enactment of older wedding customs in addition to brass band music. The initial event coincided with the local *sabor*, or saint's day fair, and was held in the courtyard of Guča's village church.

On multiple levels, then, the brass festival in Guča was conceived as a means to preserve tradition, defined by the region's peasant culture but by extension also linked to Serbian national identity. Local villagers were exposed to brass music through military service and various national wars of the 19th and early 20th centuries (Golemović 1997; Timotijević 2005:154-156). Brass bands were connected with Serbia's political elite and military early in the 19th century. The earliest brass band was formed in 1831 at Miloš Obrenović's court, the first ruler of a post-Ottoman autonomous Serbia. Obrenović hired an Austro-Hungarian bandmaster to form a central European-style orchestra to replace his older Ottoman-type court ensemble (Golemović 1997, 2002; Zakić and Lajić-Mihajlović 2012). Serbian peasant men were drafted en masse to serve as infantry during the wars that expanded and consolidated the emergent Serbian state under Obrenović dynasty rule. Rural soldiers returned home with new brass instruments in hand—

much like in Vranje, the first folk brass bands in the Guča region were formed sometime around 1912 (see Chapter 2; also Golemović 1997; Timotijević 2005;). At the same time, tropes that romanticized heroic wars for national liberation laid the groundwork for a patriotic perception of brass band music.

From the first Guča festival, connections between brass, peasant soldiering, and Serbian national history shaped the official content of the manifestation. The festival was initially named after the song *Sa Ovčara i Kablara* ("From the Heights of Ovčar and Kablar Mountains"). The earliest known lyrics date to the mid-1800s and entreat King Milan Obrenović to accept the populace "into the Serbian ranks"—simultaneously glorifying membership in a newly constituted national state and making a direct bid for military service (Stojić et. al. 2006:47; Timotijević 2005:172). In 1963 the tune became the official hymn of the Guča festival, performed in unison by all participating orchestras at the start of the final competition event. As the massed brass bands thunderously perform the tune on stage in front of the watching crowd, explosions sound from the hill overlooking the stadium. Nowadays produced by explosives, they simulate the firing of the old war cannons (*prangije*) that were used in the festival's early years (Stojić et. al. 2006:46).[39] This performance has been institutionalized as an annual festival tradition. Many attendees find the spectacle quite stirring, illustrating how musically-mediated affect links military history, national pride, and brass band music at Guča.

Brass bands also dress for the Guča competition in central Serbian peasant attire based on early 1900s military gear. The *šajkača* hat and *brič* pants (from the English "breech" riding pants) were adopted as formal wear with the return of peasant soldiers (Golemović 1997).

---

[39] See the following performance of *Sa Ovčara i Kablara* at Guča in 2009: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyFz53nJoko (accessed December 21, 2015). Note that user comments under the video point to the scene's hair-raising beauty, or entreat people to go in person to experience it since no video will do it justice. Others also link the patriotic power of the moment ("the flag flying") with the "beautiful sound" of "Serbian brass".

Furthermore, at the early competitions brass bands were required to perform a "marching tune" in addition to a representative folk song and dance tune from their home region (Timotijević 2005; Zakić and Lajić-Mihajlović 2012). While the requirement to perform marches was soon dropped in the interests of time as competitions became larger (Zakić and Lajić-Mihajlović 2012), marching tunes remained popular and were consistently featured on many brass band albums well into the 1970s and 1980s.

Multiple symbolic connections between brass band practices and Serbian national identity rendered the Guča festival suspect for Socialist authorities during the event's early years (Gligorijević 2014:141-142; Kuligowski 2011:73; Timotijević 2005:161-163). The festival hymn and regional peasant attire were also associated with World War II-era *Četnik* fighters. The *Četnik* movement fought for the ruling Serbian monarchy against German occupation, but also battled the Communist Partisans in a civil war that ended with their defeat and the formation of the second, Socialist Yugoslavia. During World War II the older lyrics of *Sa Ovčara i Kablara* were changed to praise important *Četnik* military leaders, including Draža Mihajlović and local major Predrag Raković, adding additional layers of Serbian nationalist symbolism to the tune (Timotijević 2005:172).[40]

The festival became legitimate under the Socialist regime primarily because of its focus on local folk tradition. This aspect of Guča dovetailed well with Yugoslav cultural politics that supported festivals of cultural heritage showcasing the diversity of Yugoslav peoples; most such events were situated within their home regions (Gligorijević 2014:141-142). Socialist officials

[40] See this rendition of the song in praise of Major Raković here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGMRmUYPw8w (accessed December 21, 2015). Note that the images of the video feature Raković and fellow *Četniks*, often wearing the *šajkača* hat with the *kokarda* symbol of the Royalists, as well as elements of Serbian peasant attire that were at the time closely associated with this political-military movement. Comments below the video praise Raković, one in particular calling him a "big Serb" and the "pride" of his central Serbia and the nation.

also recognized the potential of Guča (as with other such festivals) to promulgate and disseminate political messages (Lukić-Krstanović 2006). For example, the hymn *Sa Ovčara i Kablara* was retained as part of festival tradition but only in a newer version with lyrics that praised Josip Broz Tito and Partizan efforts during WWII (Gligorijević 2014:141-142; Stojić et. al. 2006:47; Timotijević 2005:163,172).[41] Exhibits of Socialist/Partisan history and politics were held at most festivals during the Socialist period, and a large photograph of Tito posing with brass musicians (taken on Mount Zlatibor) hung over the stage used for the final competitions well into the 1980s (Gligorijević 2014:141-142; Timotijević 2005:163-168).

With the dissolution of Yugoslavia, rising nationalism and wartime politics made the connections between local Serbian folk tradition, brass music, and warfare salient once again. Branislava Mijatović describes how notions of rural patriarchal culture and tradition were generally mobilized to support the nationalist regime of Slobodan Milošević in the 1990s, focusing on the importance of warfare to "defend" the nation against enemies and cultivating a discourse of Serbian exceptionalism and victimization at the hands of others (2003). Mijatović shows how commercial newly-composed folk music and "turbo-folk" were significant vehicles for maintaining popular support (particularly in rural regions) during the wars. These genres deployed stylistic features of central Serbian music—particularly *kolo* dance tunes and the 2/4 *dvojka* (duple) time—that were already widely associated with Serbian cultural identity as a result of decades of commercial dissemination. The lyrics and imagery of Serbian newly-composed folk music of the 1990s in turn yoked together themes of Orthodox Christianity, rural tradition, and military service/bravery, comprising a musical-semantic complex that encouraged

[41] See this rendition of the song in praise of Tito and his Partizans here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIxtF52UsKg (accessed December 21, 2015). Note the same music and even the same formulaic verses of other versions of the song, with the insertion of "Druže Tito, lice bela" ("Comrade Tito, White-Faced One") in place of the names of previous national heroes and rulers. The video, too, shows footage of Tito and the Partizan forces.

nationalist pride (Mijatović 2003:59-62, 73-74). At the same time, popular films and other media also increased the national visibility of brass band music. Older symbolic connections between peasant participation in national wars since the late 19th century on the one hand, and military brass band repertoires complete with references to various wars and images of soldiers in defense of the nation on the other, bolstered the musical mobilization of nationalist sentiment and Serbian patriotism in the 1990s (Mijatović 2003:82-83).

After several decades, by the 1990s Guča was hailed as an institution that showcased Serbian brass music as quintessentially national cultural heritage. Traditions associated with Socialist Yugoslavia were rapidly dropped—Tito's image was removed from the main stage, and sung renditions of *Sa Ovčara i Kablara* reinstated lyrics associated with early 20th century Serbian nationalism and the WWII *Četnik* movement (Gligorijević 2014:141-142; Kuligowski 2011:74-75; Lukić-Krstanović 2006; Timotijević 2005:171-174). Lukić-Krstanović cogently argues that during the 1990s the Guča festival was incorporated into a revamped "folklore paradigm," gaining critical semantic import in post-Yugoslav Serbia as a space that preserves and maintains a proverbially unchanging, quintessentially Serbian folk (read national) culture of brass music (2006:170-173). Guča and brass music signify mutually constitutive "invented traditions" of Serbian national identity and continuity (Gligorijević 2014:140-142; Lukić-Krstanović 2006:170-172).

Nationalism is visible on multiple levels (both officially and informally) at contemporary Guča festivals. Political and commercial interests are seminal, banking on the massive popularity of the festival and an awareness of Guča's past significance as a platform for manifesting political ideologies (Lukić-Krstanović 2006; Timotijević 2005:159). Guča's popular acclaim spiked in the 1990s, owing much to the popularization of brass music via the films of Emir

Kusturica and works of composer-musician Goran Bregović beginning in the late 1980s (see also chapter 7). In turn Serbia's political and business elites began to prominently attend the event, sponsoring events and delivering speeches (Lukić-Krstanović 2006; Timotijević 2005). Since 2004, Serbia's national Ministry of Culture provides official financial support for the festival (Mijatović 2011; Timotijević 2005:178). Informal demonstrations in support of Serbian nationalist politicians also pop up regularly. In 2008 during the Saturday midnight concert in the Guča stadium, for example, I witnessed a line of young men muscling through the crowd while carrying a large banner calling for ex-Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić to be freed. The former politician had been arrested shortly before the festival on charges of genocide against Bosnian Muslims, after evading international and national authorities for more than a decade.

Themes from national history and contemporary politics have also been incorporated into the official programming at Guča, marking anniversaries of major national historical events (such as the "Great Migration" of Serbs from Kosovo in the 17th century) or commemorations of important historical figures (such as 19th century Serbian folklorist and linguist Vuk Karadžić) (Timotijević 2005). Nationalist paraphernalia is peddled at stands throughout the festival grounds. Products run the gamut from *šajkača* hats and T-shirts playfully praising Serbia and Guča (extolling the virtues of plum brandy or the wild atmosphere of the festival, for example) to apparel emblazoned with the faces of hardline Serbian nationalist leaders such as the aforementioned Karadžić, Ratko Mladić, and Vojislav Šešelj (all facing charges in the Hague), flags and emblems of the WWII *Četnik* fighters, and slogans asserting that "Kosovo is Serbia." Droves of youths at Guča climb the bronze statue called "The Trumpeter" in the center of town in order to wave the Serbian flag or flash the three-fingered salute associated with Serbian

patriotism. Every year, images abound in media coverage showing the monument literally covered in young people indulging in ecstatic displays of national pride.

Guča and brass music have also become a Serbian national "brand" in narratives that paint the festival's care-free party atmosphere—marked by lavish indulgence in food, alcohol, sex, and musical entertainment—as a quintessentially Balkan-Serbian cultural experience (Krstić 2012:455, 460-461; Timotijević 2005:186-187; see also Chapter 7). While these narratives speak to Serbian ambivalence about their Balkan marginality vis-a-vis the West (see chapter 7), they also claim moral and cultural superiority over "staid" western Europeans by affirming an ostensibly Eastern passion for life—a national trait borne out in Serbia's unique "capitol" of brass music at Guča (Gligorijević 2014:148-149; Krstić 2012:455, 460-461; Lukić-Krstanović 2006:175-176).

Taken together, all of these multiple registers of discourse and practice at Guča allow for what Kuligowski (2011) has called a "banal nationalism"—embodied and internalized through celebratory practices by festival-goers wearing T-shirts and enthusiastically dancing to brass music instead of participating in political rallies or military endeavors. Underwritten by political and social changes since the 1990s, this iteration of Serbian nationalism is constructed from below through popular negotiations as well as by political elites and official discourses from above (Kuligowski 2011:82). Its popular support base is crafted in part through notions of folk roots and tradition, colored with nostalgia and patriotism. The whole is further strengthened by extensive media coverage of the festival that affirms natural connections between brass music, Guča-as-party, and Serbian national tradition (Mijatović 2011).

## 3.5 Brass Cultures on the National Stage: Romani Bands and the Cultural Politics of Difference at Guča

Since Guča's inception in 1961, the festival's concern with preserving the local brass band tradition facilitates essentialist links between brass and Serbian national identity. The folk music of central and western Serbia has come to represent the quintessential sound of Serbian national music, originating in regions at the heart of the original autonomous territory of post-Ottoman Serbia—and by extension close to centers of political and ideological power. These regional brass repertoires are nostalgically connected with both peasant culture (embodied here by central Serbian cultural forms) and national military history, contributing to their semiotic power for expressions of patriotism and love of tradition (Golemović 1997).

However this construction of a national brass tradition glosses—and often silences—the heterogeneity of brass band regional cultures in Serbia more broadly (Krstić 2012; Lukić-Krstanović 2006). Discourses that stress national cultural homogeneity easily flatten or ignore the musical and historical complexities associated with brass bands as a wider regional phenomenon (i.e., the ensemble's relatively recent origins as an import from central Europe, or the large numbers of non-Serb Romani performers and their regional musical traditions) (Lukić-Krstanović 2006:173-175). Ethnomusicologists in Serbia identify three regional brass band styles (see Golemović 1997, 2002; Timotijević 2005:247-248; Zakić and Lajić-Mihajlović 2012). Western Serbian brass is the most closely associated with a standardized national sound. Most songs and dance tunes are in "even" rhythms, particularly the 2/4 pattern known as the "Serbian *dvojka*" ("Serbian duple time"). Western Serbian musicians were traditionally Serbian peasants,

amateurs whose principle livelihoods centered on farming and not (solely) on musical performance.[42]

The other brass regions of Serbia are located in the country's northeastern and southeastern regions, respectively. In both of these contexts, musicians are primarily Romani professionals whose livelihoods depend on musical labor. The northeastern brass bands perform musical repertoires and styling associated with both local Serbian and Vlah populations. While most of the region's music is also based on symmetrical meters (such as 2/4) and characterized by extensive use of the cymbal on the drum, much as in western Serbia, the musical repertoires are specific to local ethnic groups and the melodic range in typical tunes (particularly for Vlah music) is distinct. The area's music is best known for the vigorous speed of many dance tunes.[43]

As discussed above, music from southeastern Serbia (including the Vranje region) is differentiated from the others by the strong influence of Ottoman musical traditions. Markers of local musical difference include the use of additive (asymmetrical) meters (*aksak* in Turkish terminology), frequent solo *gazel* and *mekam* improvisations by lead melody players, and syncopated drumming. Romani drummers from the region inflect a great deal of nuance through the use of a wand (*ranik* in Romani) on the thinner head of the drum to accent the lighter beats (in contrast to use of the cymbal in other regions). Although local dance repertoires are actually quite varied, *čoček* tunes constitute the region's primary claim to fame further abroad. Of all the brass band cultural zones, Romani musical culture and aesthetics are most closely associated

---

[42] See for example this recording of a typical dance tune, *Stari Kačerac*, by the western Serbian brass band led by Dejan Jevdjić: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-deNQ13AdkI (accessed December 29, 2015).
[43] This recording of the dance tune *Vlaško Kolo* (Vlah Dance) by the Timočani orchestra from Knjaževac in eastern Serbia is typical of this regional style: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRCpcDV2Z-Y (accessed December 29, 2015).

with southeastern Serbia—and the largest number of Romani musicians and ensembles is concentrated here.[44]

Yet the original conceptualization of traditional brass music at Guča, and the criteria for participation in the competition, were based solely on western Serbian models of village music. Romani orchestras from eastern and southeastern Serbia attended Guča for the first time in 1963—Bakija Bakić from Vranje won the prestigious "First Trumpet" award, while the ensemble of Raka Kostić (also Romani, from northeastern Serbia) won the other main prize for "Best Orchestra." Attendees and jury alike were floored by the different musical flavors of these participants, and by their exceptional musical proficiency in comparison with local village ensembles (Timotijević 2005:33-36, 225).

Almost immediately, however, local bands criticized these new competitors by differentiating the "pure" folk music of western Serbia from the "foreign" music of Romani bands from other regions. Serbs from the western region argued that Romani bands were "learned professionals" (*izučeni profesionalci*), making it nearly impossible for the amateur Serbian bands to compete with them. At the same time, they dismissed other regional styles as tainted by Gypsy music that is distorted and hybrid, and therefore inappropriate considering the Guča festival's focus on folk music (Timotijević 2005:33-36, 224-228). Popular discourses created a binary opposition between Serbian and Gypsy music—and performers—that has continued to shape debates about musical skill, notions of tradition, and the relative symbolic capital of regional brass cultures at Guča ever since.

---

[44] See this example of *Vranjski čoček* in 9/8 by the famous Bakija Bakić brass band from Vranje (note the solo *gazel* starting at minute 1:34): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9I5m4XDst4. See also this example (by the same ensemble) of an older style, "heavy" Romani *čoček* in syncopated 4/4: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IwVG2RJv8Y (both clips accessed December 29, 2015).

Standardized criteria for brass band participation in the national competition at Guča also reflect a bias toward western Serbian village brass. Brass bands may comprise no more than 10 performers at competitions, despite the fact that in southeastern Serbia full ensembles may number up to 14 musicians. Moreover, clarinet and saxophone cannot be used during competitions; in southeastern Serbia, however, clarinet and/or saxophone are important for the specific timbre of local music and for *gazel* improvisations. Even the traditional "uniforms" worn by musicians during the competitions model central Serbian folk (national) attire. All bands, including Roma from southeastern Serbia, wear some form of central Serbian peasant dress, i.e., *brič* pants, leather peasant-style *opanke* shoes, and at times the *šajkača* hat. Thus attired, Romani musicians affirm the symbolic links between brass music and Serbian national identity while (ironically) masking the ethnic and cultural diversity represented by various brass traditions in the country (Krstić 2012:459-460).

Experts serving on the jury in Guča are primarily non-Romani ethnomusicologists, musicians, composers, or other cultural elites. Officially, jury members evaluate participating brass bands based on how well they embody the distinct elements of their home region's musical style and repertoire, as well as their musical skill, quality of musical arrangements, and the harmony of the band's musicians as a performing unit (Zakić and Lajić-Mihajlović 2012). However, scholarly perspectives often reproduce essentialist ideals that equate tradition with village culture and amateur musicianship. These approaches overlook the professional exigencies historically faced by Romani brass band musicians. Ethnomusicologists criticize overly "elaborate" arrangements of competition numbers and the incorporation of "non-traditional" musical elements and influences. They claim that these practices render the music "chaotic" or

"contradictory," and moreover threaten the perpetuation of authentic regional folk music styles (Golemović 1997, 2002:238-240; Zakić and Lajić-Mihajlović 2012:67-70).

Yet Romani professional brass bands have long acted as cultural brokers, drawing from disparate sources as musical innovators to satisfy patrons and constantly re-working their repertoires within the framework of regional musical aesthetics (Pettan 2002; Silverman 2012). Romani musical hybridity played a decisive role in shaping the Ottoman-influenced repertoire and sound considered traditional by Vranje locals today. Roma point to constant innovation as an essential element of good music-making. Yet these practices are often undesirable and suspect at Guča competitions. For example, in 2001 the award-winning Boban Marković band from Vladičin Han was threatened with disqualification at the national competition because of their *čoček* number. The piece was based on the theme song of the hit TV series *Otpisani*. Although the jury and organizers eventually let Boban take the stage with his selection, they initially warned that he would be barred from the competition and penalized with a temporary ban on future participation. "I want to take a step forward, they want to keep me running in place…they want me to play music from some twenty years ago…I want to play modern," Boban explained to the media in response (Timotijević 2005:245).

Romani musical practices have also come under criticism because of their distinctive regional sound and styling. Both academics and organizers (the "establishment" at Guča) have at times been leery of Romani brass bands from southeastern Serbia—specifically focusing on the prevalence and form of *čoček* music. Popular discourse that reduces southeastern Serbian brass repertoires to *čoček* also reinforces its connections to Romani performers. *Čoček* music was popularized in Serbia via Romani brass bands that performed the soundtracks for the widely acclaimed films of Emir Kusturica. The upbeat and raucous feel of some of this repertoire is also

conducive to the "wild party atmosphere" sought by Guča revelers. Brass bands from other regions of Serbia in turn increasingly perform *čoček*-s to garner popularity. Most brass bands draw upon the musical styling featured on the Kusturica film soundtracks (arranged by Goran Bregović) in order to shape their *čoček*-s according to the musical desires of the general populace (see chapter 7).

Ethnomusicologists and other cultural elites, however, fear that this trend threatens to homogenize the styling and repertoire of participating bands (Golemović 1997, 2002). Critics argue that the popularity of *čoček* marginalizes the folk repertoires and sound of *other* brass band regional traditions. In particular, many lament that "Serbian" folk styles are seen as too "simple" in terms of rhythm and musical dynamism to compete with highly improvisational *čoček*-s, or that they are simply not publicized enough in comparison to the media attention given to *čoček*. Traditional dance repertoires and songs are purportedly in danger of being lost, undermining Guča's relevance as an institution that was formed to showcase and preserve regional folk music (Golemović 1997, 2002; cf. Gligorijević 2014:143-144).

Some criticisms also focus on the "oriental" sound of *čoček* (Timotijević 2005:105, 224-227). The Ottoman overtones of *čoček* are seen as foreign to Serbian folk music, imposed by Turkish rulers and developing out of an urban cultural hybridity that is antithetical to village culture. Rejection of the repertoires of Romani bands began in 1963 as part of general discontent among western Serbian musicians and cultural elites who privileged the central Serbian sound as "authentically folk" (Timotijević 2005:224-227). With the wars of the 1990s, however, the link between Romani-Ottoman culture and southeast Serbian brass became even more suspect at Guča. *Čoček* for some was too closely associated with contemporary Muslim others, including the Romani performers themselves. With a war raging against Bosnian Muslims in the mid-

1990s, Guča's organizers unofficially warned Romani bands from southeastern Serbia to "tone down *čoček*-s and oriental arias" at the festival (Timotijević 2005:105, 227).

Romani bands in turn adjust their performance practices in Guča in ways that de-facto downplay regional styling. *Čoček* remains highly popular at Guča, but Romani ensembles generally perform *čoček* tunes in upbeat tempos and in 2/4 or 4/4 meters—in other words, in patterns that are not as "foreign-sounding" as the additive 9/8 and 7/8 meters common in Vranje. They mostly do not play the slower, heavy *čoček* tunes typical of older local repertoire either, with the emphatic rhythmic syncopation and melismatic *gazel* improvisations that mark desirable performances of *čoček* in southern Serbia. I attended Guča for several days in 2008 and 2009, and these distinctive elements of the musical repertoire of southern Serbia and Roma were generally absent. My extensive surveys of footage from the festival confirm this tendency—outside of the competition event on stage, most Romani bands from southern Serbia privilege newer, upbeat, but also more familiar-sounding rhythms and *čoček* tunes over heavier *čoček* tunes with a greater improvizational range in order to boost their demand among revelers. Romani performances of *čoček* in Guča thus navigate the fine line between popular desire for the exotic southern sound (as popularized by media and film) and potential suspicion of the region's cultural contamination through musical influences of Ottoman Muslims—and Roma.

The Gypsy identity of Romani bands from southern Serbia is also marked in their interactions with the festival organization, jury, and members of the public. Regional and professional divisions between western bands and southeastern bands are closely connected to tropes of ethnic difference between Serbs and Roma. Romani ensembles are popularly called "black orchestras" (*crni orkestri*) in contrast to the "white orchestras" (*beli orkestri*) of Serbs, drawing from racialized discourses that focus on the darker complexions of many Roma. In the

documentary film *Brasslands*, the crew captures a telling scene at Guča in 2010 where festival organizer Adam Tadić speaks about different kinds of brass bands while sitting with Demiran Ćerimović and his son Novica, Romani musicians from Vranje. "The black orchestras, or 'Gypsies' as we playfully call them…" he comments in a patronizing manner while gesturing toward Demiran and his son, who both maintain neutral expressions while listening. Earlier in the same film, however, Demiran speaks openly about the racism that Roma continue to experience in present-day Serbia, pointing among other things to the use of the term "black" to differentiate Romani brass musicians from Serbs.[45] Romani "black" orchestras are said to embody the passionate, emotional, and dynamic temperament of southeastern Serbian and Gypsy blood, in contrast to the simple but down-to-earth folk performances that come naturally to the "white" western Serbian orchestras (see Babić and Milovanović 2003; Stojić et. al. 2002).

Romani ethnicity also informs class dimensions of their professional status and musical labor in Guča. Unlike many of their Serb counterparts, Romani brass bands also attend Guča to earn money by playing for festival guests. The vast majority of bands that walk the streets or perform under tents are Romani orchestras. While potential earnings are too good to pass up for Romani bands, these practices also stigmatize them because performing music for pay is considered low-class work (see chapter 5; also Silverman 2012, Sugarman 2003).[46] Several times

[45] In this scene, Demiran is remarking on the word "blek" written on an award that he received at Guča. Ironically, *blek* in this case likely refers to *bleh orkestri* (also *pleh*), a term for brass bands based on the Serbian word for tin (i.e., referring to the metal composition of the instruments). The comment points to the salience of racialized ethnic categorizations of brass bands in popular discourse in Serbia, however, because Demiran unequivocally interprets the term as a reference to his perceived "black," Romani identity.

[46] Teams of Romani women and girls who dance for pay at Guča are another example of professional entertainment work dominated by Roma at the festival. Many of the female entertainers who dance for Serb men seated at hospitality venues during the festival are Roma. In 2009 I saw several performances by groups of young Romani women, and it was clear that their Romani identity shaped the contours of their treatment by Serb patrons. Men generally encouraged the women to get up on tables to dance for them, and were very uninhibited in their attempts to touch them. I watched one man attempt several times to tuck his hand deep into the hip scarf and skirt waistband of a Romani girl while ostensibly tipping her. She fended off his hand gently but insistently several times, without stopping her performance. She clearly wanted the money but did not want to submit to his inappropriate fondling; eventually she allowed him to tuck the bills into her bra before hopping off the table.

in recent decades festival organizers have imposed restrictions on street performance, requiring bands to pay for permits and harassing bands that do not comply. Romani performers complained to me that these practices were unfair extortion of bands that rely on musical performance to make a living—particularly poorer Roma. Less established brass bands see Guča as a major opportunity to garner additional income but cannot afford license fees on top of the expenses of travel, lodging, and food.

Moreover, such policies implicitly target Romani ensembles by marginalizing musical labor as a legitimate motive for brass band participation in Guča. Even Romani bands that have pre-qualified to compete, and enjoy higher status as a result, endure the added physical and mental exhaustion of playing for hours on the streets at Guča in order to earn money—despite potential consequences for their final performance at the competition. Most of their Serb colleagues on the other hand spend their time relaxing and practicing for the final event (this juxtaposition is clear in the film *Brasslands*, for example). Discourses that privilege participation in the national competition at Guča position the experiences and motivations of Serbian musicians as the norm, while ignoring the economic exigencies of musical labor and professional prestige for Romani performers at Guča.

The politics of the national brass competition at Guča can carry an undertone of ethnic competition between Roma and Serbs. Because Guča has become a national institution for brass music, and enjoys growing international popularity, brass bands are keen to win the top prizes at the festival. Success in the competitions not only earns ensembles enhanced prestige and cultural capital, but also leads to increased numbers of gigs, recording opportunities, touring, and media visibility that boosts their professional careers (see chapter 7). Tensions between Romani and Serb bands over access to the top awards at Guča can be traced back to the early years of the

festival (Timotijević 2005). As the stakes of the festival have risen, however, and with shifting national politics in Serbia since the 1990s, the ethnic dimension of these debates has also intensified. Many Romani brass musicians in Vranje feel that the jury (with the blessing of the organizers) seeks to strategically balance the allocation of winning awards between Serb and Romani bands. Vranje Romani musicians told me that better qualified Romani orchestras might be passed over so that at least one Serb band is always offered a prize. A few individuals went so far as to claim that this was because of the global visibility of Guča as Serbia's "national brand"—non-Serb minorities should not be the sole winners because the festival represents the public face of the nation's brass tradition. While the recorded history of awards at Guča does not reveal obvious patterns of ethnic favoritism, this discourse (popular among both Serb and Romani participants) embeds ethnic politics into brass music competitions at Guča.

Many Romani bands from southeastern Serbia feel that Guča organizers treat them as second-class citizens because of their "Gypsy" identity. In the summer of 2011, Romani musicians complained to me that non-Romani entertainers receive preferential time slots for concerts, exorbitant pay, and privileged media attention at Guča. On the other hand, brass musicians by tradition are not paid for their performances at the festival, and many feel that their professional and artistic status is unfairly eclipsed by organizers who pay high fees to pop and folk music stars. In the summer of 2012, these tensions boiled over just after Guča. Romani brass bandleaders in southeastern Serbia gathered at a meeting in Surdulica (near Vranje) to compose a letter of protest to the organizers, primarily Adam Tadić, and debate a general boycott of the festival.

On the one hand, some bandleaders were incensed at purported jury corruption, pointing to supposed evidence of leaked information that the main awards were allocated even before the

competition event started. On the other hand, many Roma were angry that this year the adult orchestras who qualified to compete were put up in a hotel some 30 kilometers away from Guča, forcing them to commute daily to and from the festival. They claimed that there was no organized lodging at all for the youth bands competing in their own divisions, moreover, so that these young Roma needed to seek out their own accommodations in locals' "sheds" and in "parks."[47]

Romani musicians claimed that this was the latest iteration of a consistently discriminatory policy toward Romani participants by the organizers. These musicians argue that even though Roma have helped build up the image and popularity of the festival for decades, they have always been subject to barely adequate housing at the event, no official payment, and denied reimbursement for travel expenses. These policies *de facto* privilege Serbian musicians who mostly reside in the general vicinity of Guča—they need not spend as much on travel and lodging, and do not face the same economic imperatives to work at the festival as Romani professionals. Official lodging that placed Romani musicians far outside of the festival grounds in 2012 made it difficult—or impossible—for them to perform extensively for festival guests. Moreover, the arrangement implied that Romani musicians were less important to festival organizers than other guests and dignitaries who were accommodated in town.

Festival organizer Adam Tadić was unapologetic about the lodging arrangements in his response to the complaints, maintaining that it was logistically impossible to accommodate the musicians in town because of massive numbers of guests and insufficient housing in Guča. He added that it was the musicians' problem if their accommodation was not to their liking, implying that this was a question of petty inconvenience and not a substantive issue. His

[47] See news article at: http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/drustvo/nezadovoljni-trubaci-prave-novi-festival_336751.html (accessed December 28, 2015).

comments illustrate how the professional realities of Romani brass musicians are marginalized in ideological and organizational schemes at Guča. Romani musicians' economic need and labor practices are not seen as a valid dimension of their participation. Romantic notions of Guča as a place to celebrate tradition, national pride, and joyous revelry are privileged over the economic and professional import of success—dimensions keenly felt by Romani brass bands whose livelihoods are focused on professional musical performance to a greater extent than their Serb counterparts.

Romani musicians primarily see Guča as a means for professional advancement by securing popular visibility and institutionally-supported prestige on a national stage (see Chapter 7). While recent scholarship on Guča critically engages with debates about the national significance of the festival, and in some cases questions the dissonance between official narratives and the positionality of minority Roma, Romani voices remain conspicuously absent in these analyses (see Gligorijević 2014; Krstić 2010; Kuligowski 2011; Timotijević 2005; Zakić and Lajić-Mihajlović 2012). On the one hand, many Roma also affirm popular narratives of a romanticized national tradition of Serbian brass at Guča, validating the popular hype surrounding the festival's national and global visibility. On the other hand, however, Roma stress that the most important dimension of their participation centers around public validation of their musical skill by national audiences and experts. The Guča competition, as a national institution with a lasting legacy, offers critical social and symbolic capital to Roma whose primary goals focus on establishing successful professional careers and markets for their musical labor. One Vranje Romani musician, returning after an unsuccessful year at the competition, bitterly told me: "I don't need Guča anymore...I have already won sufficient times to officially claim the status of 'Master of the Trumpet,' and people all over the nation already know my name. Why would I

continue to drag myself through all that trouble and mess every year after this—what is the point anymore!?"

While official narratives see Guča as a space to confirm Serbian national identity through folk culture, for Romani musicians the festival is a gateway to the world—a place to maximize their artistic and professional credibility. Because the material and symbolic capital that Roma earn at the Guča Festival is important for their professional livelihoods, they readily embrace the popular significance of the event for a national public. Yet their participation as Roma—embedded in historical, regional, economic, and racialized dimensions of their musical practices—is attenuated by reductionist tropes of the festival's national significance. At best, Romani ethnic difference is glossed as regional color and allows for safe self-orientalism (in a non-Western, hedonistic "Balkan" sense) among Serb consumers of Romani music (see also van de Port 1998, 1999). At worst, Romani music is the focus of censure and opprobrium for threatening the romanticized homogeneity of national culture that Guča purportedly manifests for a watching world.

## 3.6 Conclusion

To better understand how minority Roma are musically imbricated in Serbian identity politics on regional and national scales, I follow scholarly calls to investigate cultural intimacy as negotiated relationships between social interest groups that often problematize simplistic binary oppositions of states vs. citizenry (Herzfeld 2005; Kiossev 2002). Kiossev (2002) cogently argues for an expanded application of the concept in his analysis of Balkanism as a "dark intimacy." He illustrates how the strategic redeployment of "embarrassing" essentialisms beyond borders claims a shared transnational subjectivity positioned both against a more powerful West while also circumventing state boundaries and national discourses of cultural difference in the

Balkans. Herzfeld also calls for expanded attention to cultural intimacies, emphasizing the significance of social poetics as a process of contestation and negotiation that marks identity struggles on scales both below and beyond the scope of nation-state politics (2005:53, 65).

Inspired by these works, I argue that Roma serve as the cultural intimates of Serbs on multiple registers of regional, ethnic, and national identity politics. Binary discourses that play orientalism (Ottomanism) against nationalism (Serbianism) in Vranje underline the social poetics at play in polemics over cultural tradition and regional music. Yet these tropes are also useful in debates over regional and ethnic difference in broader national contexts, where actors confront different configurations of power and agency. Whether on the local or national scale, these negotiations of identity necessarily engage the official narratives cultivated by the Serbian state—whether opposing, subtly sidelining, or embracing official narratives. Under very specific conditions, discursive and performative projects of cultural intimacy may invert the preeminence of the state's official narratives of belonging to grant local players desirable cultural status. The ambivalent, shifting, and often contradictory articulations of these concepts in Vranje and Serbia more broadly point to the very salience of these discursive tropes and "practical orientalisms" as means to secure differential access to cultural resources and power (Herzfeld 2005; see also Bakić-Hayden 1995; van de Port 1998, 1999).

In Vranje, Romani musical performances constitute intimate spaces where Serbs can embrace an Ottoman-inspired "self-orientalism" that is validated by its romantic popularity in the eyes of the larger nation. Roma become tradition-bearers who maintain a unique regional heritage for all locals, traditions that are legitimated because of their difference from those of the cultural center of the Serbian nation. Roma comprise the Eastern foil that allows Serbs privileged

access to an authentic exoticism, and Romani musicians provide Serbs with an all-important performative medium for enacting regional pride and cultural capital.

Yet Roma are also "useful" (or productive, in the Foucaultian sense) for policing the boundaries of ethnic and national constructs. Romani marginality allows Serbs to scapegoat Roma when local musical practices clash with dominant narratives of national identity and belonging. Serb narratives gain semiotic power from the comparatively disempowered position of minority Roma. "Nesting orientalisms" are invoked to position Roma as more tainted by the stigma of Ottoman connections and foreign cultural trappings, boosting the cultural and moral standing of Serbs by comparison (Bakić-Hayden 1995). Romani musical practices now figure as iconic markers of their inherent difference, as reified notions of so-called pure traditions facilitate the censuring of Romani cultural production.

Whether cast in a negative or positive light, however, the Romani ethnic minority—on the whole marginalized and stigmatized—constitutes an essential performative medium, via music, for the articulation of majority Serbian identity politics. Whereas minority groups are often recognized for producing popular musical genres (i.e., African Americans and jazz music), it is much less common for these groups to figure prominently in the performative enactment of majority cultural identities through musical practices. I argue here (and in the chapters that follow) that many dimensions of the construction of the Serbian "self" rely precisely on this connection with minority Roma—on the performance spaces and practices that are produced by (or enacted through) Romani musicians (van de Port 1998, 1999). Where Roma figure as cultural intimates of Serbs—as essential partners in the production of regional and national identifications through desirable cultural practices specially cultivated by Romani professionals—we see how Roma literally enable Serbs to perform valuable dimensions of their

cultural identity. Even when Roma function as a negative foil of difference against which Serbs enact a cultural superiority through discursive and performative acts, another side of their cultural intimacy, Roma remain critically embedded in Serbian imaginations of "self" (van de Port 1998, 1999; see also Silverman 2012).

Both discourses—of Roma as welcome intimates and disparaged others—coexist in contemporary Vranje and in Serbia. This seeming paradox in reality points to the logics of power that surround Romani musical performance as spaces of contextual identity politics. The politically and culturally dominant position of Serbs vis-a-vis Roma means that the former have more power to control the signification of musical practices in the service of identity narratives. Roma benefit inasmuch as they can tap into positive valences of their "exotic difference" in contexts that make them central to Serbian constructions of self. Yet even though Romani musical practices carry the potential to qualify Serb-centric discourses of national heritage, they rarely obtain the visibility or carry the discursive clout required to validate them when national Serbian discourses control the forms and content of representation. Romani brass musicians must navigate a fine line between difference and belonging in Serb-dominated society, despite being deeply rooted in musical and cultural dimensions of Serbian ethno-national identification. The remaining chapters of this dissertation explore the performance politics that mark Romani musical labor, as well as the political-economic dimensions of their musical work and identification within regional, national, and increasingly transnational performance contexts.

# 4.

# "Without the Drum, There Is Nothing!" Musical Affect, Embodiment, and Ritual at Vranje Weddings

## 4.1 Introduction

In the winter of 2011, one Romani mother-in-law was so overcome by joy that she dropped to dance "on the knees" in front of her new bride at a *sabaluk* consummation celebration, performing the pelvic lifts, arm movements, and shoulder shimmies consistent with the solo form of Romani *čoček*. Whereas earlier in the event she bent from the waist to kiss the belly of the young woman, showing affection for her new daughter-in-law, from this position on her knees Nedžipa now bent to kiss the feet of the bride dancing in front of her. Watching the video of this event together several months later, Nedžipa explained to me that she danced this way to show extreme happiness and pride in the bride that her son had brought to their family. She told me that she was quite taken with the emotional exuberance of this performance technique after seeing female relatives of a bride from Skopje, Macedonia, dance in this way at a family gathering in Vranje celebrating the birth of the couple's first child.

She also told me that she worried for years that her son would never achieve a good marriage. He had long shown little interest in settling down, casually dating instead. The older her son became, the less acceptable she felt he would be as a prospective son-in-law for picky families in the community. In addition, Nedžipa held high hopes that he would marry a diaspora girl; their family was poor and struggling in post-socialist Vranje, like many others, and dreamed of better economic opportunities abroad for their child. Her son's new bride lived with her family in the Netherlands. By finding a "proper" girl, still a virgin, he fulfilled yet another of his mother's hopes, earning his family additional prestige by bringing home a virtuous bride. As

such, Nedžipa was moved to express all of the emotions brimming over inside of her through the strongest performative medium available to her during the very public celebration. Music and dance provided a powerful platform for evincing her love, affection, and pride to all present, even as her emotional response was rooted in particular notions of marriage, sexuality, and family that are central to Romani community values.

This chapter explores the confluence of ritual, emotion, and music at wedding celebrations in Vranje in order to understand how musically-mediated affect informs local identity politics. I am interested here in the ways that music and dance mobilize affect and sentiment to heighten the import of ritual performance. I argue that the bodily engagements of participating subjects are critical means by which they "fully" experience the event. The sounds of the music and the movements of the dance have power to evoke highly affective states among celebrants, which in turn reinforce the symbolic significance of the ritual and by extension the social processes being reconstituted through it. Vranje Romani musicians and their services are thus essential for both the performative practice and ideological significance of wedding rituals.

I begin by discussing how theories of affect help illuminate particular connections between bodily experience, performance, and constructions of the self/identity. I then illustrate how ritual performances articulate social processes related to questions of gender, sexuality, and family ties, situating the customary complex of Vranje wedding rituals within wider patterns of ritual and celebratory culture associated with diverse groups in the Balkans and wider Mediterranean. Finally, I turn to an in-depth analysis of the role of music and dance for producing affective states in two significant segments of Vranje weddings: the initial celebration, or *zasevka*, at the groom's family home marking the beginning of the wedding, and the

celebration marking the consummation of the marriage and confirming the bride's virginity, called *blaga rakija* or *sabaluk*.

## 4.2 Theorizing Affect: Bodies, Relations, Sentiment, and Culture

I conceptualize affect as a force or intensity that allows for emotion or feeling (deChaine 2002:85-86). Many argue that it is not primarily cognitive or consistently conscious, but rather consists of instantaneous, visceral reactions to contact between disparate "bodies" (or perhaps "energies") (Gregg and Seigworth 2010:2; Stewart 2007:2-3). In this sense, it is distinct from (although connected to) sentiment or emotion, which are more cognitive and reflexive in nature. Navaro-Yashin usefully describes affect as a "non-discursive sensation which a space or environment generates" (2012:13).

I consider affect here as a feeling that results from bodily and sensorial engagement with specific phenomena (such as music). Affect is a highly embodied experience of feeling, or sensation, that generates a more cognitive, self-reflexive emotional response. Discussions of affect as states that arise through the interaction and relations occurring between bodies, which bounce off of one another or "collide," resonate well with explorations of how bodily engagement with musical sound produces the emotional investment that is central to the wedding ritual performances I analyze (deChaine 2002:85-86; Thompson and Biddle 2013:10-11). The throbbing beats of the drum, or the sound vibrations that emanate from the bells of clarinets and trumpets, wash over, swirl around, penetrate, or buzz inside the bodies of celebrants. These interactions between bodies/energies are the medium through which subjects engage with music via dance and celebratory gestures at ritual events (cf. Keil and Vellou-Keil 2002).

The corporeal component of the experience of affect is critical for understanding its significance in the context of social practice. Pierre Bourdieu's theories of habitus and bodily

praxis treat embodiment as a primary means by which cultural dispositions are internalized. Bourdieu argues that the body becomes a site at which cultural memory is mediated through bodily dispositions, where practices reproduce particular social dispositions to situate actors within social structure and pattern their relationships (1977:93-94). Bourdieu's theories thus point to the ways that bodily experience and cultural systems are closely linked (ibid., 91-94). At the same time, he argues that "[b]odily hexis [is] political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition…and thereby of feeling and thinking," pointing to the intersection of bodily engagement and feeling to (re)produce social understandings (ibid., 93).

Bodily engagement thus becomes a critical dimension for seeing, understanding, and re-shaping the social. Thomas J. Csordas usefully pushes Bourdieu's rather static articulation of bodily dispositions as reflections social structure, drawing from phenomenological approaches to prioritize understandings of the body not as object (or entity) but rather by as embodied ways of "being-in-the-world" (1994, 2011). Focusing on embodiment as process prioritizes the conditional and contextual nature of cultural production through bodily experience (1994:6-7, 10), and thus allows for contestation of structure or new articulations of sociocultural realities. For Csordas, the bodily experience and practice are thus the "existential ground" of culture (Van Wolputte 2004:257). Csordas also points to "somatic modes of attention" as "culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one's body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others" (ibid., 138), highlighting the social, interactive implications of bodily practice and subjective experience. Scholars of embodiment have shown how emotion (feeling) and bodily experience are fundamentally linked in the sociocultural production of reality and intersubjective relations (Bourdieu 1977:93; Lyon and Barbalet 1994:56-57; Romas-Zayas

2011:27). Attention to bodily experience is critical to understand how affect (and emotion) renders social relations and cultural processes viscerally powerful and socially "real."

Affect thus involves connections and relationships generated and enacted through the "impact" of conjunctures of phenomena in processes mediated by bodily experience (Ahmed 2004:6; Gregg and Seigworth 2010:2; Stewart 2007:2-3). An emphasis on relations built by experiences of affect (and vice versa), through interaction between/across bodies, also lends itself to thinking about the collective power and "communitas" that is enacted in ritual contexts. Affective experiences and feeling are socially contagious and may connect actors in ways that break down barriers between isolated, individual subjects (deChaine 2002:91-94; Gregg and Siegworth 2010:8). Bodily experiences of affect, mediated by aesthetic forms such music and dance, make possible intense intersubjective connections in ways that are critical for the communal import of ritual practices (deChaine 2002:91-94; Feld 1982:222; Thompson and Biddle 2013:11).

I disagree with scholars who position affect primarily "outside" of the realm of culture, power, structure, and conscious thought in attempts to advocate for affect as a space where new forms of resistance and knowledge may be possible (cf. Massumi 1995). Instead, I wish to point to the ways that thought and memory also shape experiences of sentiment—and thus affect—in a culturally grounded manner; I argue that this process is multiple and complex, however, and not only the result of cultural convention and social structure unidirectionally determining affective engagements. Moreover, affect is deeply embedded in cultural politics and power (Anderson 2010:162; Hemmings 2005:550-551, 559-562), and must be considered in terms of what work it is made to do in particular contexts (Grossberg 1984:233; Thompson and Biddle 2013:6-7).

Affect is dialogically engaged with one's cultural dispositions and processes of cognitive reflection. The relationship between affective experience, social spaces, and culturally-shaped consciousness is mutually constitutive (Ahmed 2004:6; Navaro-Yashin 2009:15). There is no universal effect (or "affect") obtained when the sound vibrations of a specific musical form hit the eardrums and collide with the bodies of human celebrants; memories, experiences, and learned cultural dispositions mediate how actors characterize stirring music and their affective reactions to its sounds. The slippage between mind and body, thought and feeling is critical—they do not operate in separate, isolated realms but rather constantly interact and shape one another (deChaine 2002:86; Gregg and Siegworth 2010:2-3; Stewart 2007:2-3). Affect may not be consciously "thought through" or even explicable in the instant of its manifestation (i.e., as the chills one may feel on hearing the opening notes of a song), but one's habitus and culturally-shaped memories provide a rich matrix from which such experiences are interpreted and signified (Bourdieu 1977). Indeed, Gregg and Siegworth argue that affect often serves to "drive us toward…thought," pointing to the ways that intense feelings and experiences also shape the symbolic spaces within which they operate (2010:1). Moreover, cultural dispositions are always-already present, often deeply ingrained such that they are not consciously re-hashed by actors and thus considered "natural" (Bourdieu 1977). They influence in potent (if sometimes pre-reflexive) ways how one's body is affected by experience, and how this experience is married to the symbolic and social dimensions of cultural practice.

Lived experience and memory contribute critically to the production of affect in the context of ritual. Williams' "structures of feeling" is useful to understand the dialectics between formal thought and spontaneous feeling, past and present, and collective and individual experience that emerge in ritual performance (1977). Williams' notion pays attention to how

thought and feeling are mutually constitutive and operate cyclically to reinforce each other in lived experience (1977:132). Moreover, it can be productively extended to think about how memory connects experience in the present to both individual and collective pasts. Affect and sentiment in a given moment are thus embedded in, and respond to, layered memories of past experience and contemporary social realities (Mazzarella 2009:292; Navaro-Yashin 2009:16). Because rituals like weddings are collective practices, this communal dimension of memory and lived experience is particularly important. Affect emerges out of the conjuncture of practices and bodies in the present ritual moment, but is mediated simultaneously by remembered, embodied understandings of sound, movement, and practice that are shaped by communal histories (Grossberg 1984:227). Williams defines "structures of feeling" as ongoing cultural processes, not finished forms (1977:132), but with an element of continuity (perhaps both affective and sentimental) that is important because it stresses the links between past (memory) and present lived experience.

## 4.3 Wedding Rituals in Vranje: An Overview

Weddings in Vranje are elaborate affairs involving several days of extensive rituals, hospitality, and celebration. Much scholarship to date has shown that rituals are means of constituting social and symbolic orders, and serve to guide individuals through culturally accepted transformations such as life cycle events. Studies of the collective, performative aspects of rituals in particular emphasize that ritual activity, as meaningful patterned action, includes all participants in the experience of reconstitution or transformation that is enacted through the performances in question (Kapferer 1984). Turner (1986) for example points to the ways in which a heightened level of engagement through symbolic practices tears down barriers between individuals and potentially constructs a collective consciousness, a sense of *communitas*. Rituals

as performance events are "aesthetically marked" and heightened modes of communication (Bauman 1992), allowing performers and participants to exchange information and commentary on social discourses and evaluations of social realities (Bauman and Briggs 1990). Ritual performances thus constitute potent, extra-ordinary (i.e., non-mundane) spaces for participants to see, reflect on, and reconstruct the social-symbolic order in which they live (Bauman 1992; Guss 2000; Palmer and Jankowiak 1996; Turner 1986). Performative processes in rituals also create spaces where participant subjectivities are continually shaped—rituals are not monolithic and universal, but rather contexts where processes of (often intersected) identities are re-negotiated both in line with, or in subtle resistance to, cultural conventions and power structures (Sugarman 1997; Silverman 2012; Zlatanović 2003).

Wedding celebrations throughout the Balkans and the Mediterranean customarily entail elaborate series of rituals aimed at regulating both the progression of specific actors into new phases of their lives and managing new relationships between kin groups. Scholarship that examines weddings in various Balkan contexts shows striking similarities in the ritual practices of myriad ethnic and religious groups, with an emphasis on ritual acts as means of ushering youth into adulthood, constituting relations between extended kin groups, and reaffirming patriarchal and patrilocal constructs of marriage and procreation (Cowan 1990; Delaney 1991; Kligman 1988; Seeman 1990; Silverman 2012; Sugarman 1997; Zlatanović 2003). Writing about Macedonian Roma, Seeman argues that weddings are a "cultural locus for the community" (1990:3), and Silverman notes that weddings are often the "glue that binds" families and communities together (2012:83). One of the primary elements of wedding ritual practices in the Balkans concerns the transferal of women (brides) from their birth families to their marital, i.e., husbands', families, with consequent focus on the bride's pre-marital sexual virtue, prospective

fertility, and ability to contribute children to the perpetuation of her husband's kin (Hofman 2012:41,46; Kligman 1988; Silverman 2012; Sugarman 1997; Zlatanović 2003). Moreover, rituals often reconstitute the dominance of elders who supervise the progression of youths into adulthood through marriage, and reinscribe patriarchal constructs of marriage by privileging the symbolic and structural dominance of the groom over the bride—as well as of the groom's kin over the bride's family—in wedding practices (Silverman 2012; Sugarman 1997; Zlatanović 2003).

Emotion is a critical component of the power of ritual. Rituals provide people with "salient embodied experiences" of cultural practice (Berthome and Houseman 2010:58). Performative aspects of ritual may illustrate how emotions are produced and how the mental/emotional states of participants are transformed (Kapferer 1979:153-54). Berthome and Houseman conceptualize ritual as aesthetic performance "whose efficacy consists in its capacity to affect the emotional and intentional states of others in certain ways" (2010:59). Emotions must be seen as "constitutive aspects of ritual interactions themselves, both reflecting and inflecting the latter's course in a variety of sensory, expressive, moral, and strategic ways." As such, these experiences are "intersubjective, emerging as much between interacting individuals as arising within them" (Berthome and Houseman 2010:69). Rituals channel the emotional expression of participants through conventions and symbolic form—while some emotions may be suppressed or denied, others are heightened, deepened, or demanded by them (Kapferer 1979:168).

Much scholarship has considered the power of music for generating affect and shaping emotional states (Becker 2004; Feld 1982; Kapchan 2007; Rouget 1985; Sugarman 1997; Thompson and Biddle 2013). Sounds shape the "affective contours" of daily lives, and people use music to "encourage or emphasize a particular mood or create a general ambience"

(Thompson and Biddle 2013:10-11). Music can be analyzed as a means of "*manifesting* affect" and providing a "reflective medium" for imagining affect (Thompson and Biddle 2013:16), positioning music as a potent site for understanding the production of affect and sentiment in ritual practice. Many studies of Balkan weddings have pointed to the crucial roles of performative genres like music and dance for generating emotional and embodied engagement with ritual practices (Cowan 1990; Kligman 1988; Silverman 2012; Sugarman 1997; Zlatanović 2003). Seeman aptly encapsulates the relation between music, ritual, and emotion at Balkan weddings by noting that "music serves as both structural signal, and a conduit for emotional expression whereby individuals, through ritualized behavior, can express their own feeling in the performance of their roles" (1990:20). Music can thus cue specific ritual practices, providing a meaningful "soundscape" against which they are enacted, but at the same time it is also critical for investing ritual acts with emotional weight through affective, bodily experience of practices informed by the symbolic values of the ritual. It is with this dynamic in mind that I now turn to an investigation of affect in the context of music, dance, and ritual at Vranje wedding celebrations.

Below I provide a brief overview of wedding rituals generally practiced by both Serbs and Roma in Vranje, highlighting the role of music and dance in conjunction with ritual practices. Locals are highly articulate about the specific events and ceremonial order that characterizes the "ideal, traditional" wedding complex, and the following survey utilizes the names and conceptual delineations of ritual practices that locals use when discussing weddings. Throughout, rituals that re-fashion the status of the bride and groom through their marriage, signal the changing roles of their immediate family, and constitute new relationships between the two families provide the primary focus of activities. Of greatest significance are practices that

confirm the elder status of the parents of the couple, particularly the groom's parents, and the transferal of the bride from her family of birth to her family of marriage (i.e., the groom's kin)—these concerns constitute visible threads that link all of the rituals within the wedding complex. All of these celebratory and ritual practices revolve around music and dance, moreover, requiring the hired services of professional Romani musicians. While older practices are highly valorized and continuity exists, changing economic conditions, political situations, and social trends have also re-shaped the form and timing of certain of the ritual segments, or contributed to the abandonment of other practices altogether.

*The Marš: "The March," Taking the Music*

This custom marks the beginning of wedding proceedings, and involves male relatives of the groom meeting with and formally paying the hired brass musicians. It usually takes place in a public space, like a major crossroads or on the street in front of the family home, thereby announcing the start of the wedding to the community at large. The brass band plays honorary marching tunes for the groom's relatives, particularly the groom's father, which is why this ritual segment is often simply called the "*marš*," or "march." The family may dance for a time in this public space before processing back to the groom's home, accompanied by the musicians.

*The Zasevka: Ritual Dancing at the Groom's Home*

This is one of the most important segments of the traditional wedding complex in Vranje. It takes place at the groom's family home, and focuses on the ritual dance performed by the groom's mother with a decorated sieve. The groom's mother holds pride of place throughout the event, directing the proceedings, and the extended family and guests subsequently take turns leading dances in order of precedence to show their respect for the groom's family and participate in the celebration.

*K'na or Kena: The Henna Celebration*

Only urban Romani communities in Vranje proper enact this ritual. After the *zasevka*, the groom's family processes with musicians to the bride's home to bring her henna. There, the groom's mother decorates the bride's hands and feet with the dye for fertility and good luck. After some dancing together with their new in-laws, the groom's family departs while the bride's family will stay up celebrating with the young woman for most of the night, the last she will spend in her parents' home before becoming a married woman.

*Ženska Svadba: The Bride's Celebration*

On the second day, the bride's family gathers relatives and guests at their home for their own celebratory event. A meal is often served, and musicians are hired to entertain the guests and accompany dancing. The bride's family considers these to be their last moments with their daughter, who will soon leave their family to join the groom's household, and thus celebrations often have a bittersweet feel. For Roma in particular, this is an elaborate event that may involve several hours of music and dancing where most of the family and guests take turns dancing with the bride at the head of the dance line.

*Uzimav Snašku: "They Take the Bride"*

At some point in the afternoon, the groom's family arrives at the bride's home with their own musicians to formally "take the bride." Rituals of separation may be enacted (like the breaking apart of a special bread above the bride's head among Serbs), as well as rituals that highlight the new relationship between the two families (like playfully antagonistic haggling over a symbolic bride price between the groom's kin and the bride's brothers, or the breaking of additional ritual breads between the new in-laws among Serbs). The climax of this wedding event involves the actual moment when the bride is transferred to the groom's family, crossing

the threshold of her natal home while specific ritual tunes are performed. A final dance, the "bride's dance," may be led by the bride once out on the street or in the family courtyard to clinch her separation from her natal family before she is taken back to the groom's home by his wedding party.

*Incorporation Rituals*

On arriving at the groom's home, the bride is directed to perform various rituals at the threshold, this time in order to "incorporate" her into her new home and family. Yet again, the groom's mother has a very important role. She will guide the bride through symbolic wiping of the doorway with honey/sugar water/grease, and place loaves of bread under the bride's arms and pitchers of water into her hands. Others involve the groom himself, as when the bride and groom teasingly feed each other sweets and offer each other sips of water, and culminate when the groom quickly pulls the bride across the threshold and into the house. The brass musicians perform music throughout these rituals.

*Muška Svadba: "Groom's Wedding," Evening Celebration*

Historically celebrations in the evening, after the "taking of the bride," occurred at the groom's family home and were often considered to be the groom's, or "man's," wedding celebration ("*muška svadba*"). Guests sat to a meal, drank, sang, and danced into the early hours of the morning, until main ritual figures of the event like the *stari svat*[48] officially end the celebration by taking their leave. The bride and groom were also customarily closed into their room to consummate the marriage during this event. Today, this celebration is usually hosted at a banquet hall, and both the bride's and groom's kin and guests participate.

[48] The *stari svat*, or *starejko*, is usually the groom's maternal uncle; together with the *kum*, the best man or church wedding sponsor, the *starejko* is one of the primary ritual figures at Serbian weddings and traditionally commanded enormous respect and deference. One of his main roles was to direct the timing and flow of the various segments of the wedding.

*Blaga Rakija: "Sweet Brandy," the Consummation Celebration*

Traditionally, the third day of the wedding was reserved for celebrating the successful consummation of the marriage. The groom's mother would confirm evidence of the bride's virginity and prepare the nightgown or sheet for display to family and guests. Brandy is heated with sugar to make a sweetened ritual drink, and after initial dancing accompanied by a brass band the groom's family process over to the bride's family to share the "good news" and celebrate together. The families and their guests share a meal, and more music accompanies additional dancing. At this time, the bride's family also gave final gifts of money and soft goods to the bride, and/or transferred her trousseau to the groom's home. Today, Serbs no longer practice these consummation rituals. For Roma they are still an important part of wedding celebrations, but they may be enacted up to one year in advance of the actual wedding to allow the couple to marry while their families amass necessary funds and make preparations for a properly elaborate wedding. Note that sexual activity is the ultimate confirmation of the union among Roma, and therefore the couple is considered married even before the wedding celebration.

The following table (Table I) visually illustrates the similarities in wedding rituals between Roma and Serbs in Vranje, but also delineates the differences between historical and contemporary ritual practice in both communities.

Table I: ROMANI AND SERBIAN WEDDING RITUALS IN VRANJE[49]

| Vranje Wedding Rituals | Serbs | | | | Roma | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ritual Segment | Historically | Day | Present-Day | Day | Historically | Day | Present-Day | Day |
| Taking of the Music: the "Marš" | x | One | x | One | x | One | x | One |
| Ritual Dancing at Groom's Home: Svekrvino | x | One | x | One | x | One | x | One |
| Henna Ceremony | | | | | x | One | x | One |
| Bride's Family Celebration | x | Two | x | One | x | Two | x | Two |
| Taking of the Bride | x | Two | x | One | x | Two | x | Two |
| Religious and/or Civil Ceremonies | x | Two | x | One | | | | |
| Incorporating Bride into Groom's Home | x | Two | x | One | x | Two | x | Two |
| Evening Celebration | x | Two | x | One | x | Two | x | Two |
| Consummation Celebration: "Blaga Rakija" | x | Three | | | x | Three | x | Separate |

By the 1930s and 1940s, brass music became the only genre appropriate for weddings in Vranje (note that prior to this Romani *surla/goč* ensembles performed ritual music and dance repertoires for weddings; see chapter 2). Locals explain that instrumental brass bands provided continuous musical accompaniment for rituals and dancing at three-day-long traditional weddings, as well as for preparatory ritual events and smaller celebrations occurring several days before and after. Only in the late 1980s, with the spread of amplification and changing popular music demands, did wedding bands with non-brass instruments such as accordion, electric guitar, or synthesizers begin to compete with brass bands (see chapter 2, pp. 46-47, and chapter 6). Today, Serbs often hire amplified Serbian wedding bands with singers to perform newly

[49] As locals increasingly rent banquet halls for the evening celebrations following the taking of the bride, some Roma and many Serbs in the interest of time do not conduct the incorporation rituals for the bride at the groom's family home. I indicate here on which day the rituals tend to be performed.

composed folk music and other genres at evening celebrations in the banquet hall.[50] Likewise, amplified Romani wedding bands have become extremely popular among Roma, particularly the youth, and such ensembles (also consisting of singers with non-brass instruments) may be hired instead of brass bands for certain segments of Romani weddings, such as for the bride's celebration, the evening banquet on the second day, or for consummation celebrations.[51]

Brass ensembles continue to be hired by both communities for at least some portion of wedding celebrations, however. Brass bands have long maintained the ritual-specific repertoire that is essential to accompany important wedding practices. Indeed, locals (particularly elders) argue that these rituals cannot be effectively—or, as I argue, "affectively"— performed without a brass band, scoffing at the notion that amplified wedding bands might substitute. For this reason the following analysis focuses primarily on the role of brass band performance practices for confirming (and re-negotiating) the affective/symbolic import of wedding rituals and celebratory practices.

### *4.3* ***Svekrvino Kolo* and the *Zasevka*: Ritual Dancing by the Groom's Mother**

Historically, three-day wedding celebrations in Vranje began in the late afternoon of the first day, most often a Saturday. In Vranje, this portion of the wedding is called the "*zasevka*," implying the "sowing" of a field—the significance of this will be explained below in connection to the ritual dance of the groom's mother. For Roma, this initial ritual event is still the rule so long as the family can afford a full "traditional" wedding. Today most Serbs, however, shorten wedding celebrations to one day. The *zasevka* thus no longer takes place on a separate evening, but instead many Serbs enact a condensed set of the *zasevka* rituals in the early morning on the

[50] See chapter 2, pg. 49 fn. 17 for more details on the evolution and style of newly composed folk music. For more on changing musical tastes and shifting professional niches of Romani musicians in Vranje, see chapter 6.
[51] See chapter 2, pp. 46-47 for more information on Romani amplified wedding ensembles (also Silverman 2012). For more information on the changing musical tastes and demand for Romani amplified wedding musicians, see chapter 6.

wedding day (usually Saturday or Sunday). Despite differences in the timing and magnitude of the event, however, many of the core elements and the significance of this initial portion of the wedding remain very similar for both Roma and Serbs.

The central focus of the *zasevka* is the ritualized dancing that formally "opens" (*otvara* in Serbian) the wedding celebrations of the groom's family, and subsequently allows all invited kin and friends to participate in the celebration. The most important figure during the *zasevka* is the mother of the groom: the *svekrva* in Serbian, or *sasuj* in Romani. Her ritual pride of place is highlighted during this initial event through a specific dance ritual that is focused on her and named after her: *Svekrvino Kolo*, "the groom's mother's dance." *Svekrvino Kolo* is an essential ritual for both Roma and Serbs, something without which locals emphasize that proper weddings cannot be imagined. Even in the context of contemporary shortened Serbian weddings, many families still insist on performing the *Svekrvino* ritual. Locals explained to me that women "live for" the opportunity to marry off a son in order to perform this dance with motherly pride in front of their assembled wedding guests. Perhaps no other moment of the wedding is so highly emotional, so viscerally exciting, as when the groom's mother dances *Svekrvino Kolo*. Even onlookers who do not participate look forward to witnessing when the groom's mother "*zaigruje,*" or "begins to dance" (see also Zlatanović 2003).

This ritual dance is significant in part because of the gendered dynamics embodied in the roles of the groom's mother and his bride, respectively. In Vranje's patriarchal context, women customarily leave their natal families when they marry and become part of the groom's family and household. As a "stranger," the bride's status depends heavily on her ability to contribute to her new family—not only in terms of labor but also by reproducing it through the children she bears (Silverman 2012; Sugarman 1997; Zlatanović 2003). Male children are particularly

important for her status, as they are the ones who will perpetuate her in-laws' family lineage and name—unlike daughters, who will also marry out and contribute instead to the perpetuation of another family line (Sugarman 1997; Zlatanović 2003). After the moment when she bears a male child, then, there is no greater event for a married woman in Vranje than the marriage of that son. As Zlatanović (2003)[52] insightfully argues in her analysis of Vranje Serb weddings, the groom's mother effectively confirms her position in her family of marriage by successfully raising her son, and increases her status in becoming an elder who will now supervise "her" new bride. The *Svekrvino* ritual thus provides a performative means for the *svekrva* to process and embody her changing social status through an emotionally intense set of practices (Sugarman 1997). For most women, joy and pride are palpable emotions during this ritual dance, and their expression is considerably heightened by their bodily experiences of dancing *Svekrvino* to the music in front of a watching public.

*Svekrvino Kolo* lies at the semiotic heart of the *zasevka* at Vranje weddings because of its significance for patriarchal constructs of marriage and the gendered roles of the *svekrva* and the bride, respectively. At the outset of the ritual, a young family member with living parents[53] hands the groom's mother an object critical to the significance of the dance: a sieve (*sito* in Serbian, *sita* among Roma) customarily decorated with flowers, greenery, and crepe paper or ribbons.[54] The sieve has significant symbolic connotations for sexuality and procreative fertility, and is a common feature in wedding rituals throughout the Balkans and the wider Mediterranean (Silverman 2012; Sugarman 1997). Sugarman, following from Bourdieu's analysis of Kabyle

---

[52] For a detailed analysis of wedding rituals in the Serbian community in Vranje, comparing pre-WWII weddings with those of the 1990s, see Zlatanovic 2003.

[53] Having living parents is believed to ensure that the young person in question brings only good energy and prospects for prosperity to the couple when handling important ritual objects, without the potential ill luck that would be associated with death.

[54] The decorated sieve is so iconic for this initial segment of wedding celebrations that Roma sometimes call the whole event, the *zasevka*, simply *sita*.

wedding rituals, points in particular to the symbolic homology between seed passing through the sieve and semen passing through the hymen/vaginal opening (1997:247). The basin of the sieve is filled with wheat, chickpeas, coins, sugar cubes, and candies and is covered by a red scarf or crocheted white doily. The flowers and grain products symbolically bestow fertility on the impending union (Silverman 2012; Sugarman 1997), the candies and sugar cubes ensure a sweet marriage and good family relations, and the coins represent wishes for the couple's prosperity. As she dances, the *svekrva* periodically throws out handfuls of the ritual contents of the sieve to bless the couple and bring fertility to their union (Seeman 1990:23; Zlatanović 2003:66-67). It is from this action that the *zasevka* gets its name—the groom's mother figuratively "sows" these blessings in tossing out the sieve's contents just as a farmer sows his field with seeds. Through *Svekrvino* the groom's mother is central to the import of this ritual event, as she transfers her own established fertility to her daughter-in-law and son through contagious ritual actions rooted in metaphors of agricultural and "natural" productivity (Silverman 2012; Zlatanović 2003).

The *svekrva* is undeniably the preeminent figure at this moment. Among Roma, where the *zasevka* remains a separate celebration, this first day is also often referred to as "*dan svekrve*," or "the groom's mother's day," an event completely oriented toward satisfying her desire to display her new role as a mother-in-law and to enact her joy on the marriage of her son. Her pride of place at the outset of wedding celebrations is also indicative of the dominance of elders in the context of marriage and family; elder female relatives are similarly privileged during dance rituals with the sieve at the outset of Macedonian Romani weddings (Seeman 1990:23; Silverman 2012:91). Vranje Roma emphasize that the groom's mother may dance for as long as she desires on this day before allowing other family and guests to lead dances and make requests of their own. Among Serbs, *Svekrvino Kolo* is customarily danced for a minimum

of three full circles around the courtyard. Because dancing often occurs on the street in front of the groom's home among Roma, however, the *svekrva* may dance *Svekrvino* for some 30-45 minutes, depending on how far up and down the street she leads the line.

For the *zasevka*, the groom's mother also dresses in attire that visually signals her special status. Her signature decoration consists of a red rose pinned on the right side of her hair. For those Serb women choosing to dress "traditionally" (i.e., in folk attire), the *svekrva* may also be dressed in the peasant-style woven red dress called a *futa* which is the strongest symbol of her status, as well as possibly a scarf tied over her hair, an embroidered towel tucked into her waistband, and perhaps an embroidered velvet jacket.[55] Among Roma, the *svekrva* wears customary Romani attire consisting of elaborate wide pantaloons called *dimije* or *šalvare*, a thin silk or linen shirt, and a short vest.[56] In this regalia, the *svekrva* greets her husband and then the remaining important guests in order of their seniority. Once these greetings are finished, she is ready to perform "her" dance.

*Svekrvino Kolo* at the *zasevka* is a highly public event, involving (and performatively constituting) the family's extended social circle in one of the most iconic rituals of the wedding ceremonial. The groom's mother is accompanied by assembled kin and invited guests during the dance, arranged in the line next to her in order of seniority and importance. Her family dances along with her to show their support and indicate their approval. Roma in particular invite a wide circle of extended family and friends to participate in the *zasevka*, and women from all of these families also dress in formal Romani folk attire to participate in the dancing throughout the

---

[55] See Zlatanović (2003) for a detailed discussion of the symbolic import of the *futa,* particularly the connotation of fertility and luck associated with the red-colored skirts traditionally only worn by the groom's mother and the bride at weddings.

[56] This is the attire typical for the urban Romani community of Vranje proper. Among Roma in Vranjska Banja, Pavlovac, and other outlying communities nearby, however, women customarily dress in folk attire more like rural forms of dress once worn by Serbs: a dark blue *futa* dress of woven cotton with lace-like decorations in black cord around the lower edge, a white blouse, and a kerchief of pink, yellow, or plain white color knotted under the chin.

event. The dance line may extend far up and down the street in front of the groom's home, with all of the participating women swaying in perfect tandem while dancing, a vibrant tapestry of billowing pantaloons and embroidered vests in every imaginable color. At one Romani wedding I attended in Vranjska Banja in 2010, over 100 women filled out the dance line during *Svekrvino*. The dancers looped around an outdoor, paved soccer field attached to a nearby elementary school, and the line was so long that it wrapped completely around the outside edges of that space, such that the last woman in line danced only several feet away from the *svekrva* at the front of the circle. For the watching community, such a long dance line vividly conveys the widespread respect that a celebrating family enjoys. At the same time, it publicly confirms community acceptance of the enhanced status and changing social role of the groom's mother as a result of her son's marriage.

Because of the cultural and social importance of the *Svekrvino* ritual, Roma and Serbs alike in Vranje evince demonstrative, visceral reactions to the musical accompaniment and performance of this ritual dance. My interlocutors in Vranje regularly articulated explicitly physical reactions to ritual music and performances. I argue that the symbolic import of the ritual is strongly tied to—and mediated by—corporeal dimensions of participants' "experience" of the moment via the sounds of the music and the movements of the dance (Csordas 1993, 1994). The sensorial elements of the *Svekrvino* dance ritual—hearing (and feeling) the throbbing beats of the drum, swaying the body to the rhythm while dancing, spontaneous lifting of the arms during particularly evocative musical improvisations—are thus critical for producing the "intensity" of experience that is affect.

These physical and sentimental responses to music and dance are shaped, however, by memory and processes of enculturation that link particular musical sounds to ritual practices in

culturally sanctioned ways. A critical factor in the affective import of the *Svekrvino* ritual is the highly specific musical accompaniment provided by the musicians for this very dance. *Svekrvino Kolo* is danced to a suite of melodies in a slow 7/8 meter. The specific melody for *Svekrvino* is always the first tune performed; other melodies in the same meter are then performed to extend the length of the suite for long-term dancing and to create variety, but the musicians always periodically return to the specific *Svekrvino* tune at the prompting of the lead musician. Musicians thus ensure that the ritual aspect of the dance is continually confirmed by a distinctive musical "soundscape" associated with the dance of the groom's mother.

Many ritual tunes and dances in Vranje are set to a slow 7/8 meter, meaning that this metric pattern evokes strong reactions for locals who closely associate it with the most intense moments of celebrations.[57] In fact the role of the large double-headed *goč* drum is particularly important during this dance in Vranje, with the drummer often performing directly in front of the *svekrva* throughout. "Without the *goč*, there is nothing (*Nema ništa bez goč*)," Smilja, a Serb woman in her late fifties, emphatically assured me. *Svekrvino* customarily begins with the drum performing solo for a time, as if to emphasize the specific percussive motif that accompanies the ritual performance.

Locals describe both the slow 7/8 meter and the accompanying dance as *teško,* or "heavy," highlighting the distinctive feel and tempo of this repertoire.[58] Analyzing the gendered

---

[57] Slow tunes in 7/8 meter are also associated with important ritual dancing in other Balkan communities, such as among Serbs in eastern Kosovo and various Romani groups in Kosovo and Macedonia (see Seeman 1990:23; Silverman 2012:28).

[58] *Teško* literally means "heavy" in Serbian, but in the local context also connotes the "slow" speed of the meter. The term can also mean "difficult," and may also refer to the fact that it requires skill and familiarity with the music to dance slowly enough to remain on beat and avoid making mistakes. In fact, Romani brass musicians in Vranje tend to play these melodies faster for local Serbs because they maintain that Serbs today often dance poorly and are less knowledgeable about music than previous generations. At Romani events, heavy dances are usually played much more slowly, and with more metric improvisation and syncopation, because Roma generally are much more comfortable with both the dances and music. This is probably a result of more frequent opportunities to dance at

differences of dance in Prespa Albanian communities from Macedonia, Jane Sugarman (2003) indicates that men's dances are often described as "heavy" in contrast to the "light" style associated with women. Critically, she notes that these descriptions are not merely indications of the slower tempo of the dances, but also connote "both seriousness and importance, thus alluding to the greater emotional depth that is seen to characterize men's performances" (2003:91). Similarly, I argue that the slow beat and movements of *Svekrvino Kolo* in Vranje are linked to experiences of the "heavy" emotional import of the ritual it serves to enact—and this emotional heaviness (or affective intensity) in turn draws upon and reinforces the social, symbolic significance of the ritual.

The sonic importance of the *goč* drum is particularly powerful for heightening the emotional state of the dancing *svekrva*. Many women of both communities enthusiastically comment that upon hearing the heavy beating of the *goč* drum in brass ensembles they automatically feel butterflies in their stomach and have the urge to dance this particular dance, *Teško* or *Svekrvino*. Family members often insist that drummers solicitously cater to the *svekrva* during *Svekrvino*. Drummers frequently perform directly in front of the woman while she dances, even appearing to lead the groom's mother along as they play. At one Romani wedding in Vranjska Banja in 2003, for example, the videographer captured a moment when Nebojša, the groom, urgently beckoned to the *goč* player Pera, directing him to come right in front of Nebojša's mother as she danced with the sieve. The musician obliged, and Nebojša immediately turned to his mother and grinned broadly while lifting his arms in jubilation. His mother in turn bent forward from the waist as she danced, clearly moved by the drumming, and waved the sieve

---

Romani community celebrations, and the greater emphasis that Roma place on actively teaching children how to dance and/or play music.

from side to side in front of her as the musician robustly thumped the drum just inches away from her.

Romani brass musicians' performance practices precipitate the emotional catharsis and displays that give this ritual its semantic "heaviness." Musicians interact closely with the *svekrva* as she dances, using musical improvisation to heighten her emotional state. In addition to the heavy, sometimes syncopated beating of the *goč* drum, musicians use periodic solos of the leading trumpets and saxophone or clarinet to raise the level of excitement during the dance-ritual. Celebrants particularly respond to microtonal melodic improvisations that are highly valued because they induce emotional excitement among celebrants. Performers launch into wailing solos that draw out specific pitches, add complex ornamentation, or else perform exaggerated slow ascending or descending pitch slides, all executed over the nearly trance-inducing percussive playing of the mid-brass instruments and drum.

Brass musicians thus serve to heighten the impact of the ritual act, as the complex combination of dance movements, melodic improvisation, rhythmic support, and public performance pushes the sentimental significance of *Svekrvino Kolo* for celebrants (especially the *svekrva*) into a state of affective "high." At a Romani wedding I attended in *Gornja Čaršija* in 2011, for example, *Svekrvino* had only recently begun in the narrow street in front of the groom's home when the saxophone player launched into a solo. Immediately, the *goč* drummer slowed the tempo dramatically, using the thin wand to rap out staccato light beats on one side of the instrument while punctuating the meter with spare but powerful thumps of the heavy beater on the other. The combination of the melodic solo and the elastic slowing of the tempo immediately affected the *svekrva*, who raised her arms in happiness and turned to face the musicians while dancing. As the women next to her also lifted their joined arms above their heads in celebration,

she drew a few bills from a small wallet she was carrying and laid them on top of the drum, and then extended a few more to the saxophone player, tipping the musicians for their performance. No guest or bystander could miss the strong connection between the instant heightening of the woman's celebratory mood and the effect of the musical improvisations aimed at her by the musicians.

While many women dance *Svekrvino* calmly for much of the ritual's duration, emphasizing the gravity and dignity that becoming a *svekrva* entails, Serb and Romani celebrants who are particularly moved by the music break into more exuberant bodily performances. Breaking from a customarily upright stance where the torso and limbs are fairly static, women will shake their heads, close their eyes, and raise their arms higher at particularly stirring turns of the melody, or in response to an improvisatory solo when a particular musician draws closer. At a Serb wedding in Preševo in 2011, the *svekrva* wove her head back and forth in response to a particularly florid interpretation of the melody by lead brass musicians, smiling at them in response, and proceeded to turn her body from side to side for the next few measures of the dance in a manner that clearly signaled her rising excitement. Her overwhelming pride and emotional excitement during these first few moments of *Svekrvino Kolo* was evident to all through these bodily gestures of engrossment.

While dancing, women also bend deeply from the waist, exaggerate the footwork and bodily movements of the dance, and wave the decorated sieve in front of them at such moments, appearing completely lost in the music. Sometimes, they let go of the line and dance solo for a time when they are particularly moved. Turning in place and raising the sieve with both of her hands, a woman may demonstratively rotate the sieve and swing it in the air. I witnessed women dancing with it almost as if with a partner, admiring it and showing it off to the watching guests

and onlookers. Such scenes illustrate the complex confluence of ritual symbolism, gendered subjectivity, and musically-induced affect during this dance-ritual. A *svekrva* may further highlight the importance of the moment by channeling the expression of her deep feelings into improvisatory displays of the very object that symbolically ties the *Svekrvino* dance to her ritually-enhanced status.

Romani brass musicians variously anticipate or respond to these displays by the *svekrva*, using their instruments and their bodies together to produce and prolong particularly intense moments. Corporeal engagements by, and with, the musicians are critical for producing affect. Indeed, the groom's parents and relatives often request specific "modes of attention" from the musicians in order to frame the ritual moment (Csordas 1993). During solos by the melodic instruments, for example, musicians often approach the *svekrva* as she dances, bending to play toward her feet, pointing the bells of their instruments toward her face, or even playing next to her ear to direct the energy of these improvisations at her in a very physical way. At a Romani wedding in Vranje in the summer of 2010, the father and mother of the groom left the front of the line to dance together in the center during *Svekrvino*. With sieve in hand, the groom's mother danced just in front of the drummer. Several times during the dance, the groom's father and other relatives lavishly tipped the drummer when he dropped down onto one knee in front of the *svekrva*, playing powerful solos on the drum while she danced over him. As he played, money fluttered down over his head and his instrument as the men of the groom's family flipped out bill after bill in appreciation of this explicit recognition of the *svekrva*'s elation and pride. Friends from the community explained to me that this particular wedding had been postponed several times over the course of five years because of a series of deaths in the bride's and groom's families, respectively. The wedding was particularly poignant for all involved because of these

losses, but also because it was *finally* taking place, allowing them to celebrate the union in properly jubilant fashion in front of particularly large numbers of guests and bystanders. *Svekrvino Kolo* in this context was especially emotional, encapsulating all of these dynamics in one performative ritual display.

Locals closely link the symbolic import and emotional power of this ritual to a deep appreciation of its musical dimensions, and the overwhelming "urge" to physically perform the dance, in their articulate discussions of *Svekrvino*. So powerful is the bodily performance of this ritual that even those whose circumstances do not qualify them to become a *svekrva* are sometimes granted the opportunity to perform this dance at weddings—in particular, women who do not have male children. In such cases, sisters and sisters-in-law of the groom's mother become "honorary" *svekrve*, donning appropriate attire and taking a turn leading *Svekrvino Kolo* at the invitation of the groom's biological mother. Zlatanović (2003) comments extensively on the phenomenon of three—or even five—*svekrve* at Serb weddings in Vranje. At one Romani wedding I attended in Vranje in 2009, three different women danced in the role of *svekrva*. After the groom's biological mother finished leading three full circles, she handed the sieve to the next woman, who led the line around the courtyard once before the sieve was given by the biological *svekrva* to the third woman, who led the last circle before the dance finished. In the town of Preševo, too, I attended a Serb wedding in 2011 where two sisters-in-law of the groom's mother also danced as *svekrve*. The women presented a striking tableau, identically attired in customary white blouses, red *futa* skirts, embroidered towels, and each wearing a red rose in their hair. The groom's mother explained that her sisters-in-law loved her son and had doted on him over the years, so she felt that they, too, should have the opportunity to dance *Svekrvino* at his wedding.

*Svekrvino* may even be enacted in cases where the conventional rules proscribing participation must be even more drastically bent in order to allow for its performance. I was struck when Milica, a Serb from Vranjska Banja, told me that she danced *Svekrvino* in front of her home when her *daughter* was married. We had just listened to a beautiful recording of *Svekrvino Kolo* by local Romani brass band *Zlatni Prsti* ("The Golden Fingers") in her small restaurant, and she was explaining how much this music stirred her every time she heard it. "Something begins to dance way down in my stomach every time I hear those throbbing beats of the *goč*," she commented with a smile while making a churning motion in front of her stomach with both hands. Since she never had a son, she had long regretted that she would never have a chance to dance this dance. On the day of her daughter's wedding, then, she requested it from the musicians even so because she was quite moved by the celebration, and by the thought that her only child was finally getting married—she told me that she even cried while dancing *Svekrvino Kolo*. She consistently referred to her love for the specific tune of *Svekrvino*—especially the distinctive meter—and her desire to dance to explain why she performed this ritual outside of its "natural" context. The semiotics and cultural significance of the ritual itself (in terms of its import for women's roles and the changing family dynamics highlighted by the wedding itself) may thus be subordinated to the desire to experience the emotional state evoked by its performance.

In another instance, one Romani woman in Vranje, Nurija, pointed out to me that she allowed her husband to take hold of the sieve and dance for a time during *Svekrvino* at their son's wedding in 2008. We were watching the video at their home, and as they were explaining the customs of the wedding they wanted to impress upon me that it was quite unusual for the groom's father to lead this particular dance. Nurija indicated that she wanted Miroslav to have

the opportunity because he spent a great deal of time taking care of their child when he was still young, preparing food for him and tending to him while she worked odd hours cleaning homes and buildings. Miroslav was touched by the offer, and danced enthusiastically for a time when his wife handed over the sieve. He hugged his wife to his left side as he led the dance line while waving the sieve in the air, and turned to face the musicians, his dancing family, and his wife with a broad smile on his face and both arms raised high in the air to show his complete abandon to the moment. Because Miroslav "took care" of their son Zoran in ways that are usually associated with doting mothers, sharing in the work of rearing the boy, his wife felt it appropriate for him to celebrate this achievement by dancing with the sieve in the same way as the groom's mother. Here again the sensory and embodied experience of performing *Svekrvino* to its specific musical accompaniment draws together the diverse threads of symbolic meaning, family dynamics, and sentimental engagement for even the most unlikely of participants. The performative power of the *Svekrvino* ritual is closely bound up with the affective dimensions of the musical sounds and bodily practices involved.

## 4.4 The *Sabaluk* or *Blaga Rakija*: Celebrating the Consummation of Marriage

The intense conjuncture of music, affect, bodily engrossment, and ritual symbolism marks most of the major segments of the Vranje wedding complex. I turn now to a discussion of these dynamics in the context of the last ritual event of local weddings. The *blaga rakija*, or *sabaluk*, celebrates the successful sexual consummation of the marriage. The groom's family uses this event to display the evidence of the bride's intact virginity to their relatives, the bride's family, and to the wider community. *Blaga rakija* ("sweet brandy" in Serbian) refers to the sweetened plum brandy that is prepared to celebrate the consummation, shared with guests, and taken to the bride's family on this occasion. Only Vranje Roma use the term *sabaluk*—among

Roma in nearby communities and among Serbs the event is called *blaga rakija*. *Sabaluk* may refer to the fact that the celebration traditionally begins early in the morning following the consummation, drawing from the Turkish word *sabah,* meaning "dawn." Alternatively, it may come from the Turkish word for "nightgown," *sabahlik*, referring to the main item used to display evidence of the bride's virginity.[59] Roma lay down a white nightgown on the bed to catch blood resulting from the bride's defloration.

Formal celebrations and ritual practices associated with the bride's defloration were once a pan-Balkan phenomenon, practiced by almost all ethnic groups in the region in various forms until the mid-twentieth century (Cowan 1990; Keil and Vellou-Keil 2002; Silverman 2012; Zlatanović 2003). Among Vranje Serbs, *blaga rakija* celebrations were still held into the 1950s (Zlatanović 2003). Today, however, only Romani communities practice the *blaga rakija/sabaluk*. As with other ritual segments of "traditional" local weddings, these consummation celebrations constitute core notions of gender, sexuality, and the nature of marriage that were held in common by members of both ethnic communities in Vranje. The following discussion focuses on ritual practices and celebrations enacted by the Romani community. I analyze how music and dance constitute the performative spaces in which affective experiences of ritual (and of the consummation of the marriage in general) reconstitute gendered identities and family dynamics in powerful ways.

The Romani *sabaluk* or *blaga rakija* begins early in the morning following the consummation itself. This celebration traditionally took place on the morning of the third day of the wedding, then, immediately following bride and groom's first night together. However, most Roma today consummate marriages up to a year in advance of holding "the wedding," allowing the couple to become formally joined together but giving the families time to accumulate

[59] I thank my colleague Neslihan Şen for pointing out the prospective connection to the Turkish word for nightgown.

resources and make plans for an appropriately elaborate celebration. The ritual forms and performative dynamics of the celebration, though, are quite similar regardless of the actual timing of the event. Because of space restrictions, in the following analysis I focus primarily on two particularly emotional aspects of *sabaluk* celebrations: the "waking of the bride" ritual and demonstrative displays of the nightgown with evidence of virginity.

Romani *blaga rakija* celebrations customarily begin with a ritual that locals call "waking the bride," or *vazdelape borja* in Romani (*budjenje snaške* in Serbian). Usually it is the groom's mother who verifies evidence of the bride's virginity on the nightgown. Once she confirms the "good news," the groom's family summons a brass band to play outside of their home in the early dawn (or morning) hours. More than merely kick-starting a third day of wedding celebrations, the sound of the music early in the morning announces to the whole community that the consummation has taken place, and more importantly that the bride's virginity was found to be "intact." This musical ritual simultaneously conveys the happiness of the groom's family and confirms the honor of the bride's parents who "preserved" her for this moment.[60]

Many Vranje locals vividly recounted the thrill they would feel when hearing this music begin very early in the morning. Older locals in particular reflect nostalgically on the practice of "waking the bride," remembering that this custom took place more frequently and with special pomp in their youth. In conversation after conversation, people focused on the unique musical accompaniment specific to this ritual. By custom, the large *goč* drum is played solo for long periods of time to wake the bride, with the drummer improvising free-rhythm (*rubato*) patterns.

---

[60] See Keil and Vellou-Keil (2002:73-74) for similar functions performed by Romani *zourna* and *daouli* (double-reed shawm and drum) musicians in the Serres region of northern Greece. The instruments, particularly the drum, were also traditionally used to announce the bride's virginity in the early morning; moreover, the musicians might also be asked to perform magical acts with their instruments to help the bride and groom successfully consummate the marriage if there were problems (i.e., pouring ouzo through the oboe-like shawm itself, and giving it to the groom to drink to make things "work," etc.).

Improvisations include periodic strikes of the heavy mallet, or *kopala*, punctuated by lighter taps and rolls produced by the thin switch, or *ranik*, on the other side of the drum.[61] These rolling sequences of drumbeats sonically cultivate an air of anticipation and suspense for listeners, grabbing the attention of all within earshot.

Locals highlight these drum solos when talking about this event. Miroslav, a middle-aged Romani man in Vranje, told me that this custom with its specific music is "the most beautiful thing" one could imagine, conveying through sound the joy, relief, and excitement associated with this milestone in wedding proceedings. Another Romani man from the same community remembers eagerly waking up to the sound of this drumbeat as a young child, even as early as 5 a.m., and rushing outside to find others already gathered on the street in order to watch the coming celebrations. Other locals, including Serbs, repeatedly told me that they feel goose bumps or notice their heartbeat speeding up when they hear this drumming early in the morning. If they do not go out onto the street to watch the proceedings, many told me that they would at least open a window to lean out and listen for a time, reflecting on yet another marriage "fulfilled" and celebration underway in the Romani community.

The powerful associations between the musical accompaniment of this ritual and its wider symbolic implications for marriage and family pride were perhaps most poignantly illustrated to me by Ajša's experiences when her relative's grandson was married. Her relative is also her next-door neighbor, and when the drum began to beat the rhythms of the waking of the bride one morning other friends and neighbors rushed into Ajša's house to congratulate her, thinking that it was her 20 year old son who had consummated a union. Stirred by the power of the music, but saddened that it was not her own son getting married, Ajša told me that she felt knots in her stomach for hours while she listened to the family celebrate to this music next

[61] Both *kopala* and *ranik* are Romani terms.

door—it was all she could do to regain sufficient composure in order to eventually join in the dancing and extend her congratulations to the family, as befits a close relative.

The "waking of the bride" may continue for anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour, as elders and relatives of the groom's family gather in front of the house to dance informally, drink toasts, and congratulate the groom's parents while the bride is being dressed and made-up inside the home. Although the drum is the central instrument for this ritual, the remaining brass instruments also play at intervals throughout. Here too, a suite of specific older melodies and songs is closely associated with the waking of the bride ritual. Elders react particularly strongly to each of these melodies, often demonstratively waving their arms in the air, calling out in approval, dancing in place while hugging relatives to their side, and tipping musicians in gratitude. At regular intervals, however, the other brass musicians fade out and allow the drum to continue beating the same stately rhythms. Family members react powerfully to these intermittent drum solos, which visibly raise the level of emotion between songs.

Because of the importance of the bride's virginity for Roma, this celebration is marked by particularly intense emotions associated with family pride, unity, and joyous celebration. If locals—neighbors and friends—become excited by this news, the families in question are that much more relieved and jubilant during the *sabaluk*. The bride's intact virginity is seen as proof of her morality and virtue, and brings prestige and honor to her husband's family even as it confirms the good reputation of her own natal family in the community. With so many emotions attached to the successful consummation of the marriage and proof of the bride's virginity, then, this initial "waking of the bride" custom is a highly charged moment of celebration for the groom's family. During the waking of the bride at one *sabaluk* in the summer of 2013, for example, the groom's mother called out elaborate praise of her "beautiful bride" during a drum

solo. As the other brass musicians launched into one of the older tunes, she waved her arms high over her head and stepped along with the beat, clearly taken by the music. When an elderly woman, a relative, approached her to congratulate her, the groom's mother suddenly broke into tears, repeatedly wiping her eyes as she struggled with the intensity of her feelings. Perhaps hearing one of these older melodies triggered memories of relatives now deceased or otherwise unable to be present, or else drove home to her the importance of this proud moment for her son and her family. Hugging the older woman to her side, the two danced together for a time while the *svekrva* dried her eyes and continued to celebrate.

At another *sabaluk* in 2014, the groom's mother similarly began to cry in response to the music of this morning ritual. The bride, dressed in her finery, had already emerged from the house to dance with the family, and the groom's mother hugged her close to her right side. At this moment, the musicians launched into a Romani song that is traditionally performed during this morning ritual, whose lyrics celebrate that the family's bride "has arrived" and extol her beauty. Musicians insert the name of the bride in question when singing this song, bringing its performance even closer to the lived experiences of the family at the moment. As the strains of this particular song rang out, the groom's mother was suddenly overcome by the moment and began to tear up; she continued to dance surrounded by her family and hugging her bride as the musicians sang and played, slowly regaining her composure. Some 30 minutes prior to this moment, by contrast, the *svekrva* was wreathed in smiles, calling out exuberant praise of her son and daughter-in-law while she danced with the nightgown draped over her head and shoulders. Family members brought her a stack of glass and porcelain plates, which she proceeded to shatter one by one to demonstrate her overwhelming happiness. These moments vividly illustrate the intense affective power of the specific music associated with these rituals, imbricated as it is

with feelings of happiness and pride that stem from the "proper" enactment of sexual propriety and marriage according to Romani custom.

At another event in 2010, the groom's father and several other male relatives were radiant in their happiness during the "waking of the bride." During a drum solo, the groom's father—still intoxicated from the previous night's wedding celebrations, and slightly disheveled from lack of sleep—raised his arms, called out exuberantly, wagged his head with eyes closed, and danced along to the stately rhythm in complete rapture. As the suite of songs progressed, he often anticipated the specific patterns of the drumbeat for specific melodies, pumping his arm in time as if instructing the drummer how to perform it, clearly unable to contain his excitement. At the height of his jubilation, he brought the drummer into the foyer of his home to beat the drum indoors. When his son's bride finally emerged, he immediately took her out onto the street to dance in public with her, hugging her against his side and allowing the musicians to serenade them from their positions in a complete circle all around them. Bystanders and family who were watching were enthralled; they beamed smiles at this display of love between the groom's father and his *bori*, or bride.

I was subsequently surprised to find out from community members, however, that this groom and bride had consummated the marriage several years prior. They even had a child, a young girl, who participated in the wedding. Locals explained that the family had been forced to postpone the wedding multiple times due to financial concerns and a series of deaths in the family; thus, their emotions were particularly intense because they were *finally* able to hold a wedding and display to the community their happiness with this match. These circumstances made the "waking of the bride" particularly poignant for the groom's father, who insisted on holding this ritual celebration (much like the wedding as a whole) to the fullest possible extent—

despite the fact that it did not mark the actual consummation—in order to express his overwhelming pride and joy.

The "waking of the bride" continues until the bride herself appears. During this time, relatives of the groom have been helping her to dress in elaborate folk attire, styling her hair, and perfecting her makeup. At the same time, other necessary preparations—making and bottling the sweetened brandy, assembling gifts to be distributed, and preparing evidence of the bride's virginal blood for display—have been finalized and all other family members have dressed and are ready to begin. The remainder of the event comprises hours of public celebratory dancing by the groom's relatives and, later in the day, the bride's family.

Ritual dancing, in a formal order that recognizes the age, degree of relation, and status of celebrants, forms a major part of these *blaga rakija* celebrations—the dynamics are similar to those that mark all other major family celebrations in the Romani community, as discussed above. What is unique to this situation, however, is the emphasis on displaying evidence of the marriage's consummation and the bride's virginity. The dancing that takes place throughout the *sabaluk* revolves around the figures of the bride and the groom's mother, who carries the blood-spotted nightgown throughout. In Vranje proper, it is customary for the gown to be wrapped in a semi-translucent red scarf, usually clutched in the right hand of the groom's mother; at the climax of the dancing, when a large number of guests and bystanders have assembled, the *svekrva* will open the gown up to publicly show the evidence to the watching community. In outlying communities like Vranjska Banja and Pavlovac, however, the gown is usually carried open and on display from the outset and throughout the day, ensuring that everyone present at all times can view the marks that signal their bride's "intact honor."

From the initial dance of the morning, then, the gown is displayed in dramatic ways to guarantee that it attracts the attention of all present. At the beginning of one *blaga rakija* celebration in Vranjska Banja in 2011, the groom's mother showed the gown while leading the heavy, slow *Svekrvino* dance. She held the customary bottle of sweetened brandy perched on her upturned right palm while the remainder of her arm passed through the straps of the gown, so that it hung as if from a hanger with the marks of blood clearly highlighted by the early morning sunlight shining through the fabric. She danced with a serene smile on her face, accompanied by the bride in the place of honor immediately to her left. Other female relatives of the groom filled out the remainder of the dance line that wound around the courtyard of the groom's home. Following the sounds of the music, many neighbors had also arrived to view the celebration and watched with intense curiosity from the sidelines.

Because the "showing" is all-important in the context of the *sabaluk*, the groom's mother may use a wide variety of demonstrative techniques to display the nightgown during the highly public dancing that can continue for hours. Very often the gown is draped across an outstretched arm or hung from it by its straps for long periods of time. Because much of the dancing, particularly in solo fashion by women near the front of the line, involves having the arms raised or spread apart, this technique maximizes the exposure of the gown and the visibility of any blood stains. As she dances, the groom's mother often waves the gown in the air along with the music, or stretches it between her two raised hands and lifts it above her head while calling out praise for her son and daughter-in-law.

At a *sabaluk* in Vranje in 2005, the groom's family processed to the main square of the *mahala* before the groom's mother opened the gown up for all to see. As she danced, she continuously adjusted the gown so that it was neatly stretched across her arm, allowing the marks

to be maximally visible for the very large crowd that had gathered to watch. A range of relatives and friends at this point approached the bride, dancing at the head of the line, and placed gifts of cash into her right hand while congratulating her. Dancing solo across from her, her mother-in-law calmly continued to lift and wave the gown in the air for several more minutes as onlookers craned their necks to see, called out praise, or came up to family members to congratulate them with handshakes and kisses on the cheek.

On other occasions, I witnessed even more flamboyant displays with the gown. At several events I saw the groom's mother drape the gown across her shoulders or the top of her head as if it were a shawl, for example. One particularly evocative display involves tucking the upper part of the gown into the waistband of the *svekrva*'s skirt, leaving the remainder of the gown to hang across her lower abdomen and legs much like an apron. While this method also allows the groom's mother to free her hands for carrying the sweetened brandy, accepting congratulations from well-wishers, and joining the dance line, the particular placement of the gown across the *svekrva*'s midsection is interesting in itself. In this position, the marks that evidence the successful sexual union of her son and daughter-in-law are draped across the very part of the woman's body that are associated with her own already-proven fertility: her uterus and sexual organs. Much like the connection between the groom's mother's reproductive success and her role in rituals to transfer fertility to the couple during the *Svekrvino* dance with the sieve, this action implicitly references the groom's family's desire to see the bride successfully produce children for the perpetuation of their lineage. Through her own proven status as wife and mother (especially of a son), the *svekrva* is semiotically linked to expectations of the new bride in the eyes of her husband's kin.

This connection to sexuality and fertility is further highlighted by the way that the *svekrva* may dance while wearing the gown across her hips. Very often it is when the band strikes up *čoček* tunes, either upbeat or heavy pieces depending on the wishes of the lead dancer, that many *svekrve* choose to tuck the nightgown into her waistband. The *svekrva* and the bride usually remain near the front of the dance line, often dancing solo across from others in the dance line. The groom's mother may use the performance conventions typical of Romani solo *čoček* at this time to heighten the dramatic impact of her display of the nightgown. Stirred by the music, I have seen the groom's mother on many occasions exaggerate the improvisatory abdominal movements of *čoček,* stressing the vertical lifting and dropping of her pelvis and hips in a manner that explicitly draws the eyes of observers to the gown stretched across her waist and legs.[62]

At one event in Vranje in 2009, the groom's family came from Niš (a city about two hours' drive to the north) in order to bring the gown and sweetened brandy to the bride's family and celebrate together. On arriving in the main square of the *mahala*, they piled out of vehicles into the street and begin an exuberant round of dancing while showing off the evidence of the bride's virginity. Shortly the groom's mother tucked the gown into her waistband. Dancing solo in the center of a circle of family and friends, facing her new daughter-in-law throughout, she performed very exaggerated solo movements for *čoček*. With a huge smile on her face, she

---

[62] Dance ethnologist Elsie Dunin's pioneering research since the 1960s on dance among Muslim Roma in Skopje, Macedonia, documented that solo-style *čoček* was once only performed by women at gender-segregated events, where women danced indoors amongst other women and out of the public eye. Both Dunin and Carol Silverman note that Roma at that time felt that the more overt movements of solo *čoček* would be considered too sexual and inappropriate to be performed in front of men, particularly in public on the street. Although weddings in Skopje (and in most other Romani communities in the area) are no longer gender-segregated for the most part, and *čoček* is danced in public as part of women's habitual repertoire at events, some of the movements of *čoček* still carry certain implicit, sexual connotations. For this reason, women often prefer to perform more elaborate solo *čoček* moves primarily in the company of family members or others of the same gender. My impression is that solo *čoček* danced on the street at weddings in the present-day appears on the whole more reserved and subtle than the more flamboyant movements women use in more intimate settings, or when dancing is less inhibited while among other women.

repeatedly used particularly dramatic abdominal movements as she danced, seeming to flick or throw her pelvis up and down with rhythmic regularity. The nightgown appeared to pulse along with her movements, and the all-important markings of blood on the white fabric of the gown appeared all the more prominent. Her jubilation and happiness were evident for all to see, but these movements also deliberately drew all eyes to the gown itself.

The sexual associations implicit in this style of movement during *čoček* also reference the important symbolism of the nightgown itself: for observers of the event, the gown represents both sexual virtue on the part of the bride (through her virginity prior to marriage) and the sexual success (or prowess) of the groom in consummating the marriage. The couple is praised during this celebration for embarking on the path of community-sanctioned sexual intimacy, as man and wife in a patriarchal context where the fertility of the couple is of paramount importance for perpetuating the groom's family line and name. The connection of women with appropriate sexuality—both in terms of sexual virtue and procreative power—is particularly important at this moment, and thus the *svekrva* uses dramatic performative conventions to expressly highlight these connections while publicly displaying the evidence of her daughter-in-law's virginity.

Considering this emphasis, the bride herself is a main focus of attention at this celebration, and particularly intense feelings of pride and joy are evoked in the act of dancing with her throughout the celebration. Beginning with the groom's mother, elder female relatives are particularly keen to dance with the bride. Not only do they show her off to the watching public, but they also corporeally express their approval, love, and pride for the bride's intact "honor" and prospective fertility through the performative medium of dance. The musicians are critical here—the quality of their music, but in particular their skillful improvisations, provide an

important affective boost for expressing strong emotions among members of the groom's family in such moments.

In the crush of people, the right combination of musical improvisation during a *čoček* and beautiful dancing by the bride bring the emotions of watching relatives to a head. At a *sabaluk* in Vranje in 2009, the bride's maternal grandmother was particularly moved while watching the young woman perform elaborate solo moves for *čoček*, emphasizing movements of the abdomen and hips while gracefully waving her arms and rotating her wrists. She rushed up to the bride and placed her hands on either side of her face, planting a firm kiss on her forehead while other family and dancing celebrants looked on with benign expressions. The power of music and dance to shape the public expression of emotions arising from the confluence of gendered and family expectations at *sabaluk* celebrations cannot be overstated—it veritably constitutes how celebrants experience and understand the changing status of the bride, the groom, and their respective families, roles that are re-inscribed through the consummation of every marriage.

Perhaps even more critically, intense dance moments at *sabaluk* celebrations are also conducive spaces to reference and highlight the new bride's sexuality—the core theme of this particular wedding ritual. Older, married women in these contexts often coax brides to dance solo *čoček* movements that isolate or draw attention to body parts associated with feminine sexual beauty and appeal, such as the breasts, hips, and abdomen. It is not uncommon for older women to publicly (if indirectly) emphasize this connection by themselves gazing at or physically touching these parts of the bride's body while dancing with her. Such displays are performatively linked to expressions of their joy and pleasure in the youth and beauty of the new bride, but also connect these sentiments to the bride's sexual honor as demonstrated by her virginity until marriage.

At one *sabaluk* held in the Sarajina *mahala* in 2009, time and again older women leading the dancing performed elaborate *čoček* solos with the young bride. Moments when the groom's grandmothers, grandfather, and mother clustered around the bride to dance with her in response to sensuous *čoček* tunes played by the brass band were especially intense. Driven by the musicians' elaborate musical improvisations, the women were quite demonstrative, calling out loudly in praise of the bride while spreading their arms as if to envelope her in a passionate embrace. Many times these women wrapped their arms around the bride's waist, pulling her abdomen to their chests or laying their heads against her stomach for a time; at other times, they leaned in to plant kisses on the belly of the bride. The focus on the belly of the bride is particularly interesting in this context—it is as if these female elders are directing attention and praise at the bride's very uterus, which has been symbolically "opened" through the consummation to the young groom and his family.

Such joyous manifestations seek to simultaneously underline the bride's sexual appeal even as it references her chastity and restraint before marriage. The very women who are most concerned with monitoring the bride's sexuality, and who supervise the proper execution of initial sexual intimacy between the bride and groom, are the same persons who most actively encourage the bride to dance in demonstrative ways at the *sabaluk*. At the same time their very presence acts as a supportive screen for the bride's dancing (Silverman 2003, 2012), perhaps allowing her to be even more demonstrative while using solo *čoček* movements that draw explicit attention to her sexual appeal and body. Surrounded by the relatives who supervised her ritual defloration and the display of her intact virginity, the bride is encouraged by them to dance in a way that implicitly references her youthful beauty, sexual appeal, and entrance into sanctioned sexual relations with her husband. In effect, these elders use the powerful ambience

created by music and dance at the *sabaluk* to foster appropriate displays of the bride's new sexuality and to evince their pleasure at her nubility and prospective fertility.

While the groom's relatives are the primary celebrants at *sabaluk* celebrations, celebrations at the bride's home are similarly dramatic and powerful when the groom's family bring the evidence of the bride's virginity to their in-laws. The music provided by the brass band heightens the intensity of this moment where the two families meet for the first time since the consummation of the marriage. The groom's kin have come to celebrate the official sexual union of the couple with their in-laws, but more importantly to congratulate them for maintaining their daughter as a virtuous exemplar of the community's sexual and moral standards. In response, the bride's family are thrilled (and relieved) that all was "found to be well" with the young woman.

At a *blaga rakija* celebration in Vranjska Banja in 2011, the bride's mother enthusiastically praised her daughter while dancing with the nightgown. Performing solo *čoček* across from her daughter who was leading the dance line, the woman waved the gown around with her outstretched arms, displaying the gown to all the onlookers by turning slow circles as she danced. She repeatedly called out in praise: *"Jašaaaa me šuže čhajačeeeee... me džamutrenceeeeeee!!"* congratulating first her "beautiful daughter" and then her son-in-law. She often stretched the gown taut in front of her face, spreading her arms to maximize the visibility of the gown for those dancing and watching.

The importance of displaying the gown at the bride's home, especially by *her own relatives*, is significant. The family's reputation and honor depend upon the moral status of their daughter, and by passing this test of sexual virtue she has demonstrated to the community that her parents raised her in conformity with formal ideals for proper feminine behavior. This is particularly important for her mother—yet again, it is elder female relatives who are most

involved in upholding the patriarchal values that shape women's roles in family and community life. Through public rituals where practices are tightly linked with visceral emotional displays, married women in the community reinforce their control over notions of appropriate sexual behavior among younger women, and simultaneously facilitate their entrance into the patriarchal complex that shapes these women's lives through marriage.

As with the *zasevka* celebration discussed earlier, the power of the emotions experienced—and bodily expressed—by families at *sabaluk* celebrations is heightened by the highly public nature of the rituals. Visibility in front of a watching, "scrutinizing" community is necessary because of the significance of these celebrations for maintaining family honor and moral reputation. Indeed, many locals stressed the need to put on weddings in general (and *sabaluk*s in particular) so that they are "seen." Several locals told me that the oft-heard rhetorical question "did you see/watch the wedding?" (*Gledao li si svadbu?*) shows that locals cannot be completely happy about their childrens' marriage until they have "made" a wedding. Not only does the family clinch its reputation by adhering to valued traditions of the community, but they also enhance their status through successful demonstrations of the magnitude of their feelings of celebration and joy.

Changing conditions in Romani communities in and around Vranje have in some ways heightened the intensity of *sabaluk* celebrations, and the emphasis on highly public performances of the rituals. Since the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, economic downturn and rising nationalism have pushed many Roma to try to emigrate to western Europe; in some cases, they have obtained legal residence by seeking asylum, citing lack of jobs and discrimination back home. Large numbers of Vranje Roma have clustered in cities in Germany and Sweden in particular. As a result, many families in Vranje now have branches of kin living abroad.

Diasporic Roma often retain close ties to Vranje, however, and locals eagerly anticipate the summer season because many of these emigrants return to spend a portion of these months visiting, continuing work on home expansions with earnings from abroad, and attending or "making" wedding celebrations. Youth in particular look forward to summertime as prime time to "see each other," where flirtations and relationships may be initiated between young people who live far apart for the remainder of the year. With the ongoing crisis in Vranje, prospective marriages to "*papiraši*" (literally "paper holders" in Serbian, a reference to their legal residence abroad) are particularly attractive for young people who face dismal conditions and lack of opportunities in present-day Vranje, offering them the hope of emigrating themselves.[63]

Despite the perks of emigration and life abroad in the diaspora, however, this trend also stirs anxieties about adherence to established community norms and values, including those associated with marriage and sexuality. For families and youth who live abroad, monitoring and controlling youth sexuality is a particularly difficult issue. Young Roma in the diaspora may socialize and "go out," side-stepping the closer adult supervision that occurs in the compact, enclosed socio-spatial environment of *mahala*s in Vranje. Additional opportunities for education and work abroad also mean that many young diaspora Roma are not ready or willing to marry until later in life. At the same time, Roma in Vranje who hope to marry into the diaspora often hold out for such prospective relationships, delaying the age at which they marry in turn. Young Roma also increasingly form relationships and "date" for extended periods of time, spending more time getting to know prospective partners before committing to engagement and marriage.

Many Roma cite these recent trends as complicating traditional outlooks on marriage dynamics, in particular with respect to regulating premarital sexual behavior and the chastity of young women. Young women are more closely scrutinized and more harshly evaluated for any

[63] See also Chapter 6 for a discussion of the economic crisis and its effects in Vranje.

aspersions on their virginity before marriage; at the same time, sex before marriage can also be stigmatizing for young men if they seem lustful, or unable to maintain respectful decorum in relations with others in the community. One unmarried young man told me that his mother often grumbled to him about her hunch that he was sleeping around. She would tell him that he "should have taken a wife if he wanted to do *such things*." In the end, however, there is no test of virginity for young men in the community. For young women, though, the institution of the *sabaluk* continues to formally discourage premarital sex in order to maintain honor. Some members of the community intimated to me that *sabaluk* and *blaga rakija* celebrations in Vranje have become even more dramatic, public, and intense as a result of these new developments in the lives of community youth. For families whose children are marrying it is even more important to demonstrate evidence of sexual morality precisely because they are marrying at a later age, perhaps after dating for some years, and especially if they have lived abroad where sexual mores may be suspect.

One informant from Vranjska Banja opined that families "waved the bride's gown around" for much longer and with more gusto at present-day *blaga rakija* celebrations than some 20 years ago. He himself had not lived a "typical" life for a community member, living away from home while pursuing higher education in the former Yugoslavia and marrying later in life. He felt that this experience gave him a more worldly perspective on new developments. He argued that many families, especially those now living abroad, still feel a need to stem potential gossip about the moral reputation and sexual chastity of their daughters or new brides. By showing the marks of the bride's "honor" more demonstratively, and expressing their jubilation and satisfaction even more passionately, they are fighting to prove to the community that they continue to adhere to important, traditional values despite living in changing times.

Yet even though many acknowledge how much the lives of young people are changing, Roma of both genders and all ages regularly reiterated the importance of proper sexual behavior and the role of the *sabaluk* for demonstrating family honor and reputation. I often heard stories about relationships where young Roma dated for years, and in many cases friends and age mates seemed sure (or knew for a fact) that the couple were already sexually intimate. Many young men told me that they were eager to enjoy sex with a partner, and chafed at the idea of waiting because young women were more anxious about premarital sex. At the same time, however, many of these youths were the most adamant that their prospective bride should be a virgin when they meet her.

In the summer of 2011, one particularly close informant confided that he was suspicious about his new wife's "condition" when they consummated their marriage several months earlier. His bride lived with her family in Germany, and came back to Vranje during the winter after several months of dating to formalize their union by consummating the marriage. He explained that her trip itinerary left only a narrow window of several days for the act to take place, and the exact timing was eventually set for the specific day when her parents could come into town to participate in the *sabaluk*. When the night arrived, the groom learned that his prospective wife was menstruating at the time. He became quite suspicious, despite being assured by his mother that she would be able to tell the difference between blood shed from a ruptured hymen and that of menstruation.[64] He proceeded with the consummation because of her assurances, but remained uneasy about the veracity of the whole situation. His bride assured him of her premarital chastity

[64] I was unable to determine if local Romani women generally believed that menstrual blood could be differentiated from that of a broken hymen, or if his mother was simply so eager to have the marriage proceed that she fibbed to her son in order to keep him complacent. As a bride from the diaspora, this girl not only brought prospective prestige to the groom's family but also promised papers and economic opportunities to her son. The family was struggling financially at the time, and had long wanted their sons to marry women from abroad in order to achieve a better life.

when he questioned her about it, but even months later he was still visibly preoccupied with the issue and disturbed at the thought that she might not have been virginal. He reiterated over and over again that he would not have gone through with the union if he had known that she was not a virgin, no matter how much he cared for her—or, moreover, how much he stood to benefit from obtaining papers to live abroad as a result of the match.

Many families were equally concerned that their prospective daughters-in-law should be "honorable." Another young man's mother complained bitterly to me that her son was widely known to be "seeing" a young girl who had been briefly married and subsequently divorced. As a "*raspuštenica*" (literally "cast off woman"), the mother told me that she could never accept this young woman as a bride for her as-yet-unmarried son. No matter how much he cared for her, she insisted that she would rather see him "hang himself in front of the house" than bring her into their home as a bride. One of her primary objections in this case was precisely that this woman would not come as a virgin—by virtue of her previous marriage and divorce, her reputation was compromised and she could not bring the honor that a chaste bride would. With such a marriage, there would be no *sabaluk*, no sweetened brandy, and no celebratory dancing to bolster public face and reputation in the community.[65] Significantly, this young woman was not living in the diaspora—as a local girl, she could not offer papers or diaspora earnings to her suitor.

Despite widespread support for older sexual values and the institution of the *sabaluk*, many Roma in Vranje often spoke of ways in which the rules are informally manipulated to

---

[65] Because most Roma do not legally register marriages, when couples divorce it is usually a family-based affair. For young women, this usually involves refusing to continue cohabiting with their spouse and returning to live with her natal family—so long as they agree to take her back. Such decisions are complicated, however, by the knowledge that families may lose face as a result of broken marriages. In particular, young women will find it much more difficult to remarry after divorce, in part because they are no longer virgins. Locals explained that previously divorced young women often could only subsequently marry men who were themselves previously divorced, widowed, or else considerably older, from poorer families than their own, or even chronically ill. All of these factors would disqualify such men from obtaining younger, virginal brides from family's with good moral and social standing in the community.

accommodate scenarios where idealized values and practices were not followed for various reasons. I heard at times that an engaged couple might admit to their parents that they had already engaged in sexual activity prior to the engagement, or at least prior to a formal *sabaluk*. In such cases, the family often accepts this admission because at least the bride has lost her virginity to her prospective groom, irrespective of the timing. In other scenarios it was whispered to me that the bride may not have been a virgin even before becoming intimate with her new husband, but that for love or in order to maintain the relationship the groom would claim that he had deflowered her at some earlier time. Often, I felt that such compromises were made in cases where the families approved of the prospective match for other reasons—of late, this is particularly true of marriages where at least one spouse lived abroad and thus "had papers." Therefore the interpretation and regulation of sexual mores is increasingly contingent on the changing needs and circumstances of the community and its diasporic connections.

At the same time, the institution of the *sabaluk* or *blaga rakija* remains important and highly valued among Romani families despite slightly "loosened" sexual practices and marriage negotiations. Although Roma constantly swapped stories or joked about the breaking of norms against premarital sex, they remained wholeheartedly invested in putting on celebrations that celebrated the public fact of bridal virginity and the marriage's consummation. Consummation celebrations remain ubiquitous in the community. Indeed, they are increasingly the first formal rituals that clinch the union of a bride and groom because they are often held well in advance of the "actual" wedding.

Commentary by community members, often while watching such events live, illustrates the ongoing tension between formal values and practical accommodations in changing times. Many joked about couples for whom they knew that sexual intimacy had begun "long before"

the day being celebrated. People traded stories of grooms needing to prick a finger, or slaughter a chicken, in order to produce stains on the gown for the eyes of the community—or even the family—with chuckles and winks. One man from Banja told me that I should keep my eye on the large drum during *blaga rakija* celebrations; should one of the heads rip or break during the event, it was a sign that the family was "lying" about the bride's virginity and the marks on the gown. Such sayings, and folk beliefs about ways in which families might fib about the consummation, indicate current anxieties about the conflict between ideal values upheld by the *sabaluk* ritual on the one hand and perceived changes in sexual behavior on the other.[66]

If newer strategies have become common—if tacit—knowledge, why do the vast majority of families continue to hold elaborate *sabaluk* ceremonies? In part, this is because the ritual practices that surround marriage and family relations constitute an important foundation of Vranje Romani identity. All families anticipate *sabaluk* rituals to formally secure marriages, indicating the affective power of these rituals to facilitate the changing status, relationships, and personal subjectivities of family members involved in the wedding. At the same time, these practices mark participants as full members of the Romani community who continue to ascribe to "quintessentially" Romani cultural values. Marriages between Roma and non-Roma remain rare, and Roma often opined that Romani family values are superior and better preserved than those of non-Roma (both in Vranje and in Europe more generally). They particularly stressed that Roma continue to cultivate "wholesome" patriarchal values, where women are still raised to be faithful

[66] This is not to suggest that premarital sex did not occur in earlier times. Stories of older, customary practices used to censure non-virginal brides (and their families) indicate that such occurrences were known in the past (or alternatively, show that the community in the past—as now—does not recognize the possibility that some women do not bleed as a result of first sexual intercourse). However, it is also true that in the past marriages were usually arranged between youth in their early to mid-teens. Prior to marriage, youth were much more dependent on parents and family circles, and perhaps too young to have the desire and know-how to engage in sexual intercourse even if they could duck the watchful scrutiny of older family members and neighbors. Today, there are expanded opportunities for premarital sex because youth are waiting longer to marry and can meet away from adult supervision.

wives and nurturing mothers. Through sensorily rich, highly emotional rituals like the *sabaluk*, the extended Vranje Romani community makes claims for perpetuating "traditional" values in the hopes of maintaining crucial connections between diaspora and home, past and present. Strategic adjustments to the ritual ensure that it remains a cornerstone of community-based identification focused on distinctively Romani ideals of family, marriage, and sexual virtue despite the contingencies imposed by transnational socioeconomic dynamics.

## 4.5 Conclusion

I argue that the continued desire for many Roma to maintain *sabaluk* rituals "to the letter," and perhaps attempts to heighten the performative elements of customary practices, point to the power of affect, embodiment, and memory for reconstituting social identity through cultural performance in Vranje. As a community facing the strain of economic crisis, migration, and diasporic distancing, Vranje Roma turn to wedding rituals and musical practices as bastions of "tradition" to reaffirm ideal values and shared understandings of self. The mutually constitutive roles of memory and affect are critical to these processes, making ritual practices desirable even when the social context in which they are enacted has shifted—or perhaps *because* such changes threaten older symbolic and social orders. Memories of family members and neighbors all performing wedding rituals according to an established, highly prized collective script of music, dance, and symbolic practice shapes locals' experiences of affect (and, in turn, emotion) during rituals. Because of the ways that collective practices are remembered as tradition through specific music and dance practices, when locals engage in these rituals their bodily experiences serve to "ground" and "naturalize" the symbolic and social meanings of their actions (Sugarman 1997). Affect is the spark that yokes bodily practices, ritual symbolism, and collective memory together at Vranje weddings, producing a powerful performative space for

individuals to publicly reconstitute (or reaffirm) various identities: gendered, familial, sexual, and ethnic.

Romani musical practices are the preeminent medium for producing this all-important intersection of affect, embodiment, and ritual symbolism—a configuration that makes ritual performance "efficacious" for reconstituting actor identities, subjective selves, and the social order (see Kratz 1994). The performative reconstitution of identities in this context is deeply mediated by bodily experiences of—and engagement with—seminal musical and dance practices (Bourdieu 1977; Cowan 1990; Csordas 1993, 1994, 2011; Theodosiou 2011); moreover, these processes build upon the affective and (in turn) emotional dimensions of such experiences for (re)constituting the social worlds of participants (Cowan 1990; Lyon and Barbalet 1994; Romas-Zayas 2011). While the *sabaluk* may have heightened salience because of its close connection to the (literal) reproduction of the Romani community, I argue that all ritual practices within the wedding complex, for both Roma and Serbs, remain desirable because of locals' powerful connection to music and dance associated with these celebrations. Locals look forward to weddings for the music and dancing, they are most articulate when discussing these aspects of weddings past and present, and they often describe the deepest links between their sense of self (personal, familial, gendered, ethnic) and emotion in weddings through discussions of music and dance practice.

Music and dance therefore remain the most important "traditions" that these communities seek to retain through wedding rituals, in spite of rapid and often disconcerting economic, social, and cultural shifts in recent decades. As a result, the specialized knowledge and performance conventions of professional Romani musicians are central to embodied, emotional articulations of identity in Vranje. In the next chapter I turn to an investigation of yet another cultural domain

shaped by intersections of musical affect, embodiment, and Romani musical practices—performances of power and ethnic relations.

# 5.

# Producing Pleasure and Performing Power—Identity Politics and Performativity in Romani Musical Performances

## 5.1 Introduction

On a hot day in the summer of 2006, I sat conversing with an elderly Romani guitar player on the porch of his home in Podvorce, the main Romani *mahala* in the city of Leskovac.[67] Bektaš was in his mid-sixties at the time, and eagerly spoke about his younger years as a popular musician. However, he also spoke candidly about his family's poverty, telling me that he began to work as a musician out of sheer necessity. The work was often difficult, comprising long hours in uncomfortable conditions without food or water—and dealing with demanding patrons. He told me that he had to accommodate celebrant desires in order to earn much-needed money, even if that meant accepting humiliating demands from those he was entertaining.

Bektaš recounted one such incident in lavish detail. He and several other musicians were performing at an event in the home of a Serb patron. While people ate and drank, Bektaš and his band played for various guests in turn while standing in the center of tables laid out in U-shape. With time, people became more animated after hours of taking in music, socializing, and drinking alcohol. At one point the host summoned the musicians to perform for a special guest, an older man seated together with his wife and family. After the man requested a song, Bektaš watched him pick up a fork, draw out a wad of money, and slowly skewer a series of bills one by one onto the tines. When the musicians concluded the song, the patron held up the fork dramatically and forcefully stuck it into the ceiling above him. He told the musicians that they would have to play "until the fork falls out" to receive the money—essentially for as long as the

[67] Leskovac lies roughly one hour's car ride north of Vranje.

man desired. He rattled off the names of several other tunes to the musicians, who dutifully picked up their instruments to play them all in order. Only after performing for nearly one hour, fulfilling several sets of specific requests and directing their full attention toward the man and his family, did he rise to yank out the fork and hand the musicians their tip.

This chapter explores the performative practices that shape and re-constitute relations between Roma and Serbs in Vranje during musical performances. Customary interactions between Romani performers and celebrants are deeply informed by historical and socioeconomic processes that ascribe low status to Romani professional entertainers, while simultaneously valorizing their musical skills and performance practices. To begin, I argue that Romani musicians are affective laborers whose services are expected to produce pleasure for patrons through solicitous attention and intimate engagement. I then turn to an analysis of how displays of power also produce pleasure for celebrants at Vranje events, where Romani musicians provide a critical medium for patrons to enact (and embody) privilege and prestige. I also explore how Roma and Serbs discursively debate performance conventions, showing how notions of tradition, occupational logistics, professional prestige, and ethnic inequality inform local narratives about performance traditions. I then turn to a discussion of "spectacular" Romani musical performances, illustrating how romanticized "Gypsyness" combines with notions of Romani low status to shape evocative performative dramas that allow Serb patrons to enact wild abandon and supreme power. Finally, I briefly point to ways that Romani performance practices are re-signified in the current socioeconomic climate in Vranje, where increased poverty and rising nationalism leads some Serbs to disparage customary interactions with Roma as "Gypsy bad manners," reinforcing the ethnic and cultural superiority of the Serb community.

## 5.2 Producing Pleasure: Romani Musical Performance as Affective Labor

As discussed in Chapter 4, music is more than just a sonic backdrop for celebrations and socializing in Vranje. Locals explain that good musicians expertly bring celebrants into heightened emotional states characterized by exuberance, openness, affection, and even ecstasy. Vranje Romani musicians' services are a form of affective labor, combining musical expertise with performance practices that are expected to produce pleasure for patrons by engendering complete engrossment in a celebratory state.

Recent scholarship describes affective labor as work (often corporeal in some way) involving interpersonal connections and aimed at producing intangible results that create certain states of being for consumers (Hardt 1999:95-96; Hardt and Negri 2000). Affective laborers are often expected to produce pleasurable experiences and evoke sentimental states (Hofman 2015; Korkman 2015). Korkman defines "feeling labor" as practices that produce "an affective intersubjective space for the incitement, experience, and articulation of emotions" (2015:197). She points to a distinction between "underlying affective intensities" and "culturally meaningful emotions," using the term feeling labor to show how both of these aspects come together to foster requisite intimacy and value in the services of affective laborers (2015: 198). This key dimension distinguishes affective labor from "conventional" forms of work concerned with material production. Affect, the ineffable and intangible relations (or responses) engendered between subjects, underpins the production of desirable states of being in patron-consumers through the skilled practices of professional laborers (like musicians).

Affect is seminal to the cultural value that informs the performances and skills of professional Romani musicians in Vranje. Locals use the term *ćef* to describe an experience of high spirits and emotional intensity that comes about during celebrations. The concept of *ćef* (or

*keyif*, *kefi*, *qejf*, etc.) is found among many groups in the Balkans, and has parallels throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East (see Caraveli 1985; Cowan 1990; Keil and Vellou-Keil 2002; Papataxiarchis 1999; Sugarman 1997; Theodosiou 2011).[68] *Ćef* is a "heightened form of experience" (Caraveli 1985), brought about through music and dance as well as pleasurable sociability (commensal participation in drinking, eating, etc.). Papataxiarchis (1991) indicates that *kefi* in the eastern Aegean involves achieving a "light" state of being, a state of joy and relaxation. Describing *kefi* he writes: "(t)he spirited body of the man who dances solo, a body animated by an all-embracing desire and elevated beyond earthly, material concerns into communitas proper, captures the aesthetics of kefi" (1991: 170). Cowan argues that *kefi* in northern Greece is an "ideal state in which individual and collective interests are happily congruent" (1990: 107). Sugarman makes a similar point by comparing *qejf* among Prespa Albanians to a state of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi 1990), where thought and action become sharply focused through participation in music and dance. The state of *qejf* manages celebrants' collective engagement and proper social interaction at events that bring together large numbers of people, lowering participants' inhibitions and fostering affection. *Ćef* is a highly social experience where individual participation in pleasurable activities ideally breaks down interpersonal barriers and fosters a celebratory atmosphere at events.

*Ćef* arises in the right context through a convergence of good company, food and alcohol consumption, and music and dancing. In Vranje people also discuss the pleasures of *ćef* in terms of *merak* ("passion" in Turkish), often using *merak* and *ćef* interchangeably. Good music and exceptional performances are praised as *meraklijsko/-a*, evaluated in terms of their potential to fulfill the *merak* of listeners. *Merak* also applies to an individual's express desire to have such

[68] The term comes from the Turkish *keyif*, itself from the Arabic *kayf*. Synonyms of the term are used throughout the Balkans in various languages as a result of centuries of Ottoman Turkish rule in the region.

experiences, their "passionate pursuit" of good music and dancing. An exceptional dancer, or someone well versed in the finer points of celebratory culture, is a *meraklija*—literally someone who pursues (or makes) *merak*. Both *ćef* and *merak* refer to intense emotional engrossment as well as the desire to actively produce such a state through convivial interactions.

Music and dance are potent mediums for cultivating *ćef*. In chapter 4 I discussed the affective power of music and dance at Vranje weddings, showing how symbolic cultural practices and individual subjective histories shape the import of specific musical repertoires for Vranje locals. Cowan (1990) also illustrates how music and dancing allow celebrants to achieve emotional engrossment and self-expression during weddings in Sohos, Greece. She describes how wedding guests request their favorite songs and dances from the musicians in order to dramatically and bodily "act out" their *kefi* for—and with—others at the event. At Prespa Albanian weddings celebrants choose songs whose texts speak to their emotional investment in the event, but they also use rousing performances of song (and instrumental music) to foster a sense of celebratory excitement among other participants, producing collective high spirits through musical activity (Sugarman 1997). Active participation in music and dance practices allows for intense interaction with others and dynamic engagement with the emotional elements of celebrations, lending itself well to the production of pleasurable states among attendees.

In Vranje, good music and dancing are seen as fundamental for producing *ćef* because music is closely associated with celebratory culture, and because music is believed to be inherently emotional. Good musicians are appreciated for their ability to act as catalysts for celebrants' emotional expression through their musical services. Such performances are often described as *za dušu*, "for the soul" in Serbian. Locals attribute pleasurable experiences to specific qualities of the music itself, either via repertoires that are coded as explicitly emotional

or through elements of musical performance (melodic progressions, dynamism, and improvisation) that are potentially exciting. One Vranje resident, Arsenije, told me that whole genres in Vranje were traditionally associated with sentimental reflection and emotional catharsis. While livelier music and dance tunes were typical during the day, in the evenings musicians would switch to listening tunes, love ballads, and songs of longing to set the atmosphere at social gatherings that would ideally continue into the early morning hours. Many locals point to Vranje's *karasevdah* song repertoire, whose themes of passionate love, tragic loss, and the difficulties of life inevitably evoke emotional responses from listeners.[69] Another local man, Boban, claimed that Vranje musicians are expert at evoking *dert* ("suffering" or "anguish" in Turkish) by performing specific repertoires in *mekamlijsko* fashion, softly and melismatically with long drawn-out improvisations that foster sentimental reflection. Here musically induced *ćef* may entail a celebrant's desire to express pain and sorrow instead of to find relaxation and joy—the emotional intensity and catharsis of the experience are important.

Celebrants manifest *ćef* through bodily gestures that express their rising, uncontainable excitement. These reactions are closely connected to the dynamics of musical performance, where the opening notes of a favorite song, a particularly evocative solo improvisation, or an intimate interaction with a musician instantly raise the level of pleasure. The physical gestures of *ćef* are fairly standardized in Vranje, allowing other celebrants to easily recognize them—and helping musicians to gauge the effect of their musical strategies on patrons. Seated individuals may lean far back (or far forward) in their chairs, or rise to sway or dance in place to music. They clap their hands or snap their fingers with the beat. They might squeeze their eyes shut in

[69] Literally meaning "black love/passion" in Turkish, the adjective "black" here refers to the genre's "heavy" emotional import. Vranje is famous within Serbia (and in the former Yugoslavia) for this genre of folk songs, primarily but not exclusively involving urban repertoire dating from the late 19th and early 20th century; it is Vranje's most recognizable musical "brand" in the region.

response to an evocative turn in the music, slowly wag their head from side to side, or throw it back as they absorb the sonic impact of the performance. Arms vividly depict high spirits during celebrations. People raise them high above their heads and spread them wide, fingers delicately extended as if to physically encompass the whole of the celebration, the other guests, the musicians, and even the sound of the music itself. I often witnessed the striking tableau of long chains of dancers simultaneously raising their joined hands above their heads during a particularly stirring musical improvisation. Drawn-out shouts of pleasure often accompany demonstratively outspread arms, constituting perhaps the most quintessential image of celebratory *ćef* in Vranje. At peak moments of intense pleasure, revelers may even shatter a glass or empty bottle, using a well-aimed toss that communicates both languid enjoyment of the moment and pleasure so deep that it trumps any consequences (in terms of money or property damage) of this deliberate breakage.

*Ćef* is also manifested by engaging with others in specific ways, underscoring the highly social nature of the celebratory state. Celebrants may clap their hand into that of a friend or relative nearby during a musical solo, reaching out to draw others into their state of exhilaration through a display of musically-induced camaraderie. As excitement grows, revelers link their arms together or lay them across the shoulders of others while dancing or swaying to the music together. Particularly stirring musical developments inspire celebrants to raise their glasses and toast one another, perhaps also twining arms together to quaff shots of brandy or gulps of beer in tandem.

Ultimate expressions of closeness and intimacy involve dancing together. Rising to dance often indicates a peak in the state of *ćef*, where celebrants can no longer restrain themselves from moving to the music in a quintessentially social way. I experienced this personally on many

occasions, perhaps most memorably one evening at an intimate gathering of several friends in a small restaurant in Vranjska Banja. After a home-cooked meal offered by the proprietors, we were all sitting around the table listening to the CD of a favorite local brass band. As we sipped brandy and beer the music began to affect each of us in turn, and in time conversation was replaced by singing along, drumming on the table, mutual toasting, and finally dancing. Two of my friends pulled me to my feet so that the three of us formed a short dance line that practically hovered over the rest of our party at the table. Those still seated called out praise and encouragement as we danced, raising their arms in tandem with us and whistling loudly. As we lifted our legs and drew out the moves during the pregnant pauses of the heavy, slow dance that we were performing, my friend turned toward me with eyes half-closed and his face split nearly in two by a grin of pure pleasure.

Intense *ćef* practically requires bodily engagement with fellow celebrants. Interpersonal physical contact signals good feelings and a desire to connect with others via shared experiences of pleasure. Yet bodily intimacy among celebrants is also a *means* to achieve enjoyment, producing shared intensity through collective participation. Bodily engagements shape how musicians produce *ćef* for celebrants—high spirits and pleasure come about through the personal interactions that musicians offer to celebrants. Hofman (2010, 2015) discusses how women tavern singers in Yugoslavia used bodily interactions with patrons to foster an atmosphere of solicitous attention and heighten their excitement. Theodosiou cogently explores the significance of bodily dispositions and physical intimacy between Romani musicians and Greek patrons for producing *kefi* (2011: 142-76). She shows how Greek patrons are particularly moved by intimate interactions with Romani musicians, where specific bodily dispositions and styles of playing can

variously evoke notions of community tradition, interethnic relations, and celebratory gusto to bolster the semiotic intensity of a musical experience.

Locals in Vranje value the *way* that musicians perform just as much as *what* they perform when it comes to making *ćef*. Performing musicians use bodily proximity and gestures of intimacy to draw out celebrants' excitement. One Serb informant, Boban, told me that older musicians in Vranje expertly conveyed a sense of *dert* even with their bodies, cultivating movements with their heads, arms, torsos, and instruments that complemented the music and fostered a sense of longing (or excitement) for listeners. People consistently cited the image of musicians playing directly into the ear of a celebrant when I asked them about good musical performances. I often witnessed celebrants who were in the throes of *ćef* bend towards the bell of a trumpet or reach out to draw the clarinet to their ear during an improvisational solo, as if wanting to direct the very vibrations of the sound into their heads to ramp up the excitement they were feeling. Jelka, a middle-aged Serbian woman, told me that she was happiest at an event when she could get the brass band to play her favorite song, *Da znaješ mori mome*. The song lyrics describe sorrow for lost youth and failing vigor in old age, a typical *karasevdah* piece (see fn. 69 above). She told me that she asks the musicians to kneel around her while they perform, using her hands to show me how they would only come to her waist and explaining that the sound of the song washes over her during such performances. She feels that at these moments the musicians are playing the song only for her. This intimate engagement with musicians' bodies implies a direct connection with the highly valued musical sound of performances. Physical proximity to the musicians also focuses the central attraction of celebrations, the music, upon a particular celebrant or group of revelers.

Many locals' accounts of the best musicians praise their intimate knowledge and personal connections with patrons. Praiseworthy musicians know the specific songs and dances that are favorites of specific celebrants, as well as the style of performance and bodily comportment that excite them the most. My Serbian landlord, Pera, reminisced about his favorite band of musicians during his youth one afternoon as we drank coffee in our backyard. His eyes lit up when he described the electric excitement of the moment when his favorite musicians would walk over to the table where he and his friends were seated. The performers always struck up a tune that was a favorite of someone in Pera's group, and would continue to play each young man's favorite songs in succession. They would gather around the table, playing into the mens' faces or next to their ears. Pera claimed that he loved these musicians for such performances. He told me that the musicians even refused to take additional tips from them after a time—"enough with money!" they would exclaim, saying that they wanted to play "out of pure *merak*" because they were pleased with their patrons' happiness.

Romani musicians in Vranje also cite intimacy as an important element of the professional capabilities of good entertainers. "Musicians have to be able to know the person's very soul" according to Bojan. They need to perform not just the right repertoire but also with the exact mannerisms that would please a particular celebrant. His friend Dejan recalled that his grandfather, Sejfa, remembered in fine detail the tastes of each of his best patrons in town. As a result, he often made more money in tips by playing to these men for just 10 minutes than he earned in several hours with the general audience at any venue. The familiarity that allows a musician to tap into a celebrant's "very soul" takes them straight to the heart of their emotional being, according to Dejan and Bojan, making musical affect essential for creating personal pleasure (see also van de Port 1998, 1999). Nezat, a young trumpet player from Banja, showed

me clips of his band performing for local politicians at a celebratory dinner to demonstrate how important it is for musicians to connect with the audience. He showed me how he raised the energy of the event by locking eyes with celebrants while he sang to them, counted out beats dramatically, or shouted aloud in tandem with them. He pointed out at various moments that men reached for their pockets to look for cash in response, saying "You see, *THAT* is how you keep people interested, how you keep them giving!" He argued that while performing music well is important, it is not always enough to inspire full *ćef*—engaging with your audience in dynamic ways, tapping into their desire and matching their energy to bolster their experience, is just as critical.

Because Romani musicians' services are *supposed* to produce pleasure for participants, locals (especially non-musicians) expect them to be genuinely invested in making *ćef*. Questions of monetary motivation sully the authenticity of the sentiments that musicians create for others. Non-musicians praise entertainers who seem to prioritize performing for the sake of *merak* and not (merely) payment, as in Pera and Boban's stories about their favorite musicians. The embodied affect produced through intimate relations between musicians and celebrants is endangered by the idea that it is rendered only in exchange for cash—it implies that the authenticity of sentiment produced through pleasurable sociability (the very crux of *ćef*) is false. In a telling parallel, Hofman (2015) shows how women *kafana* (tavern) singers in Yugoslavia were also subject to moral denigration if their performances were felt to be primarily motivated by money. Performers might emphasize their genuine emotional investment in services aimed at pleasing their audiences to deflect criticisms that their engagement with patrons was inauthentic, in essence akin to prostitution (see also Nieuwkerk 1995:124-129).

Anxieties over money in the midst of musically-produced intimacy point to another critical dimension of affective labor—it must be understood in light of power relations articulated by clientelism and discourses concerning the relative value of different forms of work. Hofman (2015) points out that affective labor in the post-Fordist moment is not necessarily more liberated than "conventional" forms of work—her discussion of Yugoslav female *kafana* singers points to the potential moral and economic precariousness of affective laborers. Korkman, too, argues that feeling labor often leaves laborers relatively disempowered because their labor practices may be devalued and subject to the desires of clients or employers (2015:212-215). Scholars have pointed to the importance of interrogating questions of money and labor to understand the status (and constraints) of musicians in society (see for example Stokes 2002). Qureshi, writing specifically about northern India, cogently utilizes Marxist perspectives to argue that musical production, despite being immaterial, can be "alienated" from musicians because its value is controlled by patrons and predicated on the inequality of performers and consumers. Such musical labor contributes primarily to the cultural capital of the patrons, not the musicians (Qureshi 2002:92-93; cf. Weeks 2007 on the "estrangement" of affective labor). Her analysis illustrates how patrons can demand experiences of a certain caliber and intimacy from musical professionals in ways that are based on the power and privilege of the consumer.

I argue that Romani musicians in Vranje are similarly positioned as affective laborers vis-à-vis patrons. Romani performers are expected to produce and embody a state of *genuine* intense excitement, while creating the potential for emotional catharsis for paying celebrants. The intimate, interactive nature of *ćef* is so powerful that locals expect musicians to fully commit to personalized relationships that promise to produce celebratory pleasure. Despite the fact that

professional musicians must make a living from the music they provide, locals prioritize the affective dimension of musicians' services over the economic motivations of their labor. Because musicians are essential for producing *ćef*, they are also seminal to another key dynamic of musical events in Vranje: for patrons, enacting *ćef* is also a public performance of self that brings pleasure. Below I explore how Romani musicians' engagements with paying patrons allow celebrants to perform status and power at events as part of their pursuit of *ćef*.

## 5.3 Performing Power: Conventions of Practice and Performative Politics at Vranje Celebrations

While Vranje locals talk about *ćef* as a phenomenon that arises spontaneously in the appropriate context, they also see *ćef* as an active process of "manifesting" one's desire. People regularly invoke *ćef* to justify their actions, particularly in extraordinary (i.e., non-mundane) circumstances. For example, locals might cap a discussion about a neighbor who would spare no expense for his son's impending wedding by declaring simply yet emphatically "that is his *ćef*" ("*ćef mu je takav*")! In other words, *ćef* also comprises deliberate efforts to produce personal pleasure through specific actions and performances of self.

The overlapping use of *ćef* and *merak* (passion/desire) in Vranje further indicates how entering into an elevated state is an agentive act, a process shaped by an individual's profound desire to attain an emotional high through participation in music and dance. Because *ćef* is produced through social interaction, it follows that celebrants feel that they can make (or heighten) their *ćef* by engaging directly with the performing musicians in particular ways. These interactions are performative as well as performances in themselves—that is, they constitute particular relationships between hired Romani musicians (affective laborers) and their patrons in

ways that draw more broadly upon notions of labor and prestige, class, and ethnicity (cf. Theodosiou 2011:142).

Although social in nature, in many ways *ćef* is a self-centered phenomenon for patrons. Speaking of northern Greece, Cowan (1990) reminds us that each person is eager to pursue their own *kefi* at an event, so much so that it may lead to conflict and quarrels among multiple celebrants who are all jockeying to experience *kefi* through their own musical requests. The phrase "making one's *kefi*" also implies taking what one wants without regard for the interests of others (Cowan 1990: 111). Moreover, *ćef* involves actions that bring pleasure because a celebrant can also convey messages about status to audiences at events.

Despite the officially joyous import of Vranje celebrations, musical events are also marked by intense identity politics. As Seeman (1990) astutely argues for Roma weddings in Skopje, the host family pays for professional musical entertainment to honor their guests and create the appropriate celebratory atmosphere. When the hosts dance and sing at the event, they display their family pride as well as their goodwill towards the community members in attendance. Requesting songs, leading dance lines, and celebrating with emotional gusto are also ways that guests indicate to their hosts that they share in their happiness, and this exuberant level of engagement re-affirms the bonds that link them to the host family. Yet even as celebrants demonstrate their convivial investment in the event, their participation also creates a platform for them to perform family, class, and gendered identities in front of the wider community. As they make requests and take their turn "holding the music" (*uzimav muziku* in Serbian), guests essentially take control of the course of the event's proceedings.

At Vranje celebrations, guests are ranked according to their closeness to the family, ritual status, age, and other markers of community social status such as economic standing. Those

guest families deemed closest or most important in the host family's circle are expected to receive greater privileges, and enjoy preferential access to the musicians during the event. Priority access to the musicians indicates the hosts' respect for the guests in question. The hosts, very close relatives, or a designated MC call up guests to lead the dancing for a time, or direct the musicians to attend to specific guests where they are seated at banquets (see also Silverman 2003, 2012). Important guests like the *kum* (the wedding sponsor or "best man"), the *stari svat* who organizes the event proceedings, or the immediate family of the newlyweds dance earlier during the proceedings, and may expect to "keep the musicians" (*da drživ muziku*) to themselves for longer periods of time or repeatedly during the event. As each guest "holds the music" they are in the center of public scrutiny, leading dance lines and ostentatiously tipping the musicians while the remaining celebrants at the event look on. Through exaggerated singing, exuberant or dignified dance movements, and the lavish and dynamic ways they tip the musicians, guests perform status, wealth, and moral standing.

The right to engage with the musicians at celebrations is such a coveted privilege that it often becomes a source of tension and competition among celebrants. Wedding revelry in Vranje is sometimes disrupted by disgruntled guests who are angry because they were not offered the chance to "take the music" for an appropriate period of time, or early enough in the course of the celebration. In such cases guests may feel insulted or shamed, particularly because of the highly public nature of large events. One woman in Vranje passionately described being mistreated in this way by her son's in-laws at a celebration hosted by the bride's family. Contrary to custom, the groom's party was not invited to lead any dances until the end of the evening, after all of the bride's invited guests (even far less important ones, such as distant neighbors) had taken their turn. The groom's mother was visibly upset as the evening wore on, and later bitterly commented

to me that the bride's family "turned us into shit" in front of all the assembled guests. She felt that the bride's family acted this way because they were much wealthier than her own family and held them in lower esteem.

In another case, I attended a celebration held by the bride's family in a banquet hall. The bride's paternal uncle was a close friend of mine, and I was seated across from Stana, an older woman who was a cousin of the bride's father. The bride's family were busy making preparations for the arrival of the groom's party to formally "take the bride," and for a time they stepped out of the banquet hall where the celebration was taking place; the bride's mother relied on the middle-aged wife of another of her husband's cousins to regulate the order of the dancing in her stead. This woman made the rounds of the tables and called up guest families to take their appointed turn leading the dancing. As the evening wore on, Stana had not yet been approached and she began to look glum. While she maintained a sullen silence, Stana's husband leaned earnestly across the table to complain of the injustice of the bride's parents. He explained that his wife was a much closer relative than several other women who had already been called up—they were insulted and very hurt at having to wait this long to dance. When Stana was finally called up, she rose to dance without comment but looked visibly upset and danced with considerable restraint, not abandoning herself completely to the moment.

Locals' wedding stories are liberally peppered by accounts of altercations and even physical violence, particularly between men who felt insulted because others enjoyed priority access to the music. In some cases, important figures like the *kum* or the *stari svat* may storm out along with their guests. A young Serb musician, Djordje, told me about one such incident in the summer of 2011, during the evening banquet at a Serbian wedding. I attended celebrations at the groom's home earlier in the day, and witnessed the family's excitement over the arrival of the

best man. I was later informed that the man lived in the diaspora, was relatively wealthy, and was well-respected by the family. I was stunned when Djordje told me that this same man, the *kum*, gathered his family and personal guests and made a scene of marching out in the middle of the banquet festivities that evening. "He was angry that the *stari svat* and his guests were given more time with the musicians…he felt they were monopolizing the music too much, instead of giving him pride of place as *kum*," Djordje explained. He told me there was even a scuffle between men of the two parties, with chairs and tables being shoved about, while members of the groom's family tried to mollify the *kum* and keep him from abandoning the wedding in such an embarrassing way.

Celebrants are able to competitively lay claim to power and prestige through ostentatious celebratory practices and by controlling the flow of music and dancing via Romani musicians. As another close friend, Gordana, explained to me, people fight over the music at these events "because they are trying to show off. That's how we are here. Why should *he* have the music right now, or for longer, instead of me? That's why they fight!" The very act of being in control produces pleasure for the guests in question. Romani musicians function as critical foils for the performance of status at Vranje celebrations, providing both an accepted space and a set of conventionalized interactions that allow community members to publically compete for prestige. Control over the proceedings and audience attention is connected in turn to a desire to control the musicians themselves—their practices and their very bodies. Patrons implicitly attribute relatively lower social status to Romani musicians, rendering them particularly controllable. Two factors shape the standard conventions and performative possibilities of celebrant-musician interactions at Vranje events: the occupational stigma that characterized professional

entertainment in the region, which I consider first; and the legacy of Romani marginality vis-à-vis more dominant ethnic groups, to which I turn later in this section.

The performance of music and dance for pay has long been considered low-status work in many societies throughout the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East (Nieuwkerk 1995; Shay 2014; Silverman 2003, 2012; Sugarman 2003). In the Ottoman Empire, professional entertainers were often Greeks, Armenians, or Jews. As non-Muslims, they occupied a lower tier of the religiously defined hierarchy within the Empire and were relegated to professional niches that were "beneath" Muslims (And 1976:140; Sugarman 2003:94 and fn. 8). Roma, too, were often entertainers in the Ottoman period. Despite being Muslims in many cases, their ethnic and class "difference" as a particularly marginalized group trumped any potential solidarity with higher-status, majority Muslims.

Many scholars have argued that stigma against professional entertainers in this post-Ottoman space is related to anxieties about the public display of the body in exchange for money (Hofman 2010, 2015; Nieuwkerk 1995:4; Potuoğlu-Cook 2006; Shay 2014; Silverman 2003, 2012; Sugarman 2003). Public performance for money implied loose morals and sexual availability to male audiences and patrons, fostering claims that entertainers were akin to prostitutes (Nieuwkerk 1995; Shay 2014; Silverman 2003, 2012; Sugarman 2003:101). Anxieties about sexual immorality foster ongoing ambivalence toward female professional dancers in the region despite continued (and in some cases renewed) demand for their services (Nieuwkerk 1995; Potuoğlu-Cook 2006).[70] While in certain contexts performers were expected to (and did) offer sexual services in addition to entertaining (Shay 2014; Sugarman 2003), I argue that this conflation points to a general belief that public entertainers surrender control over their bodies

[70] See also Morcom 2013 for similar discourses surrounding professional dancers in India.

while performing in order to produce pleasure for paying patrons. Entertainers' exposure to the public gaze implies vulnerability to a quasi-sexual, "penetrative" act on the part of patrons (Shay 2014: 21). While Shay and others focus primarily on professional dancers, where the very physicality of performance practices holds much greater potential for erotic interpretation, I argue that at a basic level *all* performers (including musicians and singers, male and female) are seen as bodies rendering a pleasurable service. The relationship of patrons and entertainers is one of unequal power, then, where the performer must allow their corporeal practices to be used by patrons in return for money.

Public entertainers were also historically denigrated because they threatened normative social constructs and the control of authorities. They might be highly mobile or occupy marginalized locations (or belong to peripheral groups) in society (Nieuwkerk 1995:7-9). Shay argues that public performers in various cultural contexts throughout the Mediterranean were also thought to transgress sexual norms (2014). Popular opinions derided performers' perceived (and at times actual) sexual availability to patrons because it undermined values that praised procreative sex within the institution of marriage, as well as ideals of sexual self-control and modesty. Women entertainers were suspect because they worked outside of the home in contrast to ideals that oriented women toward domestic and family obligations (Nieuwkerk 1995). On the other hand, male entertainers (particularly professional dancers) were often characterized as "effeminate," generally seen as potential objects of desire for male patrons and by extension open to being passive ("woman-like") partners in sex with men. For example, European travel writers and Ottoman elites in the late 1800s derided *köçek* dancers in the Ottoman Empire as effeminate or "perverse" because of their purported homosexual tendencies (And 1963:27, 1976;

Shay 2014; Sugarman 2003).[71] *Köçeks* were generally youths who dressed in feminine attire and cultivated quasi-feminine styles of dance—they performed for male audiences because at the time it was widely considered improper for women to dance in public for men.

Authority figures used notions of the alterity of public performers to confirm hegemonic moral and social constructs—derisive, moralizing discourses turn entertainers into "scare figures" to discipline the broader public and enforce conformity to accepted norms (Shay 2014). The workings of hegemonic power rely on discourses that naturalize the lower status of entertainers, even as their services and art forms are paradoxically highly valued in society. The end result means that while performers are in great demand, their lower moral and social standing subordinate them to relatively more powerful patrons.

In Vranje similar stigma applies to professional entertainers even in the present. For women the moral and social implications of public performance are particularly damning. Romani women in Vranje performed as singers, dancers, and even musicians until the late 1800s and early 1900s, much like their counterparts in many areas of the Ottoman Empire (And 1963, 1976; Sugarman 2003). Despite its viability as a female occupational niche historically, present-day attitudes among Vranje's Roma effectively preclude professional performance of music, dance, or song by women. To my knowledge, no Romani women play any form of instrument; while they are expected to be consummate dancers at community social events, they never perform on stage or at entertainment venues for pay. I never saw any Romani women singing

[71] Note that prior to the mid-1800s Ottoman attitudes toward sexuality and class were much less rigid than later in the century, when reforms initiated by an Ottoman state looked increasingly to European norms and practices in an attempt to "modernize." Men with wives and children might have sexual and romantic relations with youths and other men without considering themselves "homosexual" in the contemporary, particularly Western concept of the term; conversely, male slaves and dancers who had sexual liaisons with men would often marry and become "respectable patriarchs" of their own families (see Sugarman 2003). Ottoman-era *köçeks* were often the objects of intense desire for their male patrons, so much so that they were ostensibly outlawed in 1857 because their performances caused fights among janissaries vying for the attentions of specific performers. Love letters to *köçek* dancers from male admirers have also been preserved (see And 1963:27-28; Sugarman 2003).

professionally in Vranje either, although there are a few professional Romani female singers who have been active recently in southern Serbia (such as Jelena Marković). Local Roma feel strongly that public performance for pay remains beyond the pale of respectability for women, opening them up to accusations of immorality and potential prostitution (see also Silverman 2003, 2012 for similar attitudes in Macedonian and Bulgarian Romani communities). Only men perform in public for money, presumably because they are less vulnerable to moral aspersions on their character.

Considering the occupational stigma and moral implications associated with professional musical performance, Serbs in Vranje were rarely professional entertainers in the past. As a majority group they had access to higher-status work and resources that were unavailable to Roma, and considered it beneath them to become entertainers—even though they readily hired Roma to perform for their community rituals and celebrations, which were inconceivable without music. Exceptions to the rule only highlight the moral discourse and class connotations associated with professional entertainers. There was at least one Serb woman in Vranje who was famous as a singer and dancer: Stana Avramović, nicknamed Karaminga. Stana remembered performing for pay in her youth during the early 1900s, both at community celebrations and in entertainment venues in Vranje and throughout the wider region.

While she is locally renowned (posthumously) for her vast knowledge of older songs and musical culture in Vranje, one elderly Serb informant explained that she was not always respected. Bane (himself an acknowledged authority on older music and dance culture) told me that her very nickname indicates the stigma that she faced as a woman who performed professionally. He explained that *kara* is the Turkish word for "black," and that *–minga* referred

to Serbian pejorative slang for female genitals.[72] In other words, her sexual honor and reputation was besmirched by her desire to perform. She obtained fame as a preserver of folk tradition only in her old age, when she no longer performed regularly and would not be seen as a nubile, sexually attractive woman. The most common image of Stana that circulates today depicts her in advanced age, dressed in the conservative older urban attire of the early 20th century—an image sanitized of any reference to the demeanor and practices of professional entertainment.

Because of the stigma that accrues to professional performance, and the consequent low standing of entertainers, celebrants in Vranje demonstratively use the bodies, instruments, and performance practices of Romani musicians to facilitate their own claims to high status and respect. When a particular patron commands the services of the musicians, they usually pay a tip to the performers. The money given to the musicians secures the patron's access to them and their temporary control of the repertoire being performed. "The one who pays the musician is the only one who can lead the dance line at that moment," in the words of Zoran, an elderly Serb man in Vranje. He told me that when he paid the musicians for requests, he even had the right to control *how* they performed specific pieces according to his own aesthetic tastes—he would tell the other musicians in a brass band to go quiet for a time so that only the drummer played, for example, allowing him to take in the stirring beats of the rhythm as he danced. Money is a key means of securing rights to music and regulating musicians' performances, placing the celebrant in a place of complete control of the proceedings for as long as they keep paying for personal musical services.

Standard conventions of musical performance position the Romani musicians squarely in front of any guest whose turn it is to celebrate. Romani musicians are usually placed centrally in the physical space of the celebration, with dance lines revolving around musicians who stand or

[72] *Mindža* is the most common form of this impolite term in Serbia today.

stroll in the middle of the dance space. Musicians are expected to remain in solicitous proximity to the specific celebrant who has paid them for as long as they are performing their requests. As guests dance, moreover, the Romani musicians also play *to* them, moving constantly to keep themselves and their instruments directly in front of the celebrant in question (see also Cowan 1990: 101-103). This practice keeps the eyes of the audience fixated on the patron in question, as the most exciting activities of the evening are audibly and visually cued by the actions of the professional musicians.[73]

Musicians' bodily attention and dispositions signal—but also help enact—patron performances of status and power. As they play, musicians may bend from the waist to play into the face of the celebrant, place their instrument alongside the person's ear, or even kneel dramatically in front of them while playing up toward the patron's face. Guests are very aware of the import that these performance conventions have for their public display of pomp and prestige. Lead dancers often command the drummer to re-position themselves directly in front of them while they are dancing, for example, or a celebrant may forcefully pull the bell of a trumpet to his ear while closing his eyes, raising his hand in the air, and shouting out loud in an evocative display of complete abandonment.

The solicitous, even obliging demeanor of Romani musicians dramatically bolsters a celebrant's display of preeminence by simultaneously indexing the less powerful position of the entertainers. At a Serbian wedding I attended in 2011, the lead melody players bent deeply from the waist when playing in front of the person leading the dance, bending their knees to get even lower and directing the bells of their trumpets toward the feet of the dancer before slowly lifting

[73] Widespread amplification has changed this dynamic to some extent, tying musicians down to a raised stage instead of mingling with dancing guests. However, even with amplification there is often enough demand for proximity to musicians that leading instrumentalists (such as clarinet or trumpet players) or singers use wireless microphones in order to be able to play directly in front of patrons at the head of dance lines, or seated at tables around a banquet hall.

the instrument toward their faces. At times, two or three musicians performed these moves in tandem, creating a tableau of multiple musicians bowing periodically in front celebrants. The person in question was usually an important figure of the event, such as the groom's mother, groom's father, or the wife of the *stari svat* (see chapter 4).

Csordas' notion of "somatic modes of attention," where embodied interactions are critical for producing social relations, neatly describes the import of such practices (1993). Romani musicians' bodily engagements with patrons imply the personal "catering" to celebrants that facilitates the production of their *ćef*, while patrons' regulation of musicians' corporeal performances shores up desirable displays of control. Patrons often ask—or demand—that musicians reconfigure their bodily dispositions in specific ways, such as when they desire them to come closer or kneel in front of them while playing. Zoran, a younger Romani interlocutor and close friend, once told me about an occasion where he and some friends performed in the home of a man who was celebrating his family patron saint. The man asked them to kneel on the floor of the living room at one point while playing for him and his guests—he threatened not to pay them any more money unless the young entertainers complied for a sufficient amount of time and with appropriate gusto. Zoran told me that as time passed the position became very uncomfortable. Their knees were sore from the wooden floor, and they were feeling the strain of trying to hold their instruments appropriately in this position. For Zoran, who plays the accordion, it was beginning to affect his ability to properly operate his instrument. He noticed a small ledge running around the base of the living room walls, and sat back onto it at one moment to ease his situation while continuing to play. His colleague on clarinet, however, playfully pointed out Zoran's trick to the host, who made a big show of coming to see what was going on while Zoran was forced to jump back onto his knees.

While Zoran told me the story with much good humor and laughter, the incident illustrates underlying power dynamics by virtue of what did not occur. The young musicians, particularly vulnerable because of their age and less-established professional status, felt obliged to comply with requests that were inconvenient and even affected their ability to perform properly. Despite their discomfort, they did not attempt to refuse or explain their difficulties in order to cut short the ordeal—rather, they felt that they had to keep playing along in order to appease their patron and possibly earn more money. Their patron coveted their services just as much to perform power as to provide musical entertainment for his assembled guests.

Nowhere is the ostentatious display of power via musicians more evident, perhaps, than in the ways that celebrants pay or "tip" performers for their services. When making requests, it is understood that an appropriate tip (*bakšiš* in Serbian) should be offered to the musicians. In this way, all guests contribute financially to the musical entertainment and convey their respect to their hosts. At the same time, though, the act of "rewarding" the musicians for their attention is highly public and allows for the celebrant in question to display wealth and magnanimity. Styles of tipping are often flamboyantly ostentatious, and underline competitive attempts to accrue prestige between celebrants at events (see also Cowan 1990:103-106). Tipping sometimes reflects the social status and relations of the givers even more than it recognizes the skill of the musician—men often give tips to musicians in order to honor their kinswomen who are leading the dance line at a particular moment, for example.

With tipping, the bodies and instruments of Romani musicians become primary mediums for evocative displays of power and status. Patrons often choose to display the tips they give by tucking them into the shirt collars of musicians, or by sticking them onto the pegs or the rims of instruments. One brass band in Vranje used straw hats to allow patrons to tuck bills into the hat,

eventually resulting in a crown of multicolored bills standing up all around the musicians' heads. At Romani events today, newer practices involve hosts placing elastic bands around the heads of the main musicians and singers to create similar crowns of money (with the bills folded in half length-wise to stand upright). Most importantly, the amounts of money are readily visible to onlookers, especially since the different denominations (whether Serbian dinars or euros) are distinguished by size and color and can be identified at a mere glance. Romani hosts are particularly eager to outfit musicians in this way, and I regularly observed elder men urging that such bands be put into place as soon as possible so that the family's male kin could swarm an entertainer to tuck bill after bill into place. In 2009, younger Romani friends also described a recent trend to stick money onto clear masking tape, securing the cash with another band of tape on the opposite side to create long, necklace-like wreaths of bills that were then draped around musicians' necks.

Musicians' bodies thus constitute veritable billboards through which claims to status and class are broadcast to a watching public. Celebrants may choose to moisten bills by wiping them across their own sweat and then pasting them firmly onto the foreheads or cheeks of musicians. Alternatively, they may spit onto the bills before sticking them onto the exposed skin of musicians. However they are placed onto their bodies or instruments, musicians typically leave bills in place for a time so that the watching audience is able to see the amount that was given by a specific patron before tucking them away. Locals at events regularly exclaim in admiration when individuals gave large sums of money to the musicians, noting in particular when exorbitant sums such as 20, 50, or 100 euros are ostentatiously handed over to the entertainers for prominent display.

Patrons also perform lavishness by "making it rain" over a musician who is playing for them.[74] They place a stack of money in their upturned left hand and rapidly flick out bills with their right hands, showering musicians with a fluttering cloud of multi-colored bills while others around them scramble to collect the cash and hand it over to the entertainer. The appearance of a large quantity of cash is of paramount importance. A middle-aged Romani man joked with me that when his son got married he would convert sums of Serbian dinars into U.S. $1 bills for the event. Because U.S. money is not distinguished by color or size, he could throw out stacks of it and impress people with his magnanimity even though he was not actually spending very much money. Others in the room laughed heartily at his clever strategy, particularly because everyone was aware of his family's tight financial situation. The display of great wealth through seemingly casual gifts of large sums of money to musicians was what really mattered. Indeed most patrons display studied nonchalance while scattering money over musicians, seeming to indicate to onlookers that such sums are "no skin off their nose."

Certain more explicit conventions of tipping, however, illustrate much more vividly the inequality that marks the relationship between celebrants and Romani musicians. Throwing money to musicians, for example, can also be interpreted as a degrading gesture. Celebrants at times will casually toss bills to the ground instead of handing them to musicians, even if they are directly in front of them. Musicians are forced to stoop and pick bills up as they land.[75] In some

---

[74] See also Waterman (1990: 216-18) for a similar analysis of money "spraying" and performances of wealth and status via musicians at Yoruba celebrations.

[75] Similar traditions of throwing tips to the ground are seen in other Balkan contexts. Non-Romani patrons of Romani *zurla* (double-reed, oboe-like instrument) and *tapan* (large double-headed drum) musicians often throw tips onto the ground. I have seen footage where celebrants then collect money from the ground and push it into the mouth of one of the musicians, usually the drummer whose hands are occupied and therefore has to accept the cash in this manner (see for example minute 2:18-2:25 in this YouTube video of a Macedonian Albanian diaspora event in Istanbul, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyrQL0qcu24, accessed July 10th 2015). In another case, *köçek* dancers in present-day Turkey primarily receive tips in this manner. Dancers are expected to perform slow backbends to collect the money, using their lips or tongue to snag bills from the ground and then holding them in

cases this style of tipping is institutionalized, enshrined in "tradition" as an innocuous custom and not as a demonstration of the lower status of musicians. Many locals informed me that during *Svekrvino Kolo*, particularly at Serbian weddings, money is traditionally thrown to the ground in front of Romani musicians. One day I watched the video of a local Serbian wedding with a middle-aged Serbian woman who was a close friend. She was annoyed to see the groom's mother toss money at the feet of the musicians after the ritual dance ended, though, pointing out that the men were performing so close to her that it would have been no effort at all to merely hand it to them. "It is so degrading when they do that!" she exclaimed, and she went on to say that she would be supremely insulted if someone were to do the same to her. Her response highlights implicit understandings in Vranje that such tipping "traditions" also enshrine particular forms of power play and status inequality.

In other cases, celebrants will deliberately draw out the process of giving tips, crumpling bills and tossing them over musicians' heads or dropping them one by one as they dance down the street with a wedding party, making the musicians repeatedly bend and rise as they follow. Celebrants often do this with playful exuberance, simultaneously performing their own boisterous revelry while casually ignoring the very musicians they are paying. The guests' ability to force the musicians to pay heed to his or her whims, no matter how inconvenient, references expectations that they are supposed to be compliant. In another example, guests who wet bills with sweat or saliva and then slap them into position on the foreheads or cheeks of performers may use extra force to make this gesture an explicit gesture of domination. One well-known brass band leader in Vranje commented that people often hit the musician hard when tipping in this way, "so that your brain spins for the next 5 minutes"! This same musician complained that

---

their mouths for a time before pocketing the money (see for example minutes 3:55 to 4:40 of this YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blJKroaxr0I, accessed July 10th 2015).

he needed to be particularly careful during the evening portions of celebrations, after guests have been drinking for quite some time, because such attempts become even more careless as the atmosphere of the event "heats up." He has narrowly avoided having his front teeth smashed inward by the mouthpiece of his trumpet as men roughly shove tips into the bell of his instrument during moments of peak excitement.

As I discussed in Chapter 4 and above, many of the practices that mark interactions with musicians are also established conventions of emotional display—local ways of being happy, of reveling in music, and of expressing one's intense feelings at special occasions. Serbs and Roma alike have grown up observing others in the community behave in these ways "out of happiness" at events (i.e., throwing money, or bringing musicians closer to them while they lead a dance), and certainly these interactions have become part of the way that locals express their joy at musical events. For many, this is the primary lens through which they see such actions: they interpret them as instantaneous physical and emotional responses entailed in genuine *ćef*. They see them as positive and desirable ways of manifesting good spirits. Such understandings generally cross occupational, class, and ethnic lines in Vranje, forming part of a common culture of celebration held dear by Roma as well as Serbs, musicians and non-musicians alike, and among both rich and poor in the community.

However, it is also true that at times these interactions are not merely local "customs" or "ways of being" that are accepted by all, and thus devoid of the potential for additional meanings and implications. In addition to the professional stigma that attaches to musical performance, the ethnic identity of the musicians is also important. While professional entertainers were often members of non-Muslim ethnic groups with lower social status during Ottoman times (And 1963, 1976; Sugarman 2003), the Tanzimat reforms of the mid-19$^{th}$ century granted greater

freedoms to many non-Muslim communities as part of attempts to curry favor with disaffected subjects of the empire. Sugarman (2003), drawing from Brandl (1994), points out that this development likely allowed Christians and Jews to pursue more respectable (and lucrative) occupations. This created a vacuum in entertainment circles that was massively filled by Roma, for whom musical performance was the most prestigious of the limited, low-status lines of work still available to them (Sugarman 2003:98). Romani marginality effectively led to their subsequent domination of entertainment work from the late Ottoman period onward.

This historical process contributed to popular perceptions of an inherent link between the ethnic status and professional practices of Romani entertainers. The lines between moral derision of public performance, and stigma applied to "Gypsy" performers, are often blurred. Public performers throughout history in the wider Mediterranean have often come from disenfranchised and marginal groups: they were slaves, orphans, or ethnic minorities who were relegated to undertaking low-status work (Nieuwkerk 1995: 3; Shay 2014: 23). Roma were closely associated with professional performance in the Ottoman Empire in particular, both as musicians and as professional dancers like *çengis* and *köçeks*, and by extension with all of the sexual and moral "vices" linked to such work (And 1963: 28 and 1976: 138; Sugarman 2003). In contemporary Turkey, too, Romani identity and professional performance are linked in discourses that characterize professional entertainment as immoral and low-class. Romani dancers from the now-destroyed Sulukule district are often dismissed as prostitutes, and contemporary belly dancers in Turkey try hard to avoid association with Roma (or mask their own ethnic identity) in order to escape aspersions on their professional identity (Potuoğlu-Cook 2007; Seeman 1998).

Romani ethnic stigma informs derision of their professional practices as well, setting the stage for power plays in the context of musical events. Jane Sugarman writes of a telling

conversation with an Albanian man in Macedonia—a member of a dance group that performed for community events such as weddings—that illustrates how Romani ethnicity and professional performance stigma are connected. When she asked him if the dancers were ever paid for such performances, he indignantly responded with the rhetorical question "[a]nd sell my body like a Gypsy!?" (Sugarman 2003:fn. 16). In northern Greece, Greeks at times refer to Romani musicians simply as "the instruments," effectively "dehumanizing" them because of their perceived lower status as "Gypsies" (Cowan 1990:101-102). Such verbal constructs prioritize the valuable sounds the musicians make while sidelining them as human beings (Cowan 1990: 101-106).

While critical scholarship has noted the link between Romani marginality and their relative powerlessness as musicians in various Balkan contexts (Beissinger 2001; Cowan 1990; Pettan 2002; Shay 2014; Silverman 1996, 2012; Sugarman 2003; van de Port 1998), significantly less research has investigated how power relations are articulated through performative processes that link musical practices and bodily interactions between Roma and patrons. Cowan interprets the reserved, rigid comportment of Romani musicians at Sohos wedding celebrations as a deliberately dramatic counterpoint to the active, aggressive performances of masculine power typical of Greek celebrants. Roma here are reduced to "socially inferior…unsexed [men]…[whose performance] is and should be in a gestural sense invisible, neutral…symbolically reflective" (Cowan 1990:127). While the relationship is more complex than a simple hierarchy, her analysis points to the importance of perceptions of the lower status of "Gypsy" musicians in order for performances of power by Greek men to be symbolically valid and effective.

Aspasia Theodosiou lays out a more nuanced and useful approach to understanding Romani bodily engagements and the performativity of musical performance in her study of Romani musicians in northwestern Greece (2011). Theodosiou argues that musical practices need to be understood through the theoretical lens of performativity as well as performance (ibid. 118-19). She points to the ways that bodily comportment and celebratory gestures can be citational, recalling and reenacting customary interactions and conventional bodily modes of musician behavior that are steeped in local histories of professional performance (ibid. 151-160). Theatrical musical acts (performances proper) are therefore also performative in part because the reiterative bodily performances of "Gypsy" musical practices constantly reproduce relations of difference and power between musicians and celebrants.

Theodosiou also criticizes the lack of scholarly attention to bodily practices of Romani musicians in her work, noting that an emphasis on language-centered discussions of performance practices excludes consideration of the rich processes entailed in the corporeal and affective dynamics of patron-musician interactions. She usefully argues that both discursive and phenomenological approaches are important to understand the complexities of these engagements (2011:150-51). Theodosiou stresses that performances are inevitably contextual, shaped by circumstances of place and participants. In certain contexts in Epirus, people claim that *kefi* cannot be evoked for locals through musical sound alone—place-specific forms of bodily engagement with patrons and corporeal dispositions during musical performance are important for musicians to "grasp" those who are being entertained. Interestingly, these kinds of performances are also often characterized as "Gypsy," and reference images of poor local Romani entertainers and "older" types of relations with Greek patrons. Theodosiou shows how younger musicians may resist pressure to adopt these performance practices because these

conventions imply the lower status and less refined professional position of the "Gypsies" of old (2011:147, 175-76). She argues that such interactions mutually constitute "Gypsies" and non-Romani Greek patrons in the context of performances.

Yet despite her appeal for a deeper analysis of the embodied aspects of performance practices, Theodosiou's treatment of the performative import of these interactions does not consider questions of power and agency in greater detail. Her critique of essentialist discussions of monolithic "ethnic" identities and tropes of marginality is well-taken. But at the same time it steers her away from critically examining the ways that the *perception* of Romani difference (together with the economic and historical factors that shape Romani-Greek relations in the region) informs how the possibilities of performance practices (as well as consequent power plays) are produced in specific musical contexts. Conversely, van de Port's analysis of Romani musicians' performances for Serb patrons in *kafana* (tavern) contexts touches on questions of power (for example, via tipping) yet does not explore in more depth the bodily means by which power relations are (re-)constituted during performances, nor the symbolic and discursive ways that such practices are understood (1998:196-198). My analysis in this chapter intervenes in these discussions by interrogating how perceptions of Romani ethnic difference and legacies of professional stigma inform the semiotic weight of performance practices, considering how affective and embodied dimensions of patron-musician interactions reproduce relations of power.

I do not mean to suggest that questions of ethnic discrimination and power constitute the exclusive, or most valid, lens through which Romani musical performance in Vranje should be interpreted. As I noted above, many of the most basic conventions of musician-patron interaction are seen as generic expressions of high spirits and joy, and also occur in contexts where performers and celebrants are from the same ethnic community. At the same time, these relations

are highly contextual and informed by intersecting vectors of class, gender, and generation in addition to ethnic identity. However, critical differences in the style and intensity of such interactions in situations where Roma perform for Serbs indicate that many of the more overt performance dynamics signal power imbalances that are drawn along ethnic lines. The most elaborate and explicitly domineering practices are never seen in scenarios where both musicians and celebrants are Serbs, or conversely Roma. I argue that the symbolic power of such interactions is critically premised on understandings of Romani marginality and lower status vis-à-vis Serbian patrons.

Romani hosts do use Romani musicians to facilitate their displays of wealth and status at Romani events. Romani celebrants tip musicians exuberantly as a matter of personal pride whenever possible, and use very dramatic means to impress onlookers with the sheer quantity and value of money given. Moreover, Roma also enjoy highlighting the personal attention they receive from musicians, drawing them in to kneel before or play into the ear of a celebrant at the height of their *ćef*. However, I never witnessed Roma tip Romani musicians by slamming money onto their foreheads, by crumpling money and tossing it far off to make the musicians chase their earnings, or by using any of a wide range of conventions that similarly imply overt domination or blasé disregard for any inconvenience to the musicians.[76]

[76] My colleague Ana Hofman brought to my attention cases of famous Serbian pop-folk musicians being hired by wealthy Roma (especially in the diaspora) for their events, where extravagant forms of tipping and performance are commonplace. In one case, newspapers in Serbia wrote about video footage of one such Serbian star lying on his back at a Romani event in Vienna, singing while Romani patrons tossed money onto him. My sense is that the power dynamics here draw from the equally potent class/occupational connotations associated with professional performers in general—dynamics which, as I addressed earlier in this section, are also important in the relations between Romani musicians and Serb patrons beyond questions of ethnic difference. It is significant to note, though, that in Vranje I never heard of (or witnessed) a situation where Serbs performed for Romani events; on the whole, local Roma feel that Serb entertainers are poor musicians who lack the necessary aesthetic sensibilities in music to satisfy the Romani community. The possibility for such a role reversal, with the consequent prospects for power to flow in the opposite direction, remains unheard of in Vranje—and this means that locals continue to associate such practices exclusively with Romani musicians.

Similarly, musicians and singers in newer Serbian wedding bands are also tipped in some of the generic, "customary" ways by the Serb celebrants they are entertaining—guests will tuck bills into their shirt collars, for example, or lay them on instruments or microphones. However, Serbs never drop tips in front of Serbian musicians in order to force them to bend and pick them up, or slam them forcefully onto their foreheads while they are playing. Serbian musicians in Vranje generally perform only for fellow Serbs, and many younger Serb musicians with whom I spoke disdained the performance practices that characterized Romani brass bands at celebrations. They saw them as holdovers of outdated modes of traditional celebratory culture or low-class behavior, cultivated by uneducated Roma and culturally "backward" village Serbs.

It is true that such conventions are linked to an older configuration of celebratory culture that is closely associated with brass bands and "traditional" celebrations. Yet because Roma have long monopolized the professional performance of music in the Vranje area, the double impact of professional stigma and ethnic stigma continues to inform the nuances of practices surrounding Romani musicians at celebrations in Vranje today. "Customary" acts continually reproduce relations of ethnic inequality, while officially glossing the attendant dimensions of power by implying that these acts are normal because they are traditional. Yet Serb patrons can push more elaborate—but also forceful or degrading—interactions on Romani entertainers to a degree that is simply not possible with Serb entertainers. I contend that the conscious perception of Romani ethnic difference—and their consequent lower status—is just as seminal to the workings of power manifested in performative interactions as is the classist and moral denigration of professional entertainers. I now turn to local debates about performance practices to illustrate how they discursively underline the connections between ethnicity, class, occupation, and celebratory practices at Vranje musical events.

## 5.4 Discourses of Power in Practice: Debating Performative Conventions

Popular narratives of Romani marginality fundamentally configure the conventional interactions that reconstitute ethnic power dynamics at musical celebrations. Most people in Vranje recognize how ethnic and occupational hierarchies underlie the exchanges between patrons and musicians. Both Serbs and Roma strategically deploy discourses of Romani marginality to situate themselves within webs of power and agency in musical contexts. While notions of Romani powerlessness regularly figure in stories that confirm the status quo, and perhaps justify how Serb and Roma alike participate in these performances, debates about the import of specific practices also reveal how Romani entertainers attempt to negotiate greater agency and status in the context of musical performance.

Many of my older interlocutors in Vranje explicitly connected certain tipping conventions to the lesser status of "Gypsy" entertainers. One elderly Serb man in Vranje called these practices playful "harassment" ("*maltretiranje*") of musicians. He felt that demanding certain services of Roma musicians and paying them in "innovative" ways makes the patron feel special at musical events. He told me that he enjoyed instilling an element of "fear" in his interactions with entertainers. The man chuckled fondly while telling me that he would "playfully" threaten Romani musicians "not to shame [him]" with mediocre performances as a precondition for receiving tips, telling them that he would "slaughter" them "like you all kill chickens as a *kurban* ["ritual sacrifice" in Turkish]". One 90-year-old Romani clarinet player from Vranje remembers that even at respectable venues non-Romani patrons liberally used rough language and "playful" gruffness with Roma. He remembered that the Serbian director of the main hotel in Vranje (where he and his band performed consistently for decades during the Socialist period) greeted them most evenings by swearing: "by your mother's cunts, you

Gypsies, get a move on—get inside and start playing already!" He balanced this account by telling us that the director also took "good care" of them, making sure that they had decent food and drink while performing. A common theme in many of my conversations with Roma involved ambivalence about performance interactions, sometimes lamenting harassment from non-Roma while at other times characterizing such exchanges as "good-humored" or "playful."

Serbs, too, often espouse mixed feelings about such practices. One evening in Belgrade I was privy to a conversation between several Serb men originally from southeastern Serbia. Djordje, in his sixties at the time, commented that customs like slapping money onto musicians' foreheads were meant to "denigrate" them. His middle-aged son, Miloš, however immediately countered that the gesture was more an expression of the celebrant's uncontrollable *ćef*, coming out of good feelings and without malicious intentions; in fact, he felt that people gave these tips "to the instruments" and not to the musicians as persons *per se* (see also Cowan 1990:103-106). Miloš believed that the interaction is divorced from any awareness of the personal status of the musicians, becoming an idealized, archetypal gesture that does not reference the ethnicity, class, or any other social markers of the participants.

Djoša, an older Serbian man in Leskovac, also qualified the power dynamics behind specific customs of interaction with Romani musicians. He claimed that "older" practices of tipping musicians were fading away together with an older culture of brass band musical practices. "You can't see the traditional kinds of interactions between Serbs and Romani musicians anymore today, because the remaining brass bands are becoming more emancipated and want higher status," he told me. He indicated that Romani professional aspirations today are loftier, stimulated by world fame and successes at the brass festival in Guča. No one wants to play for rural celebrations like *sabori* (fairs organized for village saint day celebrations)

anymore. By extension, such bands do not want to humor patrons with outrageous or old-fashioned practices that might also connote an amateur, lower-status professional position akin to old-time bands (see also Theodosiou 2011:175-76). While Djoša's comments imply that some of these practices are distasteful to Roma because they are based upon assumptions of inequality and domination, he primarily attributes shifts in practice to Romani desires to become worldly, high-status performers. This perspective also hinges on the belief that Romani musicians can readily achieve "emancipation" in the present, assuming that the power imbalances that once marginalized Romani entertainers have been completely erased in the present.

By contrast, many Romani musicians unequivocally connect abrasive interactions and tipping practices with the historically low status of Roma. Several musicians told me that musical performance has always been a difficult, stigmatized profession, and that this work was effectively foisted onto "lowly Gypsies" because no other group would take it. Older musicians often explained that performing music was a necessary means to earn one's daily "bread," but as an occupation it often involved relatively meager returns and putting up with degrading or demeaning conditions. The elderly Romani guitar-player Bektaš told me that he remembered performing for food in his youth if there was no money to be had, humbly accepting bread and other foodstuffs from customers at restaurants on the back of his proferred instrument. Jašar, an even older Romani clarinet player in Vranje, also remembers becoming a musician out of sheer necessity, putting up with extreme weather and physical exhaustion. He recalled the rudeness of rural patrons who would allocate pitiful accommodations in sheds and barns to musicians needing to rest periodically during exhausting three-day wedding celebrations. He remembers that he had to go along because his family was hungry, dependent on the extra cash their young son might bring to augment the earnings of the household.

Romani entertainers had to put up with practices that were frankly shaming. When I asked one Romani musician about the custom of slapping bills onto entertainer's foreheads, he commented that this was an "old holdover" from times when patrons sought to "humiliate" ("*da ponize*") Roma during performances. Roma also characterized dramatic twists to conventional tipping styles as ways for patrons to emphasize their power over "Gypsy" entertainers. Older performers explained that patrons might employ tactics to visibly display tips to musicians while maintaining them out of reach until they had been "sufficiently satisfied." Several locals told me about the use of a fork to impale bills meant for Romani musicians without turning them over (see the introduction of this chapter). Stojmen, an elderly Serb man in Vranje, told me that he also saw celebrants occasionally string bills onto a needle and thread, which they would stick into the ceiling of the room. They would only hand over the money to the Romani musicians when they felt they had fully earned it. "Those musicians, they would be ready to kill for that money!" he exclaimed, telling me they would play fervently for hours just to make sure someone would eventually pull out the needle and hand over the cash.

Many musicians seem resigned to these kinds of practices, often simply saying that it is "the way things are done." Most qualified the unsavory nature of such experiences by arguing that at least these acts bring in money. Bektaš told me that he never found it problematic when patrons spat on bills and slammed them onto his forehead because he was always more happy to be receiving money than disappointed by the implications of the exchange. His explanation, though, much like that of other Romani musicians who offered me similar explanations, highlights how perceptions of Romani musicians' lower status are critical for the successful demonstration of power by celebrants. During "customary" conventions of tipping, solicitous

Romani musicians must accept and participate in humiliating interactions because the musicians are seen as desperate to obtain the Serb patrons' money.

Younger Romani musicians also experience exaggerated power plays as a matter of course during performances for Serb patrons. Yet many of their discussions attribute these interactions to playful "teasing" by celebrants, a kind of game that brings pleasure to certain clients while the musicians are willing to play along because it will earn them money. One evening in February 2010 one of my younger interlocutors in Vranje, Robert, spoke candidly about his experiences performing music for Serbs, together with several friends who made up a semi-professional band. He laughingly told me about occasions where a Serb host chose to "screw with us" ("*zajebava nas*" in Serbian), commenting that much of this was generally done in good fun. He told me about one time when a Serb man demanded that all of the youths remove their earrings before entering his house to play for his guests; while the remainder did so without question, one of their members balked at this demand and had to be earnestly coaxed by the others (in Romani) to comply. "We were going into *his* house to play for him…how could we not do as he asked?" Denis rhetorically asked me. Once they had all complied, though, the man grinned and with a glint in his eye told them to put the earrings back in so that he might now judge "how they look" by comparison. Even the personal appearance of Romani musicians may be subject to exercises of control by paying Serb patrons. Certainly for these young Romani entertainers there was no question of refusal.

Denis offered quite a few examples that demonstrated how money could be used as a means of performing control over musicians. He told me that on occasion guests will shower them with tips while they were playing, so that the money scatters on the ground all around them. On one occasion, Denis moved to gather up the bills in order to secure them while the rest

of the band continued to play. The Serbian host abruptly stopped him. “You cannot gather the money that they have given you whenever you want, you see; even though they have already given it, you have to wait until they *allow* you to collect it, only when *they* are ready and satisfied by your performance,” Denis explained. Sometimes the way that tips are handed over is also turned into an exaggerated “game” of control and compliance. On that same evening Denis recalled one particular man who thoroughly enjoyed making a big show of moistening bills with spit and winding up his arm tightly, leaning back emphatically as if to put all his weight behind a forceful slap meant to stick the money onto the musician’s forehead. He would follow through until the last minute, when he would slow down and instead lightly dab the tip into place. His pleasure came from watching the anticipation of the blow and the bracing effect that it had on the performing musicians.

When I told Denis that many Americans would be shocked to see a musician tipped like this, with spitting and slapping money onto foreheads, he laughed at the idea that such a practice could be seen as primarily derogatory. “Balkan ways of doing things are very different from American ones I’m sure,” he told me. He did not personally see these practices as denigrating to the musician receiving the money. He was shocked, however, when I mentioned that I have seen patrons push bills (previously tossed onto the ground) into the mouths of Macedonian Romani musicians. Denis told me that such practices were definitely “harassment” (*maltretiranje* in Serbian), and that he would never allow anyone to impose such a thing upon him. Like many of my Romani interlocutors, Denis vacillated between dismissing pushy practices from celebrants as good-natured fun (inherent to the celebratory atmosphere) and characterizing them as uncomfortable exercises of implied domination.

Because Roma are cognizant of the potential for power plays embedded in these interactions, however, many also have ambivalent (even conflicted) attitudes about how to negotiate the patron-musician relationship. Specific practices may be interpreted in very distinct, sometimes shifting ways by different Romani musicians depending on their local status (i.e., how well-known their band is, how wealthy they have become as a result of their professional success, etc.) and their desire to claim greater agency at performances. At times, Romani musicians patiently accept demands to enact certain conventions and bodily "modes of attention," or even initiate them, in order to better embody the desired image of "Gypsy" entertainers for paying customers—they are concerned first and foremost with maximizing earnings garnered by their professional labor.

Boban, a Serb acquaintance in Vranje, especially enjoyed it when very young Romani bands perfectly imitated the cajoling demeanor of adult professional performers. He told me that he always gave a tip to young musicians—no matter how poorly they played—when they bowed and smiled at him, imploring him to allow them to "play one for your soul, sir—for your soul and for our bread!" At a Serb wedding in 2007, I repeatedly witnessed Romani brass musicians encourage celebrants to give them tips (which were quite sparse that morning) by saying "give us a dinar or two, so that I can buy bread tomorrow to eat!" The trope of "daily bread" is not merely a convention to remind patrons that music is work for Roma—necessary for survival. In the context of solicitous catering and cajoling banter, it also draws upon reified images of Romani poverty and need. Roma ironically deploy these strategic essentialisms in instrumental attempts to secure earnings (as conscious performances) while simultaneously re-affirming tropes of the power inequity between Roma and Serbs (as part of a performative process) (cf. Spivak 1988).

In other circumstances, however, Romani entertainers resist or attempt to subvert conventions that enact domination. On occasion, Serb celebrants at Vranje weddings may choose to twist bills into "cones", stack them in the open mouth of an empty alcohol bottle, and force them inside. This bottle sits on the table or ground in front of the patron, who only hands over the bottle with the accumulated cash when he feels that the musicians have fully satisfied his musical desires. In this way, Romani musicians are forced to cater to the patron's whims for as long as he wishes. The performers are usually unable to extract the tips until after the event, in fact, since the bottle must be broken to collect the money and this cannot be done during the celebration without appearing unseemly and giving offense.

Musicians in Vranje have varying takes on this practice, and the disjunctures between their interpretations illustrate their anxieties about the power play involved. The leader of a renowned brass band from Vranje reacted vehemently when I inquired about this practice, telling me that he immediately breaks off any performance if he sees a Serb celebrant begin this tipping style. When I asked him why, he commented that this is done to "provoke [the musicians]…to make us play better, supposedly." In reality, he claimed, the meaning lies in controlling the musicians: "if he puts the money in the bottle, he still hasn't actually given it to us." He contrasted this with "more cultured" tipping practices, as when money is directly given to the musician "in [his] hand." The bottle technique here represents an exercise in power by Serb celebrants that this musician (whose band has a long-standing reputation and widespread popularity) refuses to accept.

On one occasion when a celebrant used this tactic, this same bandleader told me that he was so indignant that he nearly stormed off with his men. An older musician in his ensemble calmed him down though, telling him that he would handle it. As they finished the song they

were playing, he promptly scooped up the bottle and tucked it under his arm as the band moved on to another guest. He had to carry it like that all night long, though, until the band finished the gig and he was able to smash the bottle outside and pick out the soggy bills. Although his patient compliance earned that money for the musicians, the bandleader pointed out to me that even the inconvenience of having to carry around the bottle for the rest of the evening highlighted the patron's implied dominance, making a mockery of the professional status and high skill level of the musicians.

Another brass band leader in Vranje, though, later told me that his afore-mentioned colleague was "stupid" to refuse this practice. He insisted that this was a tipping custom specific to Serbs from the Rudina neighborhood of Vranje, and as such should be embraced and used by Romani musicians who performed for them. As the leader of a smaller, less popular band whose living is based on maximizing the number of local events they play, however, he also indicated that Romani musicians need to be accommodating of such demands from patrons in order to maximize earnings and maintain clientele. By downplaying the implied power play involved in the bottle scheme, this man shifted the frame of the discussion. He glossed pressure for Romani musicians' to fulfill patron expectations by "playing along" as a laudable commitment to honor local customs, while avoiding any discussion of the unequal power dynamics that Roma must navigate at these performances.

Yet discourses that justify conventional "traditions" of patron-musician interaction continue to draw attention to implications of Romani powerlessness in such scenarios. Romani musicians' need to satisfy Serb demands means that they are closely tied to the performances of power that mark celebratory *ćef* in Vranje, and notions of the marginality of these "Gypsy" entertainers remain essential to the symbolic and performative efficacy of these displays.

Discursive re-framing of performance practices for the most part does not allow Romani entertainers to avoid them, but rather re-embeds them within the cultural logic of ethnic power plays. Rarely do Romani bands (or individual musicians) possess the economic standing, professional prestige, or cultural capital to refuse to engage in celebratory power plays—this makes these performances of power normative and hegemonic, in other words, reproducing discursive constructions of inequality (Butler 1988, 2002[1990]:xiv-xv; Liechty 2003:23). The various social, economic, and cultural factors that underlie the significance of Romani ethnicity during musical performances give critical impetus to displays of power—a dynamic that extends even to romantic essentialisms connecting Roma with the realms of the extraordinary, the quirky, and the chaotic.

## 5.5 Performing the Extraordinary and the Extreme: Romani Musicians and Theatrical Spectacles of Power

Romani ethnic difference frames yet another category of musical services that were once popular at Vranje celebrations: dramatic, veritably theatrical, performance practices that emphasized the extraordinary nature of performative moments at musical events. For paying patrons, these customs provided ways to pursue pleasure by banishing the banal order of quotidian values and norms during celebrations. They allowed for behavior that often would not be permissible (or agreeable) in everyday life and social relations. I argue here that these practices demonstrate how Romani musicians' "Gypsyness" allows Serb patrons to access the realm of the fantastic or spectacular. Popular stereotypes that romanticize "Gypsy" alterity, associating Roma with chaos, anti-structure, magic, and quirkiness, render Romani musicians essential to Serb attempts to embody these dynamics through extraordinary celebratory practices (van de Port 1998; see also chapter 7 and Silverman 2007, 2015 for similar dynamics on the

world music scene). While many of these practices are waning (or completely defunct) in the present, most locals in Vranje still remember them—often fondly and with a liberal dose of nostalgia for the extravagant celebrations "of old." Memories of these practices elucidate, and continue to inform, the roles of Romani musicians at celebrations—as subordinates whose affective labor is highly desired but also effectively commanded by higher status Serb patrons.

At times, patrons could display "extra power" by securing the personal services of Romani musicians beyond the normal duration of a celebratory event—essentially extending the celebration for themselves. Many older residents in Vranje remember well-known *meraklije*, people with a specific passion for music and celebration, who would ask brass bands to walk them home after an event. The musicians would perform for the patron the whole way, announcing their largesse and pomp to the wider community as they wandered the streets (much like wedding processions—see Chapter 4). Nenad, a prominent brass band leader in Vranje, recalled one wealthy woman who promised his father two head of sheep in addition to cash for the privilege of being escorted to her home on the upper outskirts of the town. Elderly guitar player Bektaš remembered doing the same for wealthy "*adžije*" in Leskovac.[77] He told me that musicians often followed such patrons to various other establishments in succession before accompanying them on their way home. They might also be asked to remain while these men were welcomed at home by their family; he and his colleagues sometimes performed while a

[77] *Adžije* (*adži* sing.) is the local term for *hadžije* (*hadži* sing.), from the Turkish *haci* for one who has made the pilgrimmage to Mecca (*hajj* in Arabic). In many parts of the Balkans, the term became synonymous with wealthy, eminent persons (or families) particularly in urban settings; the connection arose because only those with great wealth could afford to make the costly trip to distant religious centers for pilgrimmage. While originally associated with Muslims, the title was also claimed by eminent Christians for whom pilgrimmage usually meant traveling to venerated Christian sites in Jerusalem or Istanbul (Constantinople). Wealthy persons who completed such trips added the honorific to their names, i.e., as Hadži Toma, Hadži Jovan, etc. In some cases, families subsequently took that designation as part of the patronymic naming custom, i.e, descendants subsequently became the Hadžitomići, Hadžijovanovići, etc.

man's daughter-in-law removed his shoes and bathed his feet in an older (now defunct) custom of respect typical of traditional patriarchal values.

"Big men" at events also might ask for particularly elaborate personal services from Romani brass bands. At Vranje weddings, the ritual figure of the *stari svat* (typically the groom's mother's brother) held pride of place as the man who "directed" all the important actions of the wedding; he was also responsible for promulgating celebratory gusto and excitement among all the wedding guests. The *stari svat*-s role at the wedding meant that he could exercise an exceptional degree of power over everyone there, from the newlyweds to the musicians. His desires had to be accommodated without question or hesitation. For example, he could order the new bride to prepare special dishes, like *kačamak*, for him—even at two or three o'clock in the morning.[78] The *stari svat* might also demand that a woven rug be brought for him to sit on in the family's courtyard, or have the family decorate him with strings of dried red peppers and hand him a roasted chicken (or lamb) on a spit to take with him. He might require the newlyweds to dance solo *čoček* face to face—while standing inside a round metal *tepsija* (serving tray), sometimes placed on a table, as the musicians stood around them playing (see Zlatanović 2003).

Romani brass musicians were particularly important for the celebratory displays of the *stari svat*. A wedding celebration could not finish before the *stari svat* decided to depart the groom's family home, no matter how late at night (or early in the morning) it was. The musicians were expected to perform for him throughout the process of his leave-taking, keeping the attention of all guests on his person and retinue throughout. Interlocutors in Vranje remember cases where the man and his guests took 20 minutes to move several feet towards the gate, stopping periodically to dance and celebrate—the *starejko* had full control of time as well as of

[78] *Kačamak* is a type of maize porridge, often with the addition of cheese, that is associated with rural cuisine. For families who desire to put on "traditional" weddings, it has become a conventional food offered to the *stari svat* in the late evenings, likely because of its association with people's memories of older (often village) weddings.

the celebratory action (and musical repertoire). It might take the better part of an hour, or more, for the *starejko* to depart in this fashion.

Romani brass musicians were also critical foils in another institutionalized custom: when the *stari svat* might throw roof tiles from the groom's home onto the ground as a demonstration of sheer joyous abandon. The deliberate destruction of property here indicates complete engrossment in the emotional import of the celebration, much like when celebrants break a glass as an expression of full-blown *ćef*. In this case, it also references the privileged position of power enjoyed by the *starejko*, whose destructive *ćef* must be indulged by the family and guests. The *stari svat* traditionally used Romani brass musicians to amplify his performance of power and abandon. Brass band musicians, instruments in hand, often had to accompany the *starejko* onto the roof of the home and perform while he loosened and threw tile after tile down into the courtyard.

One afternoon in the spring of 2010, band leader Nenad told me a particularly riotous (and in his opinion humorous) instance of such a practice at a Serb wedding several years prior. He explained that the groom's home was of a newer type, two storeys tall, and that many of the band members balked at the *starejko*'s request because of the height—how could they be sure they would not fall while trying to navigate the roof *and* playing their instruments? Several of the lead trumpeters dithered and avoided the ladder that had been put up. The tuba player, Bora, jumped into the fray though and convinced one of the trumpet-players to lend him his instrument—"never fear, *starejko*, I'll jump onto the roof with you, here I come!" ("*Ne se sekiraj, more starejko, će se kačim ja s' tebe na krov, eve odma dolazim!*").

Bora, himself somewhat tipsy, made an especially dramatic show of accommodating the *stari svat* with an edge that his colleagues felt was almost comical clowning. He reminded his

colleagues that he might get good tips out of the man for this service—how could they fail to oblige him? After he made it onto the roof, they chuckled at his bad technique on the trumpet; as a tuba player, he was not familiar with this instrument (flugelhorn). The others pitched in on their instruments from the ground to cover his more egregious errors. Ironically, however, the inebriated *starejko* was overcome by fear of heights upon reaching the rooftop. He was too dizzy and fearful to bend down and begin loosening tiles to throw. Bora came to his rescue, loudly encouraging him and then bending himself to loosen tiles with one hand, handing them to the *starejko*. As they began to land in the courtyard, he praised the man effusively with each shattering crash: "bravo, *starejko*, smash those tiles….bravo, do some more!" It was Bora's exuberance and dramatic acting that clinched the *starejko*'s requisite performance of power and abandon.

In this situation, a Romani musician worked on multiple levels to effectively produce a Serbian man's performance display—by obliging the patron's "whim" to get on the roof, by performing music and enacting exuberance to support the appropriate atmosphere of heightened *ćef,* but ultimately also by standing in and assisting in the very act of breaking tiles. Bora and his colleagues understood that by supporting such a performance through "above-and-beyond" effort and extraordinary tactics, they were fundamental to the man's much-desired performance of status. The "tongue-in-cheek" aspects of Bora's enthusiasm, however, also point to the ways in which Romani musicians can at times manipulate scenarios in order to claim the upper hand. By fully embodying the comical Romani "clown," this musician took advantage of this Serb patron's state of mind to better the group's earnings. At the same time, it illustrates how even Romani agency is constrained within the parameters of both established power hierarchies and the essentialist stereotypes that underpin performance conventions—obliging the client as the

quintessential "Gypsy" performer, no matter how sarcastically, remains *the* means to earn one's living.

Still other scenarios required Roma to perform in ways that explicitly married coercive power plays to quirky performance practices, adding an additional layer of "entertainment value." Older musicians' stories are littered with accounts where Serb patrons demand that Romani entertainers perform in unusual or uncomfortable circumstances "for fun." For example, Romani bands might be asked to stand in rivers or creeks while performing, even in winter when the water was freezing. Dobrivoje Novković, an elderly brass band musician from Zagužanje near Vladičin Han, recounted the following incident during an interview published in the book *Srpska truba* ("*The Serbian Trumpet*"):

> But there were difficulties too. In Panevlje we played once at the home of one Slobodan Stojanović. When we finished the wedding and we were accompanying him out, he forced us to go into the Morava river. With one hand we were to be playing music, with the other trying to catch fish under the ice. Force. He makes as if to beat you. He didn't even pay. He just gave a paltry dinar here or there. Exploitation, he's abusing us. We barely escaped with our heads. We didn't earn much money at all. But, at least there was enough to buy a sack of flour, each. (Milovanović and Babić 2003: 126)

Others told me of cases where Romani brass musicians were told to climb trees and play. In the meantime, someone would begin cutting down the tree or sawing off the branch on which the musician was sitting. In order to earn the full tip, the musician was supposed to play without missing a note until the last possible minute, when he was forced to jump down. Locals felt that the comical, out-of-the-ordinary frame of such performances added a level of entertainment beyond the musical dimension of the musicians' labor. In part, these performances became custom because the low status of Romani musicians meant that they could be coerced into performing them. At the same time, however, such practices gain semantic import because Roma are seen as quintessential ethnic "Others." They are romanticized as unusual, magical, or comical

in juxtaposition with the purportedly mundane and rational cultural sensibilities of majority Serb society. These stereotypes make Roma perfect mediums for producing extraordinary scenarios of entertainment at celebrations.

Coercion and control are key aspects of the "fun" in such scenarios, underlining "innovative" ways to challenge Romani musicians at events. Fejat Sejdić, an award-winning brass band leader from Bojnik near Leskovac, told me that in his youth playing at village weddings people often asked him to do unusual things to earn tips. He remembered that a Serb patron once showed him a large wad of cash, and told him that he would receive it only if he played the man's favorite tune with perfect style, without missing a note—all while blowing out the flame in a gas lamp with the airflow from his trumpet. Fejat complied, using extra force while sustaining one note during an improvisational run in order to extinguish the flame. He plunged the room into darkness, with people laughing heartily while scrambling for matches, but he received his tip.

Another custom similarly served to "challenge" the skill of Romani brass musicians. Dragan, a middle-aged businessman from Leskovac, told me that some men loved to eat a lemon in front of performing brass musicians. Many musicians' saliva would begin to flow copiously and uncontrollably just from watching the man eat the fruit, making it difficult for them to properly play the music. An elderly Serb woman from Prokuplje (also in southern Serbia) told me that her brother-in-law enjoyed using this trick on brass musicians. She giggled incessantly while telling me that the musicians would often beg him to stop as soon as they saw him take the fruit in hand: "Please don't, *kume*, I'm imploring you like I would God himself…don't! How will I play!?"[79] She insisted that this was always good-natured fun between musicians and a

[79] *Kume* translates literally to "best man" (as in the ritual sponsor for weddings), but it is often used more generally as an intimate term of relation between two men, akin to calling the other "friend" or "brother."

patron who had a long-standing, close relationship. The musicians may have embraced it as such, too, but the performative gist of this practice (a widely-used, conventional tactic) is embedded in the unequal balance of power between patron and musician where the professional competency of the latter can be publicly undermined by the former. Moreover, it is "comical" because the men are "Gypsies," men portrayed in popular stereotypes as regularly getting themselves into all kinds of predicaments by virtue of their cultural backwardness, lack of resources, and low social standing.

In Vranje there was an entire genre of performance customs that were particularly theatrical, where Roma played roles specifically geared to dramatically highlight the higher status of their Serbian patron—often by tapping into stereotypes of their "Gypsy" status. Elderly Stojmen from Vranje told me that a celebrant had to pay Roma two to three times more money to perform these customs than for generic requests of dance music. One such drama-custom was *Izgubljeno Jagnje*, or "The Lost Lamb," set to a specific tune by the same name. The guest who paid for it would take a seat in a chair while the musicians scattered out of his sight in all directions to seek and capture a live animal (a dog, chicken, piglet, etc.) to bring back to the man. When one of the musicians successfully cornered an animal (or else enough time had passed with no success), he would begin playing the melody. Others, hearing him begin to play, would take turns playing the principal melody line in turn, and the band members would slowly re-converge around the patron. They usually ended up in a half circle around the seated guest, playing the fast-paced and boisterous concluding section of the tune and (in the best case scenario) symbolically presenting him with the animal they had captured in return for their monetary reward.

Patrons might also pay extra to have Romani musicians enact *Ciganska Svadja,* or "Gypsy Squabble." The musicians would play a patron's favorite tune, but at some point one of their party would pretend to become irritated by another musician, presumably because he was doing a poor job of playing or getting in the way of the others. The orderly performance then devolved into a state of feigned chaos, with the whole band getting sucked into a raucous brawl. Stojmen laughed heartily while describing how musicians even pretended to hit the offending individual (or random other musicians) with their instruments in the ensuing melee. At some point calm would prevail again and they would return to playing, but always another fight would break out and the scene of disorderly, impassioned Gypsy ire would be repeated. Stojmen summed up by saying that the custom was funny because it was much like reality: "typical Gypsy behavior!"

Locals also remember the custom *Pašina Večera,* meaning "the Pasha's Dinner." Stojmen explained that Serb patrons could become "pashas" for a time during such performances.[80] The patron would sit on a chair so that their feet were placed on the seat itself, with the man perched on the top of the chair back. From this elevated position, they received dramatic displays of "homage" from Romani brass musicians. The musicians would initiate the specific tune associated with this custom—*Sulejman Beg iz Rataja ide* ("Sulejman Beg Leaves Rataje"), itself said to commemorate the departure of an Ottoman-era Muslims landlord in 1878 after the region's occupation by Serbian forces. The initial section of the tune traditionally consists of long periods where the *goč* drum performs a meterless (rubato) rhythmic pattern, where the thin wand beats out steady taps punctuated by spare but powerful thumps of the heavy

[80] *Paša* in Serbian comes from the Ottoman Turkish term for a military official and/or regional governor, a figure of authority and high rank.

beater.[81] Stojmen indicated that this solo drumming and the "heavy" tempo of the tune made it a particularly stirring piece, appropriate for evoking the drama of the performance.

As they played, the musicians circled the seated patron. One by one they were supposed to approach him, doff their hat, and bow low to him. They greeted him in formulaic ways: "Good evening, pasha! How are you feeling? What can we offer you? Food? Brandy? Something more?" Stojmen explained that the patron might agree to such offers, asking for *rakija* brandy to be poured into their mouths, or to be fed *meze* appetizers by the musicians. As each musician finished what Stojmen called "bowing" (*klanjanje*), they would leave their hat on the ground in front of the patron's chair and make room for the next member of the band to make the same show of paying homage. Once each member had done so, the band performed the final sequence of the musical tune while standing around the celebrant. According to Nenad, a well-known brass band leader in Vranje, at the end of this drama the Serbian patron was supposed to place a tip into the upturned hats of each of the musicians.

Both Stojmen and Nenad indicated that these older customs were rarely requested anymore by the time I was in Vranje conducting my research. Nenad attributed it to the ignorance of younger generations, who also did not know the proper order of rituals at traditional weddings, the conventions of older celebratory culture, or the "good old" repertoires of songs and dances that were once the bedrock of local culture. Stojmen felt that many young people in Vranje were not only unaware these customs but saw them as passé, holdovers of an older, more primitive culture of celebrations that was not as interesting for "modern" youth culture. This was part of a broader trend whereby youth maligned the elaborate rituals and social relationships of traditional celebrations, characterizing them as obnoxious or taxing obligations that were only enjoyed by "older aunties" ("*za tetke i strinke*" in Serbian). Stojmen also argued that fewer and

[81] This same tune is played for the "waking of the bride" at Romani weddings, described in Chapter 4.

fewer musicians remained who knew the specific music and practices involved in these drama-customs—older musicians passed away without imparting the knowledge to younger entertainers as demand waned in Vranje.

Perhaps younger Romani musicians and those musicians who have accrued more "worldly" status as famous performers have been able to refuse Serb requests to play this extreme "Gypsy foil" in recent years. Their ambivalence about the symbolic import of these practices mirrors similar anxieties noted by Theodosiou among young Romani musicians in northern Greece, who dislike being "reduced" to "mere Gypsies" during performances (Theodosiou 2011: 175-176). Yet the images and memories of such practices continue to color popular ideas about the allure of "real" Romani brass band performances, both in Vranje and in Serbia more broadly. Many of the quirky and comical scenarios involving Romani brass musicians in Emir Kusturica's widely popular films clearly reference this type of performance practice, for example, as in scenes where an entire Romani brass band has been tied onto the trunk of a tree with rope, dangling there while performing music.

The lure of the imagined Gypsy—wild, unpredictable, chaotic, mystical, comical—underlines the performative power of these practices for non-Romani patrons. Van de Port's (1998) analysis of Romani musicians and Serbs in northern Serbia explores the link between "extraordinary performances" and Romani ethnicity in Vranje. He argues that popular stereotypes about Roma allow Serb patrons to embody otherwise taboo levels of wildness, passion, and abandon through contact with Romani musicians. Romani musicians create a space and serve as a conduit for Serbs to enact their inner beings, access the deepest recesses of their "soul," or temporarily throw off the shackles of social constraints (van de Port 1998: 175-205).

The perceived ethnic difference of Romani entertainers is critical for the cultural significance of these performance practices.

Yet van de Port does not examine the discursive and performative dynamics of these interactions in a deeper, ethnographically grounded manner. He also acknowledges that he focuses primarily on the fantasies of Serb patrons at the expense of the perspectives (and strategies) of the Romani musicians (1998:178). Van de Port's work only partially probes the connections between cultural ideologies of ethnic (and occupational) status and the semiotic, constitutive processes of performance practice (and interaction). As such it fails to address the historical, economic, and social conditions that shape Romani musical performances and professional status in Serbia, limiting the depth of his analysis of performative processes in musical interactions between Roma and Serbs. Meanwhile, performance practices are constantly adapted to socioeconomic and cultural changes. Musical practices, and the import of musicians' Romani identity, are also being re-cast in response to post-Socialist, post-Yugoslav conditions in Vranje.

## 5.6 Politicizing Performances: Changes in Discourse and Practice since the 1990s

Reified notions of Romani identity and marginality are currently being used by some Serbs in Vranje to drastically reinterpret performance conventions at celebrations. As a result of political crises and economic collapse since the 1990s (see Chapter 6), increasing tensions between Serbs and Roma in Vranje have begun to color even the "customary" practices of musical events. Younger generations of Serbs are increasingly ambivalent about Romani brass bands, and many disparage Romani styles of engaging with celebrants at local weddings. Whereas conventional performance practices have been symbolically powerful because they reconstitute the lower status or romanticized ethnic difference of Roma, denigration of those

same practices in the present re-deploys Romani ethnicity as a means to criticize "uncouth" manners typical of "bad Gypsies."

Some Serb informants in Vranje claim that Roma are hired less frequently nowadays to entertain at Serb functions because of their "insistence" on receiving tips while playing for specific patrons. Because of growing poverty in the area, many guests find themselves unable or unwilling to tip with the necessary flourish to maintain public prestige at weddings. In light of this new source of anxiety, some locals evince disdain at Roma attempts to "beg" for money while employing otherwise standardized conventions of interaction with patrons. One Vranje Serb youth insisted that many Roma are not genuinely interested in performing well for guests at events. Instead, he claimed that bands "get you with loudness" (*faćav na galamu),* playing "quick and dirty" to get as many tips from as many different celebrants as possible. Commentary also focuses on specific practices, claiming that Romani entertainers embarrass patrons who are reluctant to give tips when they "play in their faces" or "go down on one knee to beg". Hosts are also uneasy about these conventions because they are worried about offending guests who cannot uphold obligations to pay musicians who are entertaining their requests, and may choose to avoid hiring Romani brass bands for much of the celebration.

Serb criticisms of performance practices inevitably focus on the "Gypsy" behaviors of Romani entertainers, reinterpreting customary performance conventions as the "shameless, self-interested bad manners" of the musicians themselves. Reified stereotypes of the poor, low-class, and dishonest nature of "Gypsies" are invoked to deflect attention away from patrons' inability to appropriately enact higher economic and ethnic prestige. The very practices shaped by the legacy of Romani marginality vis-à-vis Serb patrons are thus re-cast in order to reject them as inappropriate. Critically, though, these discourses actually re-embed Roma in webs of power that

re-emphasize their marginal, low status in response to Serbs' increasing social and economic anxieties.

Romani musicians in Vranje often respond by highlighting other elements of the "Gypsy" stereotype, emphasizing the exceptional musical talents to try and claim greater agency within performance contexts. Musicians complain that the current state of crisis in Vranje critically altered understandings that once marked the patron-musician relationship, and claim that the "deterioration" of Serb interactions with musicians is a result of impoverished levels of "culture" and "morality" today. Many musicians commented that the ubiquitous tensions and anxiety that pervade everyday life in contemporary Vranje mean that one can no longer expect established rules of comportment to adhere at celebrations. Roma argue that young generations evince a particularly acute lack of respect for musicians. One band leader gave a fairly typical summation of the situation: "Before, I loved to go and perform…now, I don't enjoy it anymore, I go as if I'm being tortured…now, you have to be careful when you go to weddings. People have become rude, dishonorable." Narratives that draw on nostalgia for a golden era of the past are common in Vranje today. While sanitized images of a wonderful past are often exaggerated, nostalgic tropes assert a moral authority on the part of Romani musicians to reclaim agency in uncertain times (see Chapter 6). These "complaints" illustrate Romani musicians' concerns over new power struggles concerning the symbolic and performative import of musical practices.

Among other things, some musicians point out that Serb patrons often attempt to finagle their way out of obligations to pay entertainers for their services. One popular brass band leader complained that he was shocked at a recent wedding when a celebrant that he knew very well complained about the quality of his band's performance. After some 20 minutes of musical attention from the band, the celebrant loudly and publicly disparaged the quality of the band's

performance, and told the band leader that he would not conscience such a poor showing by giving any tips. The musician added that this was increasingly common in Vranje, as Serb locals willingly "throw away honor" in order to dodge once-valorized obligations to Romani entertainers.

In response, many Roma counter the denigration of established exchanges between patrons and entertainers by highlighting their inherent "Gypsy" talent and musical authority. They tap into popular discourses that link their musical skills to their marginal, even exotic, identity as Roma. Romani musicians reject criticisms by invoking their preeminent position as natural entertainers, arguing that no one can know better than Roma how musical performances should be enacted. Furthermore, the growing popularity of "Gypsy Brass" abroad becomes another tool for Romani musicians to attempt to claim agency in light of shifting narratives about their performance practices. Musicians invoke the renown of the Guča Festival and performers like Boban Marković, for example, to claim that their "Gypsy" musical talent is validated by international acclaim (see Chapter 7).

In contrast to forced resignation to power plays, then, some Romani musicians today seek to combat growing local discrimination against their musical practices by invoking romanticized notions of their otherwise marginal ethnic identity. "Gypsyness" is reconstituted as a privileged position instead of a stigmatized one, granting musical authority to Romani musicians as a result of their historically peripheral—but in this reading, special—occupation. Yet once again these attempts to counter dominant narratives from Serb detractors do not translate into successful emancipation from deeply entrenched ethnic and occupational hierarchies. Only the most successful Romani brass bands, famous because of multiple wins at the Guča competition and in great demand both locally and further abroad, enjoy the economic and cultural capital that allows

them to refuse performance practices that imply domination by Serb patrons. For the vast majority of Vranje's Romani musicians, rejecting similar demands would jeopardize the earnings and patron connections that constitute the mainstay of their livelihoods. Moreover, Romani discourse about inherent talent and superior knowledge do not circulate widely enough to effectively counter disparaging criticisms from Serbs. In majority society the voices and struggles of Romani musicians are generally marginalized, even as their performance personas and professional services comprise the most visible (and thus salient) engagements with their Serb neighbors.

## 5.7 Conclusion

In Vranje, interactions between Romani musicians and their patrons draw from, re-affirm, or re-work complex intersections of ethnicity, class, labor, tradition, affect, and morality to constitute particular configurations of power and inequality. Romani musical practices are simultaneously cultural performances and performative processes (Theodosiou 2011:142). I argue, in other words, that musical practices and celebratory interactions in Vranje are best interrogated through theories of performance as well as performativity. On the one hand, Romani musical practices are forms of cultural performance, comprising deliberate actions and conscious strategies deployed by actors within the "play frame" of musical events set apart from everyday realities (Goffman 1959). This performance frame delineates a creative space for cultural production, where relations between Roma and Serbs are reconstituted by means of dramatized actions that serve to magnify the social and symbolic dimensions of the experience (Bauman 1975, 1992; Guss 2000; Kapferer 1984; Schieffelin 1985). The aesthetic and affective dimensions of Romani performance practices heighten the intensity of participant experiences and facilitate their engagement in the collective constitution of social realities.

On the other hand, Romani musical performances can also be read as a patterned repetition of practices that continually reproduce normative relations of power and ethnic inequality (Butler 1988; Liechty 2003:23; McKenzie 1998:221-222). Romani musical practices are performative inasmuch as they are citational and reiterative, comprising conventionalized practices with a concrete historicity: reenacting a normative cultural script of Romani professional stigma and ethnic marginality through "customary" forms of interaction (Butler 1988, 2002[1990], 2011[1993]; McKenzie 1998; Theodosiou 2011:151-160). Discourses of "tradition" and celebratory "convention" used to describe performance interactions obscure the workings of power, simultaneously legitimating both the acts and the attendant ethnic politics as "natural" (Butler 1988, 2002[1990], 2011[1993]; McKenzie 1998). When Romani musicians stoop to pick up tips flung onto the ground, or receive tips slapped onto their foreheads as a matter of course, they participate in a performative, compulsory reiteration of professional stigma and ethnic subordination that is deeply rooted in historical legacies of practice.

It is the affective and emotional value of celebratory practices that makes Romani musicians into critical partners in celebrants' performative constitutions of self—and the broader social order. I argue that the semiotic import of Romani musicians' services must be interrogated through the lens of affective labor. Affective dimensions of their musical practices make them valuable partners in creating personal pleasure at Vranje celebrations. Because this affect is produced through embodied experiences of connection, bodily dispositions effectively "naturalize" the performative dynamics invested in exchanges between Roma and their patrons. In other words, Roma make pleasure tangible and "real" for patrons during performances through desirable bodily experiences and corporeal interactions.

The centrality of affect in Romani musical performances also opens pathways for reproducing relations of power and inequality through interactions with patrons, and the corporeal dimensions of this labor serve to "ground" the semiotic import of power plays. Romani musical labor is evaluated in terms of its "authentic" investment in creating pleasure for patrons, who control the semiotic playing field within which Romani services are valorized and interpreted. Roma are alienated from their musical labor when patrons have greater control over the symbolic value of this work and the means through which it is enacted—patrons reap cultural and social capital through Romani musical services by rearticulating the lower status of the musicians themselves. Because performances of power are also pleasurable, Romani entertainers are expected to comply with the performative enactment of ethnic inequality at musical events. Affective dimensions of these embodied performances of power grant them considerable symbolic weight, re-affirming the ethnic, class, and occupational status quo through social practice. At the same time, affect allows the power dimensions of musical performances to be glossed or muted—by Roma seeking to qualify their subordination to the demands of more powerful patrons as "good-natured" fun, or by non-Roma whose privileged position allows them to ignore questions of ethnic inequality and the professional exigencies of Romani musical labor in "traditional customs."

The discursive polemics surrounding such practices point to their significance for constituting relations of power in Vranje. Even comments evincing ambivalence toward—or outright rejection of—specific customs of interaction reaffirm how power inflects such practices. As I argue elsewhere in this dissertation, Romani musicians operate within webs of power from a relatively disenfranchised position, shaped by historical legacies of economic and political marginality as well as popular tropes of "Gypsy" moral and cultural inferiority. They negotiate

power structures at times by embracing strategic essentialism to obtain needed resources and positions, or by re-framing discursive constructs of their ethnic "difference" to confer professional prestige and authority.

Yet their agency remains contingent upon established power structures that privilege non-Roma. Expectations of Romani affective labor require Roma to mimic and reproduce non-Romani notions of their ethnic marginality in order to access economic resources and professional prestige. Romani strategic manipulations of practice, or discourses of professional pride, comprise attempts to obtain agency that carry little import among non-Roma in the end; they are little heard/seen beyond the Romani community and thus insufficient to meaningfully shift power structures in their favor (Scott 1985; Seymour 2006). Romani negotiations of performance practice must work within the framework of occupational and ethnic hierarchies because most Romani musicians do not control the conditions of their labor (Silverman 2007, 2012; Zirbel 2000). Romani musical performances are first and foremost about labor and livelihood—rejecting power plays from patrons is a luxury that few can afford.

I have shown here how Romani "performative capital" critically draws from articulations of their ethnic and professional difference, made manifest through musical practices and given semiotic power via the dynamics of performance. I argue that scholarly investigations of Romani identity and music must interrogate *both* the political-economics of Romani musical labor and the performative potential of Romani musical practices for articulating identity politics. Much scholarship has rightly focused on the historical, political, and economic processes that shape Romani marginality, situating Romani musical practice and livelihoods within the context of legacies of discrimination and ethnic stereotyping (Beissinger 2001; Keil and Vellou-Keil 2002; Pettan 2002; Seeman 2002; Silverman 2007, 2012; Sugarman 2003; van de port 1998, 1999). My

work shows that detailed ethnography of the ways that Romani performance practices is produced (or contested) among non-Roma lends critical insight into the ways that Roma and Serbs experience Romani cultural difference (cf. van de Port 1998, 1999). Theories of embodiment, performance, and performativity together illustrate how discourses of power are rendered "real" through Romani bodily practices in musical contexts, literally reconstituted by the interactions of social actors. At the same time, Romani musical practices cannot be fully understood outside of popular discourses and historical legacies that produce their marginality in majority society. Their "ethnic otherness" (however complex and subjective) becomes the semiotic cornerstone of cultural meanings that underlie their performance practices—and articulate their relationships with paying patrons (cf. Theodosiou 2011). Scholarship must link the political economy of Romani ethnic identification and the performative reproduction of Romani otherness in musical practices in order to better understand Romani identity politics and musical labor.

# 6.

# "They Took From Us Even that Piece of Bread:" Romani Musical Livelihoods, Post-Socialist Crisis, and Nostalgia as Critique[82]

## 6.1 Introduction

One wintry evening in Vranje I found myself following two Romani friends, Zoran and Durak, up the steep street that leads into the upper reaches of the *Gornja Čaršija mahala*. Turning off the main road, I followed the men around the twists and turns of narrow sidestreets only sporadically illuminated by scattered street lights. Although I had come into these quarters regularly over the past months, I still felt lost at times in the maze of homes and courtyards. My friends had kindly offered to lead me to an elderly Romani clarinet player, Teil, an expert on older musical culture in Vranje. After several more turns we passed through the small front gate leading into the man's courtyard, and I followed them into the semi-subterranean lower level of the old house where the musician lived with his wife.

Over cups of Turkish coffee and homemade red wine, we spoke with Teil for more than an hour about his life and musical career. As the conversation wandered repeatedly from past to present, I was struck by the mens' rueful discussion of deteriorating conditions for musical performance in Vranje. Memories of past practices and explanations of older traditions consistently led them to impassioned harangues or resigned reflection on the changing musical scene today. The men emphasized that political changes and economic hardship since the 1990s have endangered the careers of Romani entertainers in town. At one point, Teil bitterly recalled

[82] This chapter is a significantly revised version of a previously published chapter: Marković, Alexander (2012) "Brass on the Move: Economic Crisis and Professional Mobility among Romani Musicians in Vranje." In *Labour Migrations in the Balkans*. B. Sikimić, P. Hristov, and B. Golubović, eds. Pp. 49-78. Berlin: Verlag Otto Sagner [Biblion Media].

how his orchestra was forced to stop performing at the high-caliber restaurant in Vranje that had been a mainstay of his band's musical livelihood for years:

**Zoran:** They [musicians] were more respected at weddings and performances than the mayor and the general populace. These stories about how Roma today, musicians who go to weddings and celebrations to perform, experience all kinds of trauma and such, they didn't experience those things at that time...they were respected.

**Teil:** Respected! We can't even play anymore, these days. How are you going to play when they all get drunk, beat each other up, much less expect them to be nice to the musician?...There isn't anymore music anyway. Where? So many musicians in the town...where, where are they performing? There's nothing! But before...[there was the] Vranje tavern, Evropa tavern, The Army House tavern, Tatabit's tavern...
[...]
We worked over here for years, in Haremluk restaurant. But now, the director won't even hear of us! No way. As knowledgeable as we are, he's afraid that we'll eat too much, that we'll get wealthy. You understand—us little Gypsies. Why? In other words, that is hate.

**Alex:** Of Gypsies?

**Teil:** Of Gypsies, yes! Exactly so! I worked in Leskovac, in Niš, Ribarska Banja, Lovran, Opatija. Where didn't I work! But when this director came: "You Gypsies have eaten enough here!" And he's darker-skinned than we are! He might as well be a Gypsy, and me a Serb! For shame. And I respected him more than my own son, because he was our director. And now, even if some guest were specifically to call for us to come play for him, he would not allow us inside to play!

**Alex:** When did this happen?

**Teil:** During the wars, I tell you! We were cut off. Now, about 5 or 6 years ago.

**Durak:** That director was really a big Nazi! He would rather employ *you* [Alex] to perform even if you didn't know how to play a single thing, just because you are Serbian!

**Teil:** Yes, yes. But the things that we know how to play, let him summon his father from the grave to tell him about them! They [other musicians] put on cassettes, and, you know, pretend to be playing! I tell him [the director]: "Do you hear this stuff?" And he says: "Let it be heard, only let's not have Gypsies here eating their fill"!

This chapter explores the ramifications of recent political changes and economic crises in Vranje for professional Romani musicians. Under Yugoslav socialism, strong economic conditions in Vranje combined with high demand for music at celebrations supported a lucrative

economic niche for Romani professional musicians. With the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, however, a chain of political, economic, and social upheavals make musical livelihoods less viable for Roma. During the wars of the 1990s, Serbia's economy was severely undermined by wartime expenses, international economic sanctions, and rapid hyperinflation (Bookman 2003; Dzihić and Segert 2012; Gordy 1999). With the overthrow of the Socialist regime under Slobodan Milošević in 2000, democratic opposition parties have increasingly sought to introduce pro-Western (i.e., pro-European) political ideologies (Greenberg 2014). With "democracy" have also come neoliberal economic discourses that encourage privatization, opening Serbia's economic spaces to foreign investors in ways that have essentially further impoverished much of the country (Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Lazić and Sekelj 1997; Verdery 1996; 1998). Furthermore, ongoing debates about Serbia's new position as an independent nation after Yugoslavia entail shifting and often conflicting discourses of national identity and belonging (see also Chapter 3). Both Serbs and Roma struggle to rearticulate links between livelihood, identity, and musical performance while living in a poverty-stricken border zone of the recently re-constituted Serbian state.

This chapter traces Romani musical livelihoods in Vranje from the period of Socialist Yugoslavia to the post-Yugoslav present in order to better understand how economic and social precarity affect Romani professional labor. I analyze how Roma and Serbs use nostalgia for the Socialist past to critique the rapid changes brought by the post-Socialist transition. I argue that locals in Vranje selectively contrast experiences of Yugoslav Socialism with tropes of contemporary "chaos and collapse" in attempts to reclaim economic agency, social status, and moral authority. In the following analysis I show how nostalgia provides a moral space for actors to contest new configurations of power, wealth, and social relationships in Vranje, particularly

when deployed by less powerful locals like Romani entertainers. I begin by exploring how Vranje's people remember their lives in Socialist Yugoslavia, and subsequently contrast these nostalgic narratives to present-day debates about economic, political, and musical life in post-Yugoslav Serbia.

## 6.2 Why Nostalgia? On Social Change and Memory Work as Critique

While nostalgia and nostalgics have historically been considered pathological or even dysfunctional (Boym 2001; Wilson 2005), more recent scholarship instead probes the import of nostalgia as a social practice. Far from being a sentimental fantasy or psychological malady, nostalgia articulates and makes sense of people's experiences of the present—often more than it faithfully describes what might have been in the past (Boym 2001; Wilson 2005). Nostalgic narratives are selectively constructed in order to be productive in the Foucaultian sense, i.e., to undertake cultural work on behalf of specific interests (Bissell 2005; Herzfeld 2005; Parla 2009; Quintero 2002).

Drawing on recent scholarly analyses of the social import of nostalgia, I argue that nostalgia for an idealized past in Vranje provides locals with a semiotic platform to analyze the vagaries of contemporary society, allowing them to better understand and critique their changing circumstances (Boym 2001; Parla 2009; Wilson 2005). Svetlana Boym (2001) notes nostalgia's importance for reconfiguring the individual's relationship to "self, community, and past" by engaging with "collective memory" (2001:41). Wilson (2005) similarly argues that nostalgia is a "sanctuary of memory," where the selective process of remembering helps actors to renegotiate their identity and experiences of the present in the face of rapidly changing ("postmodern") conditions. She notes that the truth of nostalgic claims is less important than understanding the "why" and "how" behind how such claims emerge (2005:8). Wilson also posits that people

become nostalgic about things that they deem to be most "worthwhile," "important," and "value[d]," making nostalgia a critical lens through which to interrogate key social concerns in the contemporary moment (2005:26).

The selective nature of memory projects lends weight to the strategic—and active—import of nostalgia. Svetlana Boym's (2001) dichotomy between "restorative" and "reflective" types of nostalgia underlines the malleable construction of nostalgic narratives—the former are often embedded in official projects that seek to bring back the glorious past, while the latter (as personal or popular collective memories of the less powerful) laments that the past is irrevocably gone and cannot be resurrected. While I find Boym's binary dichotomy too limiting, her exploration of the links between the specific *forms* of nostalgic narratives and the *position* of different nostalgic subjects is illuminating. Renato Rosaldo's (1989) analysis of "imperialist nostalgia," where the colonizer uses nostalgia to mask his own complicity in destroying conquered spaces, shows that nostalgia needs to be evaluated for how it persuades a general populace to believe in its validity despite ubiquitous inconsistencies in nostalgic constructs (110). Herzfeld (2005), too, stresses that structural nostalgias are essentialisms, reifications using tropes drawn from the cultural intimacies of particular communities in ways that "background their own usage" and are thus easier to manipulate in an authoritative, convincing way (2005:32-33). He includes both "powerful" and "humble" actors in these politics of memory, indicating that selective nostalgia can be culturally productive for both high and low ends of the power spectrum. As such, nostalgia must be contextualized within the specific interests of those doing the remembering (Bissell 2005; Boym 2001; Gille 2011; Parla 2009; Rosaldo 1989).

Svetlana Boym (2001) argues that nostalgia for socialism is often selectively "ahistorical" by re-imagining the past to support current agendas shaped by experiences of

transition. Thus communism may be either a period of "stagnation" or one of "normalcy" in contrast to present conditions, depending on the position of the actor doing the remembering. Recent scholarship documents how diverse post-socialist nostalgias serve as pointed social critiques of the present, articulating "longing for security, stability, and prosperity" as well as mourning the loss of a "specific form of sociability" (Todorova 2011:6-7). Nostalgic discourses are often impassioned (or cautious) claims to maintain collective, non-official memory narratives of a past time and ways of being that current national projects seek to erase or de-legitimize (Burić 2011; Gille 2011:283; Petrović 2011:70, 75-76). Such nostalgias involve articulations of social relations, economic life, work, and identity that have been eroded or endangered by post-socialist economic, political, and nationalist projects (Burić 2011; Creed 2011; Petrović 2011; Schwandner-Sievers 2011:103-104).

Partial or selective remembering (or silencing) of the socialist past points to the ways that it is often harnessed to contemporary sociopolitical agendas (Gille 2011:283, Petrović 2011; Schwandner-Sievers 2011; Todorova 2011), but this does not invalidate nostalgia as a socially meaningful (and thus real) process (Gille 2011:283). In post-socialist contexts, people may not be advocating for the return of less savory aspects of the past even as they long for those facets of life that were beneficial—nostalgic critiques highlight what is wrong with the present, and perhaps suggest avenues for remedying contemporary disorder or "re-orienting" society toward a better prospective future (Buchanan 2011:148-149; Gille 2011:283). Heeding Todorova's call for ethnographically grounded accounts of nostalgia, and Gille's attention to the context-specific diversity of nostalgic phenomena, the following analysis situates Vranje locals' nostalgic remembering within the economic, political, social, and musical dimensions of the transition from Socialist Yugoslavia to post-Yugoslav Serbia (Gille 2011:278-279; Todorova 2011:4-5).

## 6.3 Tito's Era: "The Golden Years" of Socialist Yugoslavia (1960s - 1980s)

The vast majority of Vranje's inhabitants are highly nostalgic about life in Socialist Yugoslavia. Most Roma and Serbs I spoke with consistently praised the living conditions in the country prior to the nation's breakup in 1991. Indeed, it was difficult to have a conversation about any aspect of local life and culture without encountering nostalgic laments about the past. Locals argue that people were able to "really live" in the relative security of Yugoslavia's because they were certain of access to jobs, enjoyed regular pay, and were protected by a controlled standard of living that allowed them to maximize the use of their earnings. Many also credit Yugoslav political stability and the Socialist policy of "brotherhood and unity" with maintaining peace and equality between citizens of various ethnic backgrounds. Locals attribute the financial plenty and social stability of these "golden years" to the rule of Marshal Josip Broz Tito and the official policies of the Socialist regime (see also Burić 2011). Among others, Romani musicians fondly remember higher earnings and greater respect for their role as professional entertainers under socialism.

### 6.3.1 Industrialization and Economic Stability in Socialist Vranje

Vranje was transformed by state-sponsored projects into an industrial powerhouse during the Socialist period. Much like neighboring socialist nations, the Yugoslav government encouraged a program of rapid industrialization and modernization immediately following World War II (Creed 1998; Hoffman and Neal 1962; Simić 1973). Massive rural to urban migration ensued in response to new employment opportunities, significantly altering the socioeconomic conditions of life for large sections of the Yugoslav populace. Booming numbers of jobs in basic industry and construction offered citizens new opportunities to participate in a cash economy and

to experience a "better life" in cities in contrast to perceived isolation, poverty, and "less sophisticated" conditions in rural communities (Simić 1973).

In Vranje, industrialization significantly increased employment prospects and provided new sources of income for most locals. New factory jobs drew in large numbers of people seeking to abandon agricultural subsistence farming for urban wage labor. Roma and Serbs recall that many in their respective communities worked in the *YUMCO* cotton industry, *SIMPO's* furniture manufacturing plant, Vranje's *DIV* tobacco-processing giant, or the *KOŠTANA* shoe-making factory. Entire extended families often worked within a single firm, as younger members sought—or were granted—work in the same factories that employed their elder relatives.

Official Socialist policies guaranteed universal employment and healthy earnings for the general populace as part of a platform of social and industrial progress. The demand for large numbers of workers necessary to jumpstart rapid industrialization drew significant portions of the populace into wage labor. At the same time, fairly endemic "economies of shortage" in state-sponsored firms often led managers to hoard supplies and labor to successfully meet production needs. Large numbers of laborers enjoyed steady employment in firms regardless of actual need, and labor enjoyed substantial power vis-a-vis management in state-run firms and factories (Verdery 1996). Tito's distinctive socialist policies further bolstered the power of Yugoslav laborers by stressing decentralized economic development and "worker management" of enterprises, placing much of the formal decision-making power in the hands of councils of workers within each firm (Hoffman and Neal 1962; Patterson 2011:24-35). These policies bolstered the strong sense of job security and material stability praised by Vranje residents. Locals favorably contrast the significant power of labor in these firms to worker conditions since

the collapse of the Socialist system. People in Vranje credit expanding industry with initiating an era of rapid development and growing prosperity for the town and wider region.

Vranje's Romani community also benefited from Socialist-era industrial development. Throughout Eastern Europe, state socialism often incorporated Roma into expanding labor markets as a matter of policy. Guy (2001) argues that many Eastern European socialist governments cast Roma as a "social" (i.e., class) problem instead of an "ethnic" one in order to support official efforts to bring Roma into the mainstream workforce. Romani workers were considered an important source of the unskilled labor necessary to jumpstart state-sponsored manufacturing and production. As a result Romani communities enjoyed greater access to steady employment and wages than in previous periods, and Roma enjoyed a modicum of improvement in their economic standing and living conditions under many socialist regimes (Barany 1994; Guy 2001; Ladanyi and Szelenyi 2006).

Vranje's Roma were actively incorporated into the labor force at major factories in town during the Socialist period. Government policies allocated a percentage of the jobs created by burgeoning industry to Roma. While Roma were usually employed in menial positions that Serb workers found undesirable, many maintain that access to factory work improved the range of labor opportunities available to the Romani community.[83] Factory jobs also provided steady wages and benefits that were preferable to less secure incomes garnered through other typical lines of work for Roma, such as the resale of foodstuffs or apparel in open-air *pijac* markets.[84]

---

[83] Local Serbs claim that Roma were often hired to do the work that most Serbs would refuse to undertake in these factories. Roma were engaged to clean factory floors, gather excess material from production lines, clean bathrooms and mess halls, load and unload trucks, or to act as guards and night watchmen for factory property. Serbs I spoke with characterized these jobs as low-class (as well as low-wage) work. Although some Roma were employed in more skilled types of functions, as tailors or machine operators, locals told me that this was a small percentage of the total Romani workforce in factories.

[84] Serbs in Vranje often link these activities to Roma during socialism, insisting that this was low-prestige. Many Serbs would be embarrassed to find themselves forced to sell clothing on the streets in order to make ends meet. Roma also customarily worked as field-hands and manual laborers, as small craftsmen manufacturing rope or

While more traditional, less prestigious occupations continued to emphasize social distance between Roma and non-Roma during this period (see chapter 2; also Pettan 2002)—a reminder that socialism did not magically level the playing field for Roma—older Roma in Vranje praise Socialist policies of labor-force incorporation for providing alternative, concrete sources of income for Romani workers. Many feel that this policy brought Roma closer to mainstream society, elevating the status and visibility of the community.

Rapid economic growth throughout Yugoslavia beginning in the late 1950s often significantly improved the standard of living for large sections of the populace, and particularly for workers in industry, urban firms, and the local bureaucracy (Hoffman and Neal 1962; Patterson 2011). Incomes and consumption in Yugoslavia skyrocketed during the 1960s and peaked in the 1970s, as employment was widely available for large sectors of the populace (including as guest workers abroad in western Europe) and the basic costs of living (such as housing) were kept low as a matter of state policy (Patterson 2011:38-46). Most of Vranje's population could comfortably meet their basic needs. Many in Vranje boast that their families were able to build brand new homes or expand existing dwellings from salaries earned during this industrial boom. Family elders used earnings to build multi-storey homes in order to provide separate floors for married sons and their families.

Relative financial stability and a booming cash economy during this period also allowed people to partake in "luxury" activities. Rapid economic growth in Yugoslavia between 1965-1978 spurred a popular culture of consumption that rapidly changed the general standards of living for vast swathes of the population (Patterson 2011). Worker self-management and Yugoslav open-ness to certain market principles encouraged notions of personal choice in

---

working as blacksmiths, and even as domestic helpers and later as workers involved in streets and sanitation (see also chapter 2). Serbs rarely undertook any of these occupations.

shaping the directions of the national economy, while freedom to travel for leisure (including shopping) or to work in Europe exposed Yugoslavs to western consumer culture and aspirations for material comforts as part of a better life (Patterson 2011:38-46). As a result of how widely accessible material goods and leisure activities became during this period, many Yugoslavs claimed to be quite satisfied with the quality of life in the country and were convinced that general conditions and people's quality of life were consistently improving (Patterson 2011:253-293).

Vranje locals' nostalgic accounts of plenty during the Yugoslav period mirror this emphasis on consumption as a marker of "the good life." They argue that economic prosperity and widespread employment meant that people were in a better position to enjoy leisure, consumption, and travel. Many wistfully remember taking regular summer vacations with their children and grandchildren on the Adriatic and Aegean seacoasts. Iva, a Serb woman who grew up during the Socialist period, recalls Yugoslavs taking short trips to see the sights and go shopping in Italy, for example, with the spare time and cash they enjoyed under socialism. Unlike the present, however, she argued that very few chose to leave the country permanently because they were generally satisfied with the quality of life in the former Yugoslavia (see also Patterson 2011:5). Such narratives stress that a strong economy and pervasive job security of Socialist Vranje allowed locals to enjoy pleasurable activities beyond the scope of elementary survival.

Favorable conditions and the consumer culture of the period in turn supported a culture of musical entertainment and elaborate celebrations in Vranje. At this time, Vranje was widely known in the region for the number and quality of its restaurants, taverns (*kafana*-s), and hotel accommodations. The urban economic boom supported an institutionalized culture of tavern

patronage. Local Serbs speak of "good old days" when groups of friends would share meals, drink, and enjoy good music and dancing at such establishments. Music was one of the most important aspects of these venues, providing both the context and the means to build and maintain social relationships. Pera, an older man from an old Serb family in Vranje, fondly recalls regular musical events as prime occasions for relaxation and socializing. As a teenager, he would scrape together scarce cash with his friends in order to visit the *Hotel Vranje* and have a Coke, or to order a simple treat of slices of bread toasted with a bit of lard and ground red pepper in the *Kafana Evropa* ("Europe" Tavern). The real treat, he says, was the music and dancing by assembled crowds of guests at these venues.

Note that Pera could only afford "simple" pleasures at events in his youth, hinting that this period was not uniformly bountiful despite nostalgic assertions to the contrary. Such details highlight the tensions between idealized memories and the more complex realities of life in Socialist Vranje. Yet Pera and many in his generation favorably compare their experiences in taverns and hotels in the past to "tasteless" café settings and "stupid" musical options available to young people in today's Vranje. Pera's nostalgia for better—if simpler—musical times in his youth points is decidedly strategic (Bissell 2005; Herzfeld 2005; Parla 2009). This selective remembering of the socialist past laments the loss of specific aspects of a social and moral order without necessarily advocating for a return to all past conditions (Gille 2011; Petrović 2011; Schwandner-Sievers 2011; Todorova 2011). Vranje locals often use nostalgic discourses to produce an emotionally-charged moral commentary on the contemporary impoverishment of musical sociability in post-socialist Vranje.

Vranje residents relish detailed descriptions of "old-time" musical establishments and events. Older people recall that the famous Bakija Bakić Romani brass orchestra performed

every Monday evening in *Hotel Vranje's* outdoor garden during the summer months. Scores of families would dress in their best and sit in the garden to dine together while enjoying the music performed by Bakija's ensemble. The gardens of the *Hotel Pržar* and of the *Dom JNA* ("*Yugoslav People's Army House*") were additional popular places to enjoy live performances and to dance during warm summer evenings. Patrons seeking good music to accompany evening dinners—particularly during the colder winter months—filled the large indoor halls of various tavern establishments like the *Kafana Evropa*. Many of these venues contracted professional Romani musicians year-round to provide the necessary atmosphere and draw in clients. Vranje's inhabitants are said to have been famous throughout Yugoslavia for their exuberant musical culture and celebrations. Pera remembers that people would come from Macedonia, Kosovo, or as far away as Belgrade to experience "*kako se Vranjanci vesele"*—"how Vranje's people let loose." Vranje musicians were periodically invited to Belgrade to perform at "Evening in Vranje" events ("*Vranjske Večeri*") that recreated Vranje's celebratory culture for nostalgic migrants from that region, as well as for curious guests from other parts of Serbia and Yugoslavia.

Economic growth in Socialist Vranje also supported elaborate traditions of family celebrations featuring live musical entertainment. Major rites of passage such as the birth of a child, baptisms, serving one's obligatory military service, and weddings were marked by celebrations that required hiring professional musicians. Hosts were obligated to provide ample food, drink, and entertainment to their guests throughout, and events entailed significant financial costs for families. Although family festivities were traditionally hosted in courtyards, basements, or even in the streets in front of their homes, over time people also began to rent halls in local hotels or restaurants for celebratory banquets. Lavish celebrations conveyed the hosts'

solicitous hospitality toward invited guests, where economic extravagance boosted the celebratory ambience for attendees.

Good music was considered among the most essential services (and expenses) required of host families. Locals boast that hosts provided continuous musical accompaniment day and night for the entire three-day course of weddings. Nenad, a well-known Romani brass band leader, remembers his father's band performing nearly every day for three months straight during peak wedding season in Vranje. Between Romani and Serb weddings, the band would barely finish playing for one three-day event at midday only to proceed directly to their next wedding engagement that same afternoon. "By the end of those summers, my father's colleagues all developed sores around their mouths from so much playing," Nenad recalls. Remembering even arduous dimensions of musical labor allows performers to praise times when the sheer numbers and lavishness of local celebrations constituted the backbone of Vranje's musical economy.

The surplus cash enjoyed by most of Vranje's inhabitants during socialism also supported extensive tipping of musicians, allowing nearly all celebrants at an event to maximally participate by making musical requests of the performers (see chapters 4 and 5). The lavishness of the event and the "good mood" of the guests earned significant cultural capital for the host family, maintaining the family's status and social relationships. Events were discussed at length among town residents, and locals sought to ensure that their own family celebrations would be suitably impressive in turn. Many in Vranje stress that families at the time were relatively unconcerned about lavish amounts of money and effort expended on celebrations—people knew that they could afford the costs of entertainment demanded by local cultural standards because of economic stability under socialism.

### 6.3.2 Professional Musicians in the "Time of Plenty"

Romani musicians indicate that the 1960s through the 1980s were the peak of their professional prowess in the town. Roma practically monopolized the professional performance of music—most claim that there were very few professional Serbian musicians at the time. Patrons inevitably sought entertainers in one of the several Romani *mahalas* in and around Vranje. Romani musicians operated in various entertainment niches and catered to a wide variety of patrons.

*Kafana* ("tavern") ensembles comprising some combination of clarinet, violin, guitar, accordion, contrabass, and/or *tarabuka* drum were predominant in restaurants, cafes, and hotel guest halls (see Chapter 2). Musical versatility made this type of ensemble widely popular both in Vranje and in cities further abroad, and a significant proportion of the active Romani musicians in the region performed in *kafana* ensembles because of high demand. Many restaurants, cafes, and hotels at the time permanently retained specific Romani *kafana* bands for nightly performances in their establishments. One Romani clarinet player in his eighties told me proudly that the *kafana* ensemble he worked with was on the payroll of the *Hotel Vranje* for years, performing several evenings every the week. At the same time, famous local clarinetist Kurta Ajredinović's group was the primary band at the *Kafana Evropa* in another part of the town.

Musicians also recall coming away from performances with large sums of money to split between orchestra members. Typically, each performer earned equal shares of both the pre-arranged fee that booked their orchestra for an event (known as the *pogodba,* or "agreement") as well as the sum of the tips (*bakšiš*) offered by various. Deda Aca, an elderly Rom brass band leader, recalls that sometimes bands would even waive the initial fee to perform at weddings:

"The people had money then…if you knew someone well, you know that they will give *bakšiš*, we would leave it up to them…as much as your soul desires, you will give. But we always knew that we would come away with good money!"

Professional musicians were also able to hold non-musical jobs because of flexible schedules and the general availability of work, allowing entertainers to maximize their overall earning potential. Teil, the Romani clarinetist quoted in the introduction, explained that he worked welding aluminum (as a *limar*) during the day and then performed in *kafana* orchestras in the evenings. He indicated that the combination of his monthly earnings might amount to more money than some factory directors' salaries at the time. Teil asked me rhetorically "How, then, was a prestigious director in a Vranje firm any better than me?" He felt that the widespread availability of work under socialism allowed even average (or marginalized) residents of the town to live well.

Older Romani musicians also remember that many entertainers were registered with a musician's union (*udruženje muzičara*) based in nearby Skopje, Macedonia.[85] Member musicians had official "worker's booklets" (*radne knjižice*) that gave them access to important benefits. The union might function as a middleman to find gigs and negotiate steady contracts for *kafana* performers. Perhaps most importantly, the union documented musicians' earnings so that they could earn pensions (*radni staž*) as entertainers. The elderly clarinet player who performed at the *Hotel Vranje* lives entirely (if humbly) on the pension he earned through stable musical work during this period. He told me that he could not live without this money today, adding that he is too old and weak to perform on his instrument anymore. The institutionalization of musical performance in Socialist Vranje introduced long-term benefits and bolstered earning stability for

[85] Roma in Vranje also told me that another musician's union was later based in Vranje itself. Much like the older union in Skopje, it is no longer active following the disintegration of Socialist Yugoslavia in the early 1990s.

Romani musicians in ways that had never before been possible. Appreciation of musical performance as a "legitimate" profession under socialism elevated Romani musicians in Vranje to a more prestigious place in society.

### 6.3.3 "Musical Intimacy:" Familiarity and Prestige in Patron-Musician Relations

Both Serbs and Roma comment that favorable conditions during socialism also granted musicians significant cultural prestige. Many stress that Romani professional entertainers attained middle-class status (*srednji stalež*). Locals point to aspects of the musicians' appearance and comportment as evidence of their high standing. Neviza, a middle-aged Romani woman who grew up in the *Gornja Čaršija mahala*, exclaimed with pleasure when I showed her a 30 year old photograph of the late Stojadin, a well-known, older *kafana* musician. "That man was quite the gentleman (*To je bio gospodin čovek!*)," she told me with a smile. She remembered as a child watching him descend through the *mahala* in the early evenings on his way to perform in one or the other of the town's restaurants. He was always impeccably dressed in a suit, complete with tie and cufflinks, and carried his violin in a case under his arm—she felt that he looked like the epitome of high class. His proud and calm demeanor was a trademark of the self-assured musicians of his day.

Many locals emphasize the elaborate decorum that Romani musicians cultivated at the time, commenting that their appearance and the ways they approached potential patrons at venues were an important part of their trade in the "highly cultured" atmosphere of hotels and taverns during socialism. Older Vranje Serbs speak with obvious affection about certain well-known *kafana* musicians. They stress that these men were respectable gentlemen who developed close relationships with many of their regular patrons. Many fondly recall how musicians knew

to play exactly the right song in exactly the right way for a given group of visitors—testament to their personal knowledge of specific patrons and their desire to please them.

Both Roma and Serbs in Vranje draw attention to personal relationships nurtured by musicians and patrons. Many such stories emphasize that certain Serb patrons developed particular affections for a given Romani musician or orchestra and regularly sought out these performers above others. Dejan told the following story about his grandfather to paint a picture of these intimate and lucrative relationships:

> I remember one night when I was a child that the wealthy director of a local firm dropped by my grandfather's home. He was probably returning from the *Hotel Pržar* and decided to stop in along the way, since our home is located along the main road. I was already getting ready for bed, but we all heard a car pull over and park. The man knocked on our front door and my grandmother let him in. He asked if my grandfather Zenka was home. When my grandfather entered the room, the director greeted him and asked if he wouldn't mind playing a few songs for him—"for my soul," he told him. My grandfather agreed, and while my grandmother started to make coffee for the man my grandfather asked me to go get his accordion. He quickly dressed in his good clothes. My grandmother served the man his coffee on a tray—things had to be *bonton*[86] you know—while my grandfather took a seat in a chair at the kitchen table, facing the director. For the next 20 minutes, my grandfather played songs non-stop for the man. When he was satisfied, the director reached into his coat pocket and laid a series of bills onto the kitchen table in front of my grandfather. Thanking him, he stood up and wished us all a good evening before heading out the door and driving off. After he left, my grandfather took me on his knee to show me the money the director had left. I was young, so I didn't know, but my grandfather explained that this amounted to one month's average wages at the time! Imagine that! That's how things were in those days.

Considering the social and economic barriers that separated the Romani minority from majority Serb society, the familiarity that many Serbs shared with Romani entertainers indicates the value that good musicians could garner. Many Serbs speak with easy familiarity about "legendary" Romani musicians in the *kafana* genre, peppering their discussions with anecdotes and stories

---

[86] *Bonton* here refers to established, "Western", and cultured etiquette used for serving meals and refreshments. There is an element of nostalgia here for "older times" and knowledge about formal rituals that structured social interactions at the time. In addition, this facet emphasizes the high degree of respect the man's family was extending to this wealthy patron.

from the lives of musicians such as Kurta Ajredinović,[87] Jaško Jašarević,[88] and others. Details about the comportment, style, and attire of middle-class musicians form the core of nostalgic reminiscences, indicating the close link between economic prowess and cultural cachet that lubricated patron-musician relationships.

For some of Vranje's Romani entertainers, stories of musical work outside of Vranje provide an additional platform for claiming status. Roma cite the prestige of performing abroad, and accolades of cosmopolitan audiences throughout the nation, to illustrate respect for professional Romani musicians during the Socialist period. Musicians in the *kafana* genre were particularly mobile, traveling throughout the former Yugoslavia. One Romani accordionist from Vranjska Banja reminisced that local *kafana* musicians "were famous throughout the nation, from Kumanovo to Triglav mountain *(od Kumanova do Triglava*)!"[89]

Many of these performers explain that diverse repertoires and the high quality of *kafana* bands made them popular in high-class establishments across the nation. Anica, a Romani woman who sang in a *kafana* orchestra, laughed when I asked if the group performed music by Esma Redžepova (a popular Macedonian Romani singer).[90] She claimed that diverse audiences far from Vranje were thoroughly uninterested in music from southern Yugoslav regions,

---

[87] A favorite clarinet player from *Gornja Čaršija* in Vranje, many locals relish telling visitors that Boki Milošević, perhaps Serbia's most famous clarinet player, spent his early career learning from Kurta in Vranje.

[88] This violinist from *Gornja Čaršija* was well known for performing in local venues and in theatrical productions of playwright Bora Stanković's works, but also as a professor of violin and trumpet in Vranje's music school.

[89] This expression refers to regions found at the northern and southern extremes of Yugoslavia: Kumanovo in Macedonia to the south and the Triglav Mountain in Slovenia to the north. The comment seems to be a misuse (or innovation) based on the popular song praising Yugoslavia titled "Od Vardara do Triglava", in this case referring to the Vardar River in Macedonia (instead of the town of Kumanovo).

[90] Esma Redžepova is a ground-breaking Romani performer, so I was surprised by Anica's dismissive attitude toward her music. She was one of the first Romani women ever to achieve musical fame in the former Yugoslavia in the 1960s, and she was one of the first Romani artists to promote Romani culture on national and international stages. She was regularly featured on Macedonian and Yugoslav radio and television, her records were commercially available and sold widely, and she even acted as a diplomatic envoy and ambassador for the Yugoslav government (and its Romani population, in effect). She was—and still is—much beloved in Macedonia and the former Yugoslavia for her music and charitable works, and remains an iconic representative of Balkan Romani culture worldwide (see Silverman 2004 and 2012).

implying also that the music was too provincial for high-end venues. Others proudly pointed out that *kafana* musicians were popular for playing "Western" and "modern" styles as well as local music. Nebojša, a Romani man from Vranjska Banja, explained that his father was a ground-breaking trumpet player who performed jazz just as easily as local genres, often combining styles while performing in clubs and cafes in other parts of the former Yugoslavia. Musicians even underscore the cosmopolitan prestige of *kafana* music during socialism by favorably comparing it with brass music. They argue that brass bands were mainly a local phenomenon at the time, catering to "peasants" on a less formal, gig-by-gig basis. As outdoor wedding performers, Vranje's brass musicians occupied a slightly lower musical rank than the more versatile and in-demand *kafana* musicians (see also chapter 2, pg. 48, fn. 14).

Yet Romani brass musicians also speak of personal prestige and respect enjoyed during the peak years of the former Yugoslavia. With the growing popularity of the Guča Brass Festival, winning Vranje musicians like Bakija Bakić added new layers to the reputation of Romani brass performers as excellent musicians (see chapters 3 and 7). Bakija's orchestra was a major source of pride for Vranje residents, and many local Serbs told me that they insisted on having Bakija's band perform for their wedding celebrations. Because their services were so central to ritual celebrations (see chapter 4), brass musicians were generally well rewarded.

Brass bandleader Deda Aca claims that patrons in those days were exceptionally generous. Each and every song and dance tune performed was rewarded with an appropriate cash tip. He remembers seeing patrons regularly throw out wads of bills without so much as a glance at the amount being given to the musicians. In those days, Deda Aca told me, everyone worked and people could afford to be magnanimous to entertainers. People were also keen to be "good hosts" (*dobri domaćini*), making certain that musicians were also served food and drink

throughout the day. Older Serbs echo this picture of generous and familiar relationships, talking about how they affectionately reserved hefty tips for the moment their favorite brass musician would play a tune that held a special place in their heart. Zoran, an elderly Serb man from Vranje, recalls the pure pleasure he felt when musicians would strike up the dance tune *Pembe* on his account. He told me that he always had "great *merak"* (desire) to gift money to musicians during emotionally exciting moments.

However, nostalgia for the dignified decorum and affectionate familiarity of relations between Romani entertainers and Serb patrons in Socialist Vranje also glosses many of the less savory interactions that mark Romani musical performances (see chapter 5). Stories of better treatment under socialism conflict with musicians' accounts of difficult conditions and demanding patrons. Patrons might make excessive or humiliating demands of Romani entertainers because of the stigma attached to musical performance as low-class work, in conjunction with derision of the performers' "Gypsy" identity (see chapter 5). Many older Romani musicians in Vranje recall harassment, poor conditions, and uncomfortable exchanges with Serb patrons in the past, yet later fondly claim that both patrons and performance events were much better in the Socialist period. Idyllic narratives about "reciprocal mutuality" and social respect in the past are strategic, pointing to the loss of "specific form[s] of sociability" from the socialist past to critique of present-day moral and social collapse (Herzfeld 2005:147; Todorova 2011:6-7; see also, Burić 2011; Creed 2011; Petrović 2011). Nostalgic narratives allow Romani musicians to mine "structure" for resources, deploying them in social poetics that mark attempts to accrue status and legitimacy in the present (Herzfeld 2005:174).

With the collapse of Yugoslavia and socialism in the 1990s, Romani musicians encountered significant challenges to maintaining earnings and reputation in Vranje. In the

following section, I discuss locals' perspectives on the socioeconomic changes that characterize post-socialist life in Vranje. Criticism of current conditions in Vranje is closely tied to narratives of "the way things once were." While many of these debates concern indisputably real and dramatic reversals of the quality of life in post-socialist Vranje, locals juxtapose stories of present-day chaos with romanticized visions of the socialist past in discursive attempts to maintain some degree of social and moral agency in turbulent, uncertain conditions.

## 6.4 Post-1990s Vranje: Conflict and Collapse

Yugoslavia's violent dissolution in the 1990s set in motion far-reaching political, economic, and social processes that greatly destabilized the once-lucrative professional music niche in Vranje. Although the wars in Bosnia and Croatia were geographically distant from Vranje, the economic hardships caused by Serbia's military spending, rampant inflation, and extensive international sanctions took a significant toll on the region's population (Bookman 2003; Dzihić and Segert 2012). Serbia also received a flood of refugees in the 1990s from other republics, further straining the state's already limited resources (Bookman 2003). When fresh conflicts broke out with Albanians in Kosovo in 1998, and NATO forces bombed the country in 1999, widespread destruction of local infrastructure and incursion of additional wartime damages exacerbated the decline of Serbia's regional economies.

Slobodan Milošević's overthrow in 2000 officially ended Socialist rule in what remained of the former Yugoslavia. As the political opposition came to power in Serbia, new political and economic policies were put into effect in accordance with a "pro-democratic" and "pro-Western" (i.e., pro-European Union) re-orientation in the nation's leadership. The post-Milošević political and economic climate has seen rising levels of unemployment and poverty in Vranje, however, rocking the cultural foundations of the town's social—and musical—life.

### 6.4.1 Economic Crisis: Neoliberal Changes after Socialism

Across Eastern Europe, post-1989 transitions from state-sponsored socialism to "democratic capitalism" have been fraught with political tensions, rising nationalism, widening class rifts, and widespread unemployment. Many of the economic "reforms" sweeping the post-socialist context are decidedly neoliberal, emphasizing privatization, openness to foreign investment, deregulation of capital, and minimal government controls on national economic spaces (Brenner 1999; Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Diawara 1998; Harvey 2005; 2006; Kearney 1995). In post-socialist Eastern Europe, national emphasis on democratization and modernization is ideologically linked to privatization and free-market reforms, and these processes are encouraged by international bodies like the IMF, the World Bank, or the European Union (Verdery 1998).

In the wake of these reforms, however, class rifts and poverty levels have grown considerably for many citizens (Bookman 2003). Socialist-era elites were best situated to take advantage of new flows of capital and political connections in order to profit from privatization, further widening the growing gap between rich and poor and adding to social disillusionment (Lazić and Sekelj 1997). In the case of Serbia, wartime spending, debt, international sanctions, and hyperinflation experienced in the 1990s exacerbated the social and economic impact of these transitions. Poverty and shortages were so severe that the vast majority of the populace, particularly in urban spaces, was barely able to meet basic needs (Gordy 1999). After the Milošević period, however, neoliberal economic policies in Serbia have intensified the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of the elite while severely reducing employment opportunities, lowering the standard of living, and augmenting the widespread

social apathy and political disillusionment that first developed during the crises of the 1990s (Gordy 1999).

Despite severe economic depression, repeated military losses, and authoritarian political conditions under the Milošević regime, Vranje's voting populace strongly supported his ruling Socialist party during the 1990s because of government investment in the local industrial economy. Indeed, Vranje enjoyed a relatively privileged status under Milošević. Locals saw Milošević's government as guarantor of state funds and praised ongoing support for Vranje's extensive industry. Staunchly pro-Socialist directors led the large industrial firms in Vranje, cultivating important political connections to obtain needed resources and capital. Politics and local economics were closely linked; the working populace was cajoled (and sometimes coerced) into loyalty to the Socialist party because of its role in maintaining the institutions that employed the vast majority of Vranje's residents.

Many locals fondly remember the Milošević government's support of Vranje's industry in light of the current employment crisis. Even those who were not fond of Milošević's politics appreciated that jobs were readily available under his regime and that workers continued to receive full pay on a timely basis. In an extreme example, one Romani woman explained that she received her husband's paychecks while he was away with the army in Kosovo during the NATO bombing in 1999. Locals also point out that the standard of living remained fairly balanced—prices for basic food items and other living necessities were kept at reasonable levels, so that family earnings were able to cover the essentials for everyday life. Although the political, economic, and military turbulence of this decade were far from the "easy times" of Tito's Yugoslavia (Bookman 2003; Gordy 1999), Vranje in the 1990s fared better than some other regions of Serbia because of strong economic and political support from state institutions.

With Milošević's fall in October of 2000, however, the democratic transition entailed a complete reorientation in Serbia's economy, throwing open the door for increased foreign investment and rapid privatization. As Vranje's industrial firms fell into the hands of *privatnici* ("private owners"), levels of employment were drastically slashed as firms were overhauled. Many workers were laid off after being proclaimed *tehnološki višak*, or "technical excess," in the larger scheme of firm productivity.[91] Where the majority of the working populace once relied on the wide array of factory jobs, massive numbers of people were quickly left unemployed. According to municipal figures offered by Vranje's mayor during an interview for *Politika* newspaper in November 2011, for example, the number of employees in the firm *YUMCO* dropped from 13,500 to 1,800 as a result of these post-1990s upheavals. In the same interview, he notes that official city records show that 10% of Vranje's population were unemployed in 2011, although previously the figure was nearly twice that number (Momčilović 2011).[92]

Many local industries did not survive the privatization process. An Italian investor bought the *KOŠTANA* shoe factory shortly after the Kosovo conflict in 1999. Within a few years, the investor closed the company and moved on, leaving the company's roughly 4,000 remaining workers unemployed. The financial state of the factory was so poor by the end that many employees were still owed months of back pay. For years, they pressured the local government to settle these debts to no avail. In 2009, a certain portion of the former employees of the firm received a small, symbolic percentage of the income they were owed. At the same time, municipal representatives announced that the company was officially bankrupt and that no more money would be disbursed to former workers.

---

[91] This term liberally peppers the stories of many (ex-)workers in Vranje.
[92] Accessed online at www.politika.rs on July 4th 2012.

Those who retain employment in Vranje's newly privatized economic spaces face much more difficult working conditions than during the former Yugoslavia. With the stark reduction in job positions, competition to keep (or obtain) positions in remaining factories is stiff. Personal or political connections are often vital to access jobs in any sector, whether in remaining large firms, small private businesses, or the service sector. Massive unemployment makes the workforce in Vranje much less powerful in relation to employers, in stark contrast with labor-management relations in the Socialist era. Employers can easily threaten workers with replacement by new laborers desperately in need of work. Locals complain that they are forced to accept low wages, irregular pay, and even physical or sexual harassment because they are largely unable to combat the growing power of private capital interests.

One Romani man, Čerim, complained to me in 2010 about his boss's complete disregard for basic employee rights. After losing his job at a privatizing state firm, his new position in another privately-owned factory was far less secure and offered fewer benefits. In and out of the hospital with a severe respiratory infection, his employer denied his request for sick leave and told him that if he did not report to work he could stay home—permanently. Gordana, a middle-aged Serb woman, pointed out that it was doubly difficult for women like her young, unmarried neighbor who had recently lost her job as a store clerk. She told me that many male employers had no qualms coercing young women to sleep with them to retain their jobs or obtain promotions. "The only thing that works here in Vranje [today] is promiscuity [*kurval'k*, literally "prostitution"]," she commented. Gordana feels that all sense of the social order and decent work that once characterized life in Vranje has completely disappeared. She added that young women are damned if they refuse to comply, because they can easily be dismissed without recourse to official protection from local government and law, but they are also damned if they do give in,

suffering reputations as loose women because gossip about such acts is easily (and readily) spread throughout the small town.

Class rifts in town are also widening as a relatively small percentage of the local population successfully utilizes the economic transition to obtain expanded financial and political resources. The interests of private entrepreneurs and local political cadres converge significantly as government gives increasing free reign to private enterprise in return for political support. In an April 2011 article in the national newspaper *Politika*, Vranje's mayor indicated that the local municipal government would be offering tax breaks to private investors willing to open businesses and "create new jobs" in the city (Bukvić 2011).[93] While ostensibly this measure aimed to lower rates of unemployment, many locals pointed out that official policies primarily privileged the expansion of the private sector and bolstered the profit margins of elite businessmen. Such criticisms often spiraled out to include local politicians as well. One elderly Serb man in Vranje characterized political dealings in Vranje as outright "thievery" (*lopovl'k*), nostalgically comparing the rule of Tito and Milošević to current regimes by saying that even if those leaders took for themselves, at least they also made sure to give something back to the people.

The line between political and business interests in contemporary Vranje is often significantly blurred. In 2010, the municipal official in charge of the town's economic development and investment office was himself a well-known, wealthy local businessman. He turned the management of his multiple apparel boutiques over to his wife in order to pursue his political career, but many in Vranje felt that his involvement in politics conveniently allowed him to foster ever more favorable conditions for business owners like himself. As one Serb

[93] Accessed online at www.politika.rs on July 4th, 2012.

woman told me, he certainly did not need the extra money that came with his "cushy seat" (*fotelja*) as an elected official.[94]

As the ramifications of rapid privatization continue to spread in Vranje, expanding levels of unemployment are coupled with drastic changes in the standard of living. Prices for basic necessities such as food, drink, and clothing have continued to rise even as incomes are plummeting. One middle-aged Serb woman whose husband regularly traveled to Belgrade for work complained that meat products and clothing often cost just as much in Vranje as they do in the capitol. At the same time, average monthly wages in Vranje in 2010 were estimated at a mere 100 EU (roughly $150 U.S.), easily 3 to 4 times less than typical earnings in Belgrade. These meager incomes often barely support even basic lifestyles for Vranje locals, especially when at best single workers support entire families.

Locals argue that growing *nemaština*[95] ("state of lack") in Vranje has driven workers to compete for smaller, more limited economic niches. Residents claim that people increasingly engage in work never before considered viable, much less desirable. The frequency of *šverc*—the re-sale of goods purchased in other regional markets or in the weaker economies of neighboring countries—has skyrocketed. Apparel, jewelry, toiletries, household goods, cigarettes, and even produce are bought and re-sold by growing numbers of Vranje residents to help make ends meet. In addition, more and more people must seek jobs in the service industry, working as waiters in cafes or cashiers in grocery stores for relatively low wages.

The situation is hardest for the town's youth. Locals complain that young families are forced to live off of the monthly pensions brought in by parents and grandparents who worked

---

[94] *Fotelja* is a Serbian word literally meaning a fluffy chair or lounge—locals in Vranje use this term often to disparage politicians and civil servants for wanting to obtain (or hold onto) jobs with high salaries and benefits without fulfilling their obligations, or working hard enough to earn them.

[95] *Nemaština* is the Serbian term locals use to encompass the general lack of employment, low incomes, and the overall state of desperation in Vranje in the present moment.

"while times were still good" under socialism. One elderly Serb interlocutor, Negovan, pointed out that his son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren depended on the monthly checks brought in by his wife Javorka and himself. Otherwise, their sporadic earnings would not be enough to sustain the family. "They are lucky so long as we are still alive to bring in our monthly pensions—once we die, though, God help them," he told me with deep resignation.

Limited employment opportunities, poor wages, and a lack of job security increasingly deprive Vranje's youth of the opportunity to obtain experience as workers, and prevent them from saving money, planning for families, or paying into pension funds. Negovan bitterly commented that his son, like many others, was never able to retain an official job that would allow him to pay into a state pension fund. The deepening crisis fosters high levels of anxiety, frustration, and apathy among local youth. Despite claims by successive governments that democratic and free market reforms are necessary to undo the damage of Milošević's wartime regime and "re-join Europe," many of the same crises in employment, living standards, and disenfranchisement that characterized Serbia in the 1990s have only been exacerbated by subsequent government policies, adding to growing popular disenchantment in Serbia (Dzihić and Segert 2012; Gordy 1999).

### 6.4.2 Politicizing Ethnicity: Serbian Nationalism since 1990

The economic crisis in Vranje is intertwined with other political and sociocultural changes resulting from the civil wars of the 1990s. Heightened nationalism in post-socialist spaces of Eastern Europe is closely connected to widening economic crises as political elites respond to growing popular anxiety and competition for resources by championing majority ethnic or national interests (Bookman 2003; Bukowski 1987; Dzihić and Segert 2012; Verdery 1998). As the former Yugoslavia broke into new nation-states, nationalism became a powerful

tool to re-shape popular support for new boundaries and new political regimes (Bougarel 2007; Duijzings 2001; Hammel 2000; Hayden 1996; Hayden 2000). New political leadership championed national causes and homogeneity that were supposedly "neglected" under Tito's Yugoslav Socialism (Gordy 1999). Minority groups like the Roma find themselves in particularly precarious positions in the context of these transitions, trapped between more powerful competing groups or cast in the role of scapegoat as levels of economic and social disorder grow (Duijzings 1997; Kenrick 2001; Poulton 1993).

Since the 1990s, both Serbs and Roma in Vranje have grappled with shifting discourses of identity in response to nationalist ideologies sweeping Serbia. The Yugoslav wars effectively ended Socialist Yugoslavia's official policy of "Brotherhood and Unity."[96] Because Vranje is located in a border region of the territorially redefined Serbia, local debates about national identity are often reactionary, swinging away from what some consider the "fallacy" of multi-ethnic solidarity in the former Yugoslavia. When armed conflicts with Albanian militias began in Kosovo, Bujanovac, and Preševo near Vranje in the late 1990s, ethnic tensions increased substantially and mistrust, fear, and social distance began to characterize relationships between different communities. Unlike conflicts in Bosnia and Croatia, local Serbs and Roma experienced in much more immediate ways the 1998-99 war in Kosovo and later clashes with Albanian militias in the adjoining Bujanovac region.[97] Albanians and Serbs have minimal, often

---

[96] Brotherhood and Unity was one of the most famous slogans of Socialist Yugoslavia. This expression claimed that Socialist Yugoslavia under Tito united various ethnic and religious groups into a singular national identity. It intended to show that these groups had successfully depoliticized their ethnic differences so that they might work toward the common goal of building a new, better society. There is much debate in scholarly and popular contexts as to whether this slogan reflected reality in Yugoslavia, however (see Bax 2000; Burić 2011; Hammel 2000; Petrović 2011; Simić 2000; Weine 2000). Critics often argue that it was the threat of force and political ostracization that enforced a façade of unity, while ethnic and religious differences (and tensions) were never truly undone by the Socialist project.

[97] Space limitations prevent me from discussing the historical trajectory of Serb-Albanian antagonisms in the region. In brief, tensions can be traced back to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the region. The expansion of the Serbian state entailed political and military attempts to cleanse new territories, displacing many Albanian Muslims

strained relationships and live in largely segregated communities. Roma, on the other hand, are suspect among Serbs not only for their "Gypsy" ethnic difference but also because of their historic adherence to Islam. According to nationalist Serb rhetoric, Muslim cultural markers in Romani communities link them implicitly with local populations of "antagonistic" Albanian Muslims.

As a result, Roma speak of growing social distance with Serb communities and increasingly hostile rhetoric and interactions. Some recall that Serbs harassed fellow Romani soldiers while serving on the frontlines in Kosovo in 1999. One Romani man told me he heard stories of Serb fighters boasting that Roma were next on the list once the Albanian "problem" was settled. In the early 1990s, Romani youth in Vranje chose to move their *korzo* (evening promenade) from the city's main park to the center of the *Gornja Čaršija mahala* after a few Serb teens attacked several young Romani men and brawls ensued.[98] Other Roma indicate that

---

into Kosovo while Serbs from Kosovo subsequently emigrated to Serbia (or fled increased violence in Kosovo) (see chapter 3). Since then, various political regimes have often characterized the national interests of the two ethno-national communities in radically opposed terms. Nationalist narratives in Serbia promulgated notions of Kosovo as integral to Serbia's territorial integrity and cultural identity based on medieval-period Serbian states in the region, while Albanian political interests advocated for independence or (later) significant autonomy from Serbian rule. Serbian control of Kosovo from 1912 saw periods of extreme repression of the Albanian majority, and periods of insurrection and resistance by Albanians in turn. Even during the Socialist Yugoslav period, the political establishment wavered between strict repression and relative tolerance of Albanian autonomy in Kosovo. With the dissolution of Socialist Yugoslavia, Albanians in Kosovo and southern Serbia were again targeted by nationalist political rhetoric as "enemies" who had unjustly usurped power and territory in the region at the expense of local Serbs. The military conflict in Kosovo emerged out of these polemics, with Albanian militias (The KLA, or Kosovo Liberation Army) seeking to achieve full independence while Serbian state forces sought to protect national sovereignty at all costs. After the war, Albanians in southern Serbia (south of Vranje and along the border with Kosovo) also briefly organized military attempts to secede from Serbia and join with Kosovo. In the aftermath of recent conflicts (informed by more than a century of political and national developments) overall relations between Serbs and Albanians are strongly polarized along ethnic lines, and mistrust and mutual suspicion pervade cautious political (and social) interactions in the region. For relevant discussions, see Blumi 2011 and 2013, Duijzings 2000, Jagodić 1998, Malcolm 1998, Pettan 2002, Reineck 2000, Stefanović 2005, and Vickers 1998, among others.

[98] *Korzo* in Vranje refers to the once popular practice of "strolling and mingling" on city streets in the evenings by local youth. Locals tell that Serbs and Roma had separate *korzo* gatherings—Serbs would gather in the city center, while Roma confined themselves to the city park and later the main Romani *mahala*. While this formal practice has slowly dwindled in the Serb community (where youth increasingly choose to frequent cafes instead), it remains one of the main social activities of Romani teens in Vranje. Many commented that this is partially because the *korzo* is one of the only viable options available to Roma—economic and unofficial social ("ethnic") restraints almost completely exclude Roma from patronizing public cafes in the city center.

small groups of self-proclaimed Serbian "skinheads" have randomly attacked lone Romani youths returning to their communities in the evening hours.

One evening in 2010 I was walking with several young Romani men through the city center, accompanying them up into the Romani *mahala*, when we overheard a young Serb man we had just passed mutter "*Mrš, Cigani!*" ("Get lost, Gypsies!"), deliberately using the pejorative epithet for Roma. My companions shook their heads angrily, commenting bitterly amongst themselves as they continued walking. One of the young men told me that this kind of hateful sentiment was typical of Serbian *seljaci*, or "villagers." He explained that there were more and more "uneducated and uncivilized" Serbs in Vranje who came from rural backgrounds. He claimed that these people do not know how to behave in urban settings, much less appreciate Roma as human beings and fellow townspeople. "The only thing they are familiar with is the barnyard…how are they going to know how to act in the city?" he concluded derisively. Many Roma in Vranje told me about similarly unpleasant encounters with Serbs in a wide variety of contexts, including in workplaces, in markets and stores, at schools, on playgrounds, and in public spaces generally. Although derisive rejection of "Gypsies" is not a new phenomenon in Vranje, many Roma feel that in recent decades the frequency and intensity of such conflicts with local Serbs has grown considerably.

Stories of escalating harassment circulated widely in the Romani community during the turmoil of the 1990s, and some argue that a wave of Romani conversion to Orthodox Christianity at the time was an attempt to avoid attacks from Serb nationalists (see chapter 3, pg. 79, fn. 38). Since nationalist discourse cast diverse Muslim populations as "enemies" after the breakup of Yugoslavia, Roma in Vranje are sometimes concerned about potential fallout in interactions with Serbian Orthodox Christian neighbors. Growing rates of conversion to various Christian

churches, the use of more "neutral" (i.e., Serbian or Western) first names, and the sporadic rejection of so-called Turkish or Muslim elements in Romani cultural practices indicate that some Roma chose to mask such attributes to avoid harassment from radical segments of local Serb society (see also Zlatanović 2008).[99]

Deteriorating economic conditions exacerbate ethnic tensions as Roma and Serbs compete for increasingly scarce resources. Roma complain that they were among the first to lose jobs as local firms began to spiral into collapse. Economic niches once dominated by Roma have become interesting alternatives for Serbs as work becomes scarce. Whereas "at one time no self-respecting Serb would ever have considered selling socks on the street," as one Serb woman told me, today there are growing numbers of Serb peddlers setting up stalls next to those of Roma on market days. While Roma have no formal claim to monopolize this line of work, many are afraid that Serbs are more likely to buy from fellow Serbs because current discourses prioritize shared ethnic/"national" identity. Jašar, a middle-aged Rom man, complained that Serbs benefit from their ethnicity to obtain now-coveted positions as garbage men and street cleaners for Vranje's "Streets and Sanitation" (*KOMRAD*). While this work used to be almost completely in Romani hands, Jašar claims that Serb applicants now have preferential access over Romani candidates. In general, Roma argue that they are the last to be offered positions in new enterprises, much as they were the first to be laid off in response to the crisis. Many claim that even government disbursement of unemployment and social welfare benefits is more readily shirked or denied where Roma are concerned.

Local Serbs (especially municipal officials) often deny that discrimination is on the rise, pointing to various programs and services that focus on facilitating the integration of Roma into

[99] For additional information on the complexities of Romani identity in Vranje, see Zlatanović (2006). For an important discussion of the re-construction and strategic masking of Romani identities in Kosovo and Macedonia in the wake of the Yugoslav civil wars, see also Dujzings (1997) and (2001).

mainstream society (such as a municipal representative and office for dealing with "minority rights"). At the same time, official discussions of Romani concerns often employ stereotypical arguments about that blame innate Romani cultural difference for poor living conditions and inadequate integration. Some argue that Roma cannot advance because they themselves do not take advantage of opportunities or cultivate a "culture" that would allow them to make progress—discounting any consideration of the long-term political, economic, and social exclusion of Roma (see chapter 2). One local Serb woman even claimed that reverse discrimination was often the case in Vranje, telling me about a recent instance where only Roma were paid unemployment benefits while she and other Serbs who had come to the bureau that day were told that there were insufficient funds for them. She felt that government institutions were often too generous when accommodating Roma because of growing international interest in Romani "problems," and that this focus came at the expense of helping needy people in the majority Serb community.

However, many Roma argue that the current political climate in Vranje cultivates an unofficial policy of economic neglect and ethnic bias against members of their community. While government officials pay lip-service to the need to increase Romani access to resources and facilitate integration, Roma indicate that local institutions in reality approach Romani concerns haphazardly at best. They point out that most local Serbs continue to ignore, or deride, structural problems faced by Roma. Their situation parallels the struggles of other Eastern European Roma who are increasingly impoverished, economically excluded, and discriminated against under nationalist regimes since the fall of state socialism (Barany 1994; Boscoboinik 2006; Guy 2001; Silverman 1996; 2007; Verdery 1996). Marginalized anew in the wake of new definitions of national identity and politics in Vranje, Roma must struggle with the combined

pressures of economic crisis and polarizing ethnic relations in the region. Ethnicity becomes a ready flash point for conflict in popular discourse as Serbs and Roma jostle past one another in attempts to maintain their livelihoods in Vranje.

## 6.5 "There Isn't Any More Music!" Musical Livelihoods and Romani Musicians in Crisis

Post-socialist economic conditions have significantly undermined Romani musical livelihoods. As poverty rises, the demand for musicians wanes as more and more people cannot afford elaborate celebrations with musical entertainment. At the same time, newly formed Serb orchestras compete with Romani ensembles as local Serbs seek alternative means to make a living. Nationalism and ethnic polarization magnifies the derision and anxiety that marks ever-more-strained relations between Romani performers and their non-Romani patrons. In essence, the economic and political turmoil of the last two decades has affected the social relationships and cultural values that once provided Romani performers with a prestigious professional niche in Vranje. Not only do Romani musicians seek "refuge" from contemporary uncertainties in nostalgic narratives about the past, but they also construct a moral position from which to criticize and contest threatening trends that undermine their professional status.

Since the 1990s Vranje's once-renowned *kafanas* and restaurants have dwindled in number, and large crowds enjoying evenings of dining and dancing disappeared amidst rising levels of poverty and social apathy. By 2009, Vranje's once-famous *Kafana Evropa* had been closed for some years, and in fall of that year it was bought by an entrepreneur and converted into a supermarket. Musical evenings in the garden of the *Hotel Vranje* have also ended. Nenad Mladenović, the grand-nephew of renowned brass bandleader Bakija Bakić, attempted to revitalize the orchestra's tradition of performing there on Monday evenings some years ago, but

because of lack of interest he was forced to abandon the idea. All over Vranje, the older establishments that color local memories of celebrations and social outings are closing their doors, falling into disrepair, or being torn down.

As the cultural institution of the *kafana* fades, so has the demand for the *kafana* musical ensemble—locals indicate that the genre has almost completely disappeared in the past twenty years. Apart from growing poverty and the erosion of a culture of musical leisure in Vranje, formal institutions like the musician's union that once supported *kafana* musicians have also disappeared. While remnants of the *kafana* genre (primarily accordionists, clarinetists, and *tarabuka* players) perform sporadically at local family banquets and smaller celebrations like patron saint feast-days, the larger ensembles that formed the core of a diverse, mobile, and lucrative entertainment genre have collapsed. Former stars of the *kafana* scene (like the seasoned clarinet player Teil) are left to reflect bitterly, nostalgically remembering their heyday during socialism.

Many musicians also indicate that ethnic competition contributed to displacing Roma from this professional niche. Young Serbs in town are forming new ensembles that primarily perform commercial folk-pop music (the latest incarnations of Yugoslav newly composed folk music; see chapter 2, pp. 49 fn. 17). Playing "modern" instruments like synthesizers, electric guitars, and drum sets, these bands edge older style Romani ensembles out of performance opportunities at posh new cafes, disco clubs, and at the evening portions of Serb weddings in rented banquet halls.

Many Romani musicians claim that outright discrimination by Serb proprietors and clientele is a major dimension of this shift. Roma often argue that they have a genetic predisposition for musical performance that cannot be bested by any other group, or point to

family professional histories and intensive musical training that make Roma superior musicians to Serbs (see chapter 2). Despite these traditions, however, they claim that young Serb bands of barely mediocre quality are regularly engaged these days in place of Roma. "They took from us even that piece of bread (*Uzeli su nam i to parče leba*)," as one of my middle-aged Rom friends told me, using a common metaphor that equates work with the daily bread earned for oneself and one's family. His comment implies that because music is one of the few means of survival available to Roma, discriminatory trends are the equivalent of robbing a poor man of his simple sustenance.

I witnessed firsthand how difficult it has become for Romani musicians playing *kafana*-type instruments to maintain musical livelihoods today. On a gloomy day in February 2010, I shouldered a double-headed *goč* drum and accompanied a small group of Romani musicians who were heading to two villages near Vranje on the occasion of a patron saint feast-day, or *slava*. These young men (two accordion players, one clarinetist, and one *tarabuka* drummer) keep close tabs on the Orthodox Christian religious calendar. They focus on Serb clientele and draw much of their musical income from performing at people's homes on such holidays. There is a long tradition of hiring musical entertainment for saint's day celebrations in Vranje; experienced entertainers often encouraged young Romani musicians to gain early performance experience and build repertoires by performing for Serb patrons at *slavas*.

One of the group leaders of the ensemble I accompanied was concerned that I would be overwhelmed by the real difficulty that musicians face today. He told me that I would "become disappointed in life itself" (*"će se ražočaraš u život"*) after seeing how little we might earn. Our group spent hours walking through the major part of these villages, looking for homes where celebrations appeared to be taking place. Time and time again likely prospects for a performance

were shattered as we filed into courtyards, our instruments at the ready in our hands, only to be turned away. Many hosts explained that too many bands had already come through that day, so that the families no longer had the money or patience for additional entertainers.

Indeed at every turn we ran into other orchestras, some even made up of children as young as 10, energetically competing to arrive at homes before others and cajole patrons into accepting their services. One particularly gruff man swore loudly at us from his front door even though we had barely entered his courtyard, yelling out "What kind of dick are you looking for here? Am I supposed to work just so that I can bring in cash to pay your kind?!" Aside from the deliberately insulting reference to male genitalia, the man's rhetorical question cited ethnic tensions by categorically rejecting the notion that his hard-won cash should be handed over to Romani entertainers like "us." In other cases, hosts gave various explanations for refusing musical entertainment, such as a recent death in the family or sleeping children. My fellow musicians listened with resignation to excuse after excuse, remaining courteous at the moment but often grumbling once back on the roads, particularly when certain explanations seemed barely plausible or patently false.[100]

As the dreary day progressed into evening we slogged onward through mud and incessant drizzle looking for still more celebrations, our instruments slung on our backs, stumbling down steep and winding roads often barely lit by sporadic street lights while trying to make the entire day's work pay off. Of the 25 odd homes we tried, though, only four allowed us to play for them. We only received money (in addition to a beverage and perhaps some finger foods taken on the fly) at three places; at the fourth home, the hostess told us that she had no cash but would give us

[100] In one instance, for example, the man who answered the door claimed that his children were already asleep and would be woken by music; he was quite flustered, though, when almost immediately we saw a small girl playfully tweak the drapes on a window next to the doorway, revealing his lie. He still insisted that we move along.

a 2 liter bottle of juice in return for playing a brief dance melody, which she insisted that we perform outside.

Utterly exhausted, we finally returned to Vranje and tallied up our earnings. An entire day's work barely brought 550 dinars in total, roughly $8 U.S., for the five of us. After taking out the 200 dinars to pay for the gas spent driving to the villages and back, we were left with merely 70 dinars per person, slightly more than $1 U.S.—just enough to pay for a small *pljeskavica* burger each, while we shared the bottle of juice that rounded out our earnings. Joking darkly about our situation, my companions commented that at least this saved their families the cost of feeding them that evening. They explained their resignation by reminding me that this situation is increasingly becoming the norm—music is simply not as lucrative as it was a few decades ago.

Romani *kafana* ensembles are also increasingly undesirable because of growing anxieties about local versus national identity in Vranje (see chapter 3). *Kafana* ensemble instruments and musical styling are closely associated with urban "Old Vranje" musical culture. Where once these repertoires were an important medium for claiming regional pride in cosmopolitan Ottoman heritage and cultural uniqueness, today the Romani identity of musicians may trigger vehement rejection of these forms by nationalist Serb patrons. Anxious about connections to ostensibly Muslim or Turkish cultural practices, patrons denigrate Romani performance abilities and musical authority by interpreting practices through discourses of supposedly discrete ethnic cultures. Ambivalence about Ottoman-derived musical practices and aesthetics contributes to the growing instability that marks Romani entertainers' professional status in Vranje. Romani musicians' nostalgia for "older times," where ethno-national belonging is held to have been less important for social relationships, dovetails with their appraisal of older generations as

consummate connoisseurs of "good music" in the local style. In the relative peace of Socialist Yugoslavia, Romani musicians claim to have felt far less anxious about reactions to their repertoires because local musical styles were much less prone to politicization than they are in Vranje today.

As a result, many young Roma now turn with increasing interest to other less politicized or more lucrative genres when pursuing musical careers. The violin and *kontrabas* (contrabass) are rarely played anymore in Vranje because of waning interest in the *kafana* ensemble. Clarinet, saxophone, and the *tarabuka* drum remain popular because they are used in smaller ensembles that still perform at Serb (and more rarely Romani) family celebrations. They are also sought after in the newer Romani wedding band genre that often performs at Romani celebrations—local Roma call this genre *ozvučena muzika* ("amplified music") or *talava* (see chapter 2, pg. 46).[101] These amplified wedding bands can be very lucrative for Romani musicians. Amplified wedding bands are increasingly popular on the second day of Romani wedding celebrations in the Vranje region, but also among Roma in Macedonia, Kosovo, Bujanovac, and in diasporic communities in northern Serbia and in Western Europe (Silverman 2012). Roma living abroad in particular pay large sums to bring the most popular bands for weddings—young Roma in Vranje told me that the best ensembles might charge some 5 to 10,000 EU to perform in the Romani diaspora. The modern sound of contemporary wedding bands, the transregional popularity of the genre, and the potential for substantial earnings among performers serve as powerful draws for young Romani musicians.

---

[101] The term *talava* (*tallava* in Albanian) seems to derive from the Romani phrase *tal o vas*, "under/with the arms," which may refer to the use of the arms during solo dancing. *Talava* originally referred to improvised singing performed to the accompaniment of frame drums (large tambourines with zils) at women's celebrations in Kosovo; women's dancing is a key aspect of guest participation at such events. *Talava* spread to male amplified bands in the late 1980s, and has since become a popular musical genre closely associated with Roma and Albanians (see Pettan 2002, 2003 and Silverman 2012).

Romani musicians are also turning in greater numbers to brass bands. Unlike the *kafana* ensembles, brass remains in demand among both Roma and Serbs for customary family celebrations in Vranje. The popularity of director Emir Kusturica's films and Goran Bregović's brass compositions, brass music's status as a valued "national brand" at Serbia's Guča Brass Festival, and the international renown of Romani brass orchestras like the Boban Marković ensemble also adds to growing interest in brass music (see chapters 3 and 7). Young Roma are especially keen to perform with well-known brass ensembles (such as consistent winners in Guča) because they anticipate higher and more stable earnings, a more diverse client base (Serbs as well as Roma), and prospects for greater fame than other musical genres. Moreover, Romani musicians maintain a professional monopoly on this genre throughout the region. While a few local Serbs do perform in brass bands, there have been no organized efforts to create all-Serb ensembles in Vranje to date. One Romani man, Jašar, cynically assured me that this would only last until some innovative Serbs come up with the idea, however. He opined that once this last barrier is broken Romani brass bands will also be subject to exclusion and discrimination, no matter how paltry the skills of emergent Serb orchestras.

Despite continued demand for brass, however, Romani brass bands are also struggling with changing conditions in Vranje. Widespread poverty means that brass ensembles have increasing difficulty making ends meet from local gigs. Many patrons are strapped for cash and anxious about putting guests into the financial obligations that traditional celebrations entail. Echoing Gordy's (1999) insightful analysis of the "destruction of sociability" in Serbia during the hyperinflation crisis of the 1990s, people in Vranje explain that rising poverty makes even elementary and once-respected conventions of reciprocal visiting and gift-giving difficult. A full brass ensemble of 10 to 14 musicians represents a great expense for the host because the

*pogodba*, or agreed-upon fee, must be sufficient to accommodate each individual musician. Locals say that the minimum fee cannot be less than 100 EU in order to grant each musician at least 10 euros (roughly $15 U.S. in 2010). Brass musicians complain that this is a relatively low price compared to past earnings—the amount barely makes performances economically feasible considering the hours of work that are involved. However, they often acknowledge that most of their local patrons are in a financial bind and cannot afford to give more. "They, too, are suffering ("*I oni si imav muke*")," as elderly brass bandleader Deda Aca told me with deep resignation.

Brass musicians also note that tipping has largely dried up at celebrations. Whereas locals still officially believe that musicians should be paid for each musical request as a matter of course, I saw much less tipping of Romani entertainers by participants at Serb celebrations than at Romani events. Almost always, the value of the tip was also considerably smaller at Serb events. Musicians confirmed that the drop-off in tipping is a relatively recent development. The initial *pogodba* is now often the only source of money at performances as fewer guests are willing (or able) to give money to musicians.

I saw a particularly dramatic exchange between Romani musicians and a Serb patron captured on video taken at a Serbian village wedding near Vranje in 2005. The man, an important guest of the hosts, had just finished leading a dance to mark his arrival at the celebration. He was subsequently approached by the Romani band leader and several other musicians in customary fashion, anticipating a tip for their services. The celebrant handed over a paltry 50 dinars (less than $1 U.S. in 2010), a pitifully inadequate amount. The Romani musician, incredulous, frowned while exclaiming "What is this!?" The Serb man, avoiding eye contact while pocketing the rest of his cash, brushed off the rebuke by dismissively waving his

hand and repeatedly exclaiming "ajde!" in exasperation.[102] He was supported by the host, who urged the entertainers to move on to the next guest and continue playing. Unable to object further without jeopardizing the gig, the musicians gathered themselves and solicitously approached the other guests, hoping to fare better with subsequent requests.

The moral overtones of traditional obligations to tip musicians have also become a source of strife, and tension marks relationships between celebrants and musicians as a result. Brass performers complain that guests today lack the "culture" cultivated by celebrants in previous decades. Patrons often demand longer lists of songs and tunes from musicians while offering little or no money in return. Džafer, a Romani musician from Vranjska Banja, told me that celebrants often expect to be personally entertained with five or six songs in return for a mere 100 dinar tip.[103] "For that amount of money, the most I will do is play them a few notes, and bid them goodbye!" he summed up sarcastically. Another Romani musician told me that certain guests attempt to "squeeze" (*da izcede*) the maximum amount of entertainment out of musicians for a single tip: "if he has given you 1000 dinars, he acts like he has given you 100,000 euros!"

Musicians complain that patrons are also more unseemly in the ways they treat entertainers. Some individuals loudly complain about the quality of the music in attempts to avoid giving additional—or any—tips after the songs have been played. One brass band leader complained: "You're playing for them, and they claim to find fault in it...they make a scene, stand up and interrupt the whole wedding. People have become terribly dishonorable." Sometimes celebrants under the influence of alcohol become physical with musicians, either by pulling them away from another guest mid-song or while disputing the quality of the musicians'

[102] The word *ajde* in many Balkan languages generally translates roughly to "come on" or "go on." It is often used in an exclamatory way, however, to intensify expressions that it accompanies. Here it was used to convey a sense of justified yet impatient dismissal, as if the musicians were making an unreasonable request.
[103] Roughly 1 euro, or $1.39 U.S. in 2010.

playing. As the rules of etiquette during celebrations are dissolved by social anomie and economic depression, Romani brass musicians lament that they are losing both the incomes and the prestige that once adhered to their presence as skilled professional performers providing valuable services.

Romani musicians respond to Serb denigration and anxieties by referring back to somewhat sanitized images of musical performance during the former Yugoslavia. Many musicians' nostalgic narratives claim that there was little discrimination before, that all patrons were much more respectful and better behaved with Romani musicians, and that earnings were uniformly higher and more generously given to entertainers. While Romani earnings and status did improve on some level during the Socialist period, certainly Roma were not completely integrated, accepted as full equals, or emancipated from stigma and marginality under the Socialist regime. Musicians' biographies and other stories about the "old days" also describe poverty, difficult work conditions at performances, and performative power plays with Serb patrons that complicate the idyllic picture of harmony, respect, and high incomes during Tito's Yugoslavia (see Chapter 5). However, Romani nostalgic narratives are meant to show that times were relatively better, preferable to a state of extreme flux and tension marking professional musicianship today. More importantly, Romani musicians focus their arguments on positive elements of past performance conditions to criticize what they see as the ongoing dissolution of the proper social and moral order that should mark patron-musician relations even after socialism (Burić 2011; Gille 2011; Todorova 2011).

The broader cultural foundations of the brass band niche are also weakening in the area. Many Vranje Serbs find it impossible to maintain the lavish scale and form of traditional celebrations. Comparing the more expansive tipping at Romani weddings to Serb events, one

Serb musician argued that "Serbs just don't have money nowadays!" Three-day Serb weddings are increasingly rare, and brass bands are usually only hired for the first half of what has become a one-day affair. Brass orchestras accompany the ritual dancing and processions in the morning at Serb events, but once the festivities move to the banquet hall they are replaced by the newer—and smaller—amplified Serb bands that play commercial folk-pop music.

Many claim that changing cultural values of younger Serbs drive the growing popularity of "modern" one-day or "evening" weddings (*noćne svadbe*). Dejan, a Serb in his twenties, explained that traditional-style weddings are expensive and can be quite a hassle. Having guests at home requires extensive preparations of the space and adequate staging of food and drink. It also inevitably involves people dirtying up the house, which requires subsequent cleaning of dishes, rugs, and furniture. Some Serb families choose to eschew the home portions of wedding celebrations altogether (and by extension, traditional rituals set to brass music) in favor of renting a hall in a more modern—and convenient—fashion. Elders who may prefer the sounds of brass and enjoy the older wedding customs find themselves giving way to the wishes of the marrying couple. Mile, a Serb man in his late 50s, recalled that he had to hire a newer-type band for the evening banquet at his son's wedding despite his own preference for brass; his son insisted on having an amplified Serb band and Mile could not convince him otherwise. Many parents whose children have married in the past fifteen years are similarly disappointed by the changing tastes of local youth, frequently sighing while remembering musical polemics surrounding their childrens' weddings and regretting that things could not have been more like in "the good old days." Nostalgic rhetoric here speaks to elders' anxieties about changing traditions and family values.

Although most locals in Vranje still find brass music necessary and desirable for successful celebrations, a number of young locals find brass bands "old-fashioned" and increasingly irrelevant. One young Serb man who worked as a professional wedding videographer told me that he would never have brass bands at his own wedding, calling the complex of rituals accompanied by brass musicians "stupid" and impractical. Other youths in town offered similar sentiments, commenting that preparing and executing all these rituals took too much time, effort, and personnel to be worth anyone's while—they were things that only "grandmothers and aunties" ("*babe, tetke, i strinke*") were really interested in.

Others of this generation also consider the brass ensembles to be obnoxiously loud and dramatic, playing a raucous cacophony of music that they were sick of hearing at every turn in Vranje. Close friends in town often teased me about my own interest in brass music, wondering how I could tolerate all that "noise." One friend laughed hysterically while telling me how Sladjan, a local youth, took a summer trip to the Czech Republic in order to get away from everything associated with Vranje and Serbia. At a festival there, he nearly spit out the swig of beer he was swallowing when he heard the all-too-familiar trilling of a brass bandleader calling his orchestra to attention. Turning slowly, he saw Romani musicians from southern Serbia angling toward the crowd where he was standing. "Even in the Czech Republic, he couldn't get away from them," she exclaimed in mirth.

Still other Serbs draw attention to the purportedly dirty or uncouth practices of Romani musicians. Some told me that they disliked seeing brass musicians periodically empty the spit valves of their instruments while playing, claiming that it ruined guests' appetites. One young man, himself a musician in a Serbian amplified wedding band, claimed that some Romani bands were unhygienic, coming unwashed to gigs in clothing that they had previously worn while

working as day laborers on local farms. "After a few hours in the sun, playing music and running around to various guests, they begin to give off quite a stink…and once they enter an enclosed space like a rented hall, it's unbearable," he commented. Hosts and guests alike are easily disgusted by such unprofessional mannerisms, he assured me, and think twice about hiring Romani entertainers again.

Many of these younger locals also disparage customary conventions of interacting with brass musicians, claiming that "Gypsy" entertainers are only looking to make quick money through tips—calling into question their genuine investment in producing a celebratory atmosphere through their affective labor (see Chapter 5). They argue that Romani entertainers "insist" too much on tips by playing up to specific celebrants, drawing uncomfortable public attention to the fact that the celebrant has not yet given—or is incapable of producing—any cash. "Ohhhh, they go around asking [for money]! You'll see! (*Eeeee oni traživ! Će vidiš!)"* one middle-aged Serb man told me. While his group of Serb friends applauded my interest in brass music as a local tradition, they were rather less impressed at my focus on Romani professional musicians, repeatedly criticizing their "overly-zealous"—and thus unseemly—tactics for obtaining every last dinar at performances.

The young Serb musician quoted above, too, argued that many local Serbs loathed Romani musicians' insistence on tips because of the wider economic crisis. His father, seated next to him, rubbed his index finger and thumb together to indicate that hunger for cash was central to Romani musicians' tactics. His son explained that Roma stood directly in front of patrons and played in their faces, offered their instruments to guests conspicuously, or even extended up-turned hats to coax celebrants to proffer tips. By contrast, he claimed, Serb musicians like himself would never shorten songs or nag guests if there was no cash being

offered—tip or no tip, they gave their musical services one hundred percent as professional musicians "ought."

Comments about the "Gypsy attitude" of brass musicians underline the complex interaction of economic crisis, social anomie, and the politicization of ethnic identity that characterizes contemporary life in Vranje. Rhetoric that blames the supposedly inherent and undesirable "Gypsy demeanor" of Romani performers glosses local Serbs' shame over rising poverty and their consequent discomfort with once-standard conventions of musical patronage. While I discussed the performative politics of the patron-musician relationship in chapter 5, I stress here how changing economic conditions affect the material and semiotic struggles that mark such interactions today. Much like anxieties about the "ethnic" character of musical styles, the performance conventions of Romani musicians are reduced to "ethnic traits" by local Serbs to reject Romani services and devalue their professional status.

## 6.6 Conclusion: Remembering to Critique—Interpreting Nostalgia in Post-Socialist Vranje

The changing predicament of Romani professional musicians in Vranje illustrates the ramifications of political and economic upheaval in Serbia for ethnic identity politics and minority status. The collapse of local industry and transition to capitalist ideologies in government circles have thrown Vranje's regional economy into a deep state of crisis. Expanding economic hardship in turn fans the ethno-national tensions galvanized by recent Yugoslav conflicts as the material underpinnings of social interaction in the region collapse under the strain. As a result, Vranje's Roma are re-marginalized after the fall of Socialist Yugoslavia as new discourses about national identity and ethnic difference are brought to the fore (see also chapter 3). As levels of poverty rise, the economic conditions and cultural traditions that once

supported a diverse cadre of professional Romani musicians are rapidly disappearing, plunging their community into a deep state of existential insecurity. Moreover, the "Gypsy" identity of Romani performers becomes salient in popular discourse as locals attempt to navigate widespread socioeconomic precarity.

For Vranje's Roma (and local Serbs), nostalgic reflection helps narrators to critically assess the changing conditions and emergent anxieties of post-socialism, and to offer calls for a re-ordering (or re-orientation) of social relations through selective interpretation of a more just social past. Parla's (2009) cogent analysis of Bulgarian Turkish exiles in Turkey illustrates the strategic import of tropes of morality in nostalgic discourses. The women she discusses critique the "backwardness" of gender regimes in Turkey by praising the Bulgarian Socialist ideals with which they were raised; they do so despite the harsh reality of severe discrimination against Bulgarian Turks which led to their eventual flight to Turkey. Parla shows that migrant Bulgarian Turkish women are able to use their dislocation across both time and place to more deeply understand their changing sociocultural context. Nostalgias (and the "distances" they comment on) are deployed to comment on social conditions as well as to interpret them, opening spaces for these women to claim higher moral and cultural positions as independent, hard workers in order to combat accusations to the contrary from Turks in Turkey.

Similarly, Vranje Romani musicians' nostalgic narratives employ selective remembering to claim that the very musical practices being denigrated today were wholeheartedly validated and legitimated in the past. Steeped in memories of a more "perfect and honorable" past, these discourses serve as proverbial "weapons of the weak" for Romani musicians who reject the growing distance and malcontent between Serb patrons and Roma in Vranje (Scott 1985). In the face of these challenges, Romani musicians resort (sometimes wistfully, other times vehemently)

to the nostalgic "sanctuary of memory" (à la Wilson 2005) in order to make claims for their rightful status as preeminent entertainers. Romani nostalgias use moralizing language to bolster the impact of their social critiques and claims to authority (Herzfeld 2005; Quintero 2002). Wilson's (2005) attention to the "emotional valence" of nostalgia suggests how moral arguments can be productively coupled with the visceral impact of nostalgic constructs, noting that nostalgia is enacted someplace between the head and the heart (2005:23). In Vranje, nostalgic arguments emphatically situate Romani musicians as the victims of systemic collapse and the corruption of proper social relationships, delegitimizing attempts to place blame on their repertoires, fees, and performance practices.

The pervasive use of nostalgia to discuss current affairs in Vranje, however, does not imply that locals' experiences of the past (or the present) are false or unreliable—they are not, as Zsuzsa Gille reminds us, "false consciousness" in the wake of socialism (2011:283). Economic crisis, political instability, and social disorder constitute real problems in post-Yugoslav Vranje that deeply affect people's daily lives and hopes. For Vranje's Romani musicians, these issues are further exacerbated by their marginal position in majority Serb society, rising nationalism, and general social instability in post-Yugoslav Serbia. However, the nostalgic discourses deployed by both Roma and Serbs in Vranje are also not objective, comprehensive recollections of the reality of the Socialist past. Rather, I show how local actors use nostalgia to make sense of—and perhaps cope with—the upheavals that are rapidly unraveling the conditions within which they built their lives during previous decades. People in Vranje use nostalgic images to evoke strong emotions, seeking to galvanize collective discontent and reclaim a modicum of agency in the face of change. Moreover, these narratives provide a historical basis and social

precedent for better conditions, allowing musicians to propose a “return” to such conditions as a moral—albeit unlikely—imperative.

# 7.

# "So That We Look More Gypsy!" Strategic Performances and Ambivalent Discourses of Romani Brass for the World Music Scene[104]

## 7.1 Introduction

In the summer of 2011, my Romani friend Ivan asked me to do some publicity shots for his brass band in Vranje. Ivan constantly changed poses, background scenery, and even elements of the band's attire for different photographs. It quickly became clear that he had distinct strategies depending on the particular performance niche in question. For Vranje clientele, they donned jackets over their shirts and posed formally in straight rows with their instruments at rest in their hands. Orchestra members stared at the camera with composed, calm expressions. These pictures conformed to the formal, dignified comportment expected of professional brass musicians by locals.

At the same time, Ivan explained that he wanted images to appeal to patrons in Slovenia, where the band had lately been getting gigs. He told me with a wink that he had forbidden the band members to shave for several days beforehand. When I asked why, he responded "so that we look more Gypsy ("*da izgledamo više Ciganski*")!" During this portion of the session, Ivan actively suggested a variety of unusual shots from different angles, constantly checking the images on the screen of my digital camera and subsequently making adjustments. Having international audiences in mind, he had the group pretend to play their instruments, spread legs wide, bend bodies, crane necks, and smile broadly or haughtily stare out at the viewer. He also chose unconventional locations for photographs, like having the band members stand in the basin

[104] This chapter is a revised version of an article first published in *Ethnomusicology Forum* (Volume 24, Issue 2) on July 29th, 2015, copyright Taylor & Francis, available online: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17411912.2015.1048266

of a decorative, Ottoman-style fountain. For Ivan, these images suggested a quirky Gypsy atmosphere for foreign clients with exoticizing perceptions of Romani brass.

In this chapter I examine Romani strategies for accessing performance spaces that are shaped by romanticized international interest in consuming (and even performing) "Balkan Gypsy" music, primarily among Western and Northern Europeans. Critically, non-Romani promoters, labels, and managers possess the greatest degree of economic and cultural resources to shape popular representations of Balkan Romani music on global musical markets. Balkan Romani genres may code for European "internal Others" whose Orientalized elements simultaneously allow them to inhabit Europe while also marking distance from "Europe proper," making them exotic yet safe for Western fans (Silverman 2007, 2012, 2013). At the same time, however, the "Balkan Gypsy" discourse divests Romani genres of explicit connections to their grounded ethnic and historical contexts, rendering invisible the power imbalances associated with such appropriations. Romantic stereotypes of Roma emphasize their purportedly pre-national cultural roots and itinerant lifestyles, undermining any exclusive claims to their musical practices and styles. The "sound" of Eastern European Romani music is marketed for international audiences in terms of primal affect and ancient tradition, promising potential consumers that they might mitigate nostalgia for "lost traditions" of their own by viscerally connecting with music of "Others" that is unconstrained by borders and history (Silverman 2013:190). These constructs also facilitate the commercial marketing and sale of East European musics for profit on the global music market.

Critical scholarship has interrogated the politics of representation and economic dimensions of cultural appropriation that characterize the "world music" market (Feld 1994, 2001; Hutnyk 2000; Silverman 2007, 2012, 2013; Taylor 2007, 2013; White 2012; Zirbel 2000).

World music marketing purports to showcase cultural difference by making "ethnic" musics of the world readily accessible to average (generally Western) consumers. Yet scholars have argued that local musical practices are often re-worked or re-presented in ways that seek to make them more palatable and "familiar" to global audiences; ironically, however, their marketability often rests on claims to their "authenticity" as representative sounds of exotic cultural difference, rendering oxymoronic implications of "authentic hybridity" profitable in the global marketplace (Taylor 2007, 2013). Yet performers often lose representational power and control over their musical practices because of the power of profit-driven marketing hypes primarily controlled by Western elites (Feld 2001; Hutnyk 2000; Silverman 2007, 2012; Zirbel 2000). Marketing tropes and exoticized performance practices distance musicians and their music from the complex realities of their grounded sociocultural contexts. At the same time, romanticized hypes enable cultural appropriation that furthers the profit-centered interests of music middle-men while ostensibly "liberating" native performers by boosting their visibility on international markets.

I explore here how the ideological import of the Balkan Gypsy marketing hype is reflected in—and contested by—Vranje Romani musicians' engagements with the world music market. Although I did not conduct research with international audiences, I draw upon emerging scholarship that critiques this phenomenon in order to interpret how Balkan Romani brass music is marketed and performed for this niche (Kaminsky 2014, 2015a; Silverman 2012, 2013, 2015). This scholarship argues that the value of Gypsyness on today's world music market is linked inexorably to its capacity to grant listeners access to cultural diversity via "authentic hybridity" (Kaminsky 2015a; Silverman 2013, 2015; Taylor 2007:142-44). I argue that this value relies on the juxtaposition of two distinct but inter-related Gypsy stereotype complexes in marketing tactics—an authenticity complex that characterizes Roma as primitive, mystical, and exotic, and

a hybridity complex that constructs their music and culture as inherently mixed, channeling and re-working elements combined from widely disparate sources. For non-Romani consumers, the Gypsy authenticity and hybridity tropes are mutually reinforcing. Romani music is advertised to Western audiences as a means to liberate themselves from the cultural strictures of their European nation-state citizenship, as the authentic Otherness of Romani music is made accessible via its putative hybridity (Kaminsky 2015a; cf. Kaminsky 2014).

For Roma, the widespread popularity of the Gypsy authenticity trope on the international stage makes strategic performances of essentialized Gypsyness the predominant paradigm for professional success. While Romani musicians strategically manipulate links between the two stereotype complexes to maintain popular demand abroad, they also use claims of cosmopolitan artistry via musical hybridity to qualify clichéd performances of Gypsyness and invoke modern sophistication. When the cosmopolitan trope threatens to reduce Romani musicians to mere "vessels" (or sponges) trafficking the sounds of non-Roma, however, Roma employ discourses of their "innate talent" and authentic, rooted traditions to counter dispossession of their musical labor and authority. In short, while non-Romani audiences and producers attempt to access Gypsy Otherness by conflating these stereotype complexes in marketing discourses, Romani musicians counter by strategically playing them against each other.

## 7.2 "Balkan Gypsy Brass:" From Local Tradition to International Phenomenon

Since the first brass bands formed in Vranje around 1912, Roma have completely monopolized this seminal local musical genre (Milovanović and Babić 2003; see also Chapter 2). Political and economic crises following the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, however, have undermined Romani musical livelihoods in Vranje. Poverty and unemployment have skyrocketed under post-socialist neoliberal restructuring, drastically lowering the demand for

musical entertainment (Markovic 2012; see also Chapter 6). Romani struggles in post-socialist Vranje closely parallel the experiences of non-Romani musicians throughout the region. Professionals must cope with the loss of state support, decreased incomes, and deregulated conditions for musical labor where artistic standards are often conditioned by profit-based calculations and informal networking (see Chapter 6; also Buchanan 2006:344-46, 353; MacMillen 2011; Tochka 2014).

As a result, many of Vranje's Roma aspire to break into a growing market for Romani brass music abroad. Roma told me that good non-local gigs might earn each ensemble member up to 100 or 150 Euros in one weekend—one month's average wages in Vranje. Stories of high earnings encourage musicians to seek out orchestras that have performance connections elsewhere in ex-Yugoslav territories or central and Western Europe. Many musicians in the post-socialist Balkans have turned to diasporas and international fans for performance opportunities (Buchanan 2006: 344-46; MacMillen 2011; Silverman 2007, 2012). Yet unlike non-Roma, Romani musicians often cannot claim "natural" ties to non-Romani diasporas and are not felt to represent majority national culture abroad (cf. MacMillen 2011). For example, most Serbian Romani brass bands perform regional music that is distinct from the central Serbian style considered to be the most authentic national sound. Romani brass musicians are thus doubly marginalized as "ethnic Others" from peripheral regions whose folk cultures are tainted by "foreign" trappings (i.e., Romanian, Bulgarian, and Ottoman Turkish).

International interest in Romani music on the other hand often centers on notions of Romani cultural difference. Buchanan cogently argues that geographic (and cultural) distance fosters romantic essentialisms about Balkan musicians on the world music scene because most non-Balkan audiences have little knowledge about the political, economic, and socio-historical

context of the music (2006: 361-62). Note that Balkan Roma may be even more easily exoticized than non-Roma in this way, as marginalized people who are ostensibly less connected to established nation-states. Romanticized tropes of Gypsy difference, linked to the rising fame of the "Balkan Gypsy Brass" sound, thus inform many Romani musicians' attempts to access global music markets. Over the past two decades, Serbian Romani brass bands have been at the forefront of international interest in this genre. Various phenomena have combined to promote this increase in demand, fundamentally re-shaping how brass music is popularly linked to Gypsyness.

First, the soundtracks to several internationally acclaimed films by Serbia-based director Emir Kusturica prominently feature arrangements of Romani brass music by the non-Romani musician and composer Goran Bregović.[105] Prior to the 1990s, brass bands were primarily specific to certain regions of Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Greece, and Bulgaria. Kusturica's films have since made Romani brass wildly popular in the ex-Yugoslav context as well as in western Europe, North America, and Latin America. Moreover, Bregović's arrangements have become practically synonymous with Balkan brass for international audiences, and significantly influenced brass band repertoires in the Balkans as well. Gypsyness and Balkan culture have subsequently become conflated via this media-driven trend in ways that drive the popularity of brass within the "Balkan Gypsy" international music scene. Note that it is non-Roma who initiated the concept behind the international "Balkan Gypsy Brass" hype, setting the representational parameters and discursive tropes that Romani entertainers subsequently had to "fit."

[105] While Goran Bregović produced the soundtracks of the Kusturica's "Time of the Gypsies" (1988) and "Underground" (1995), he did not arrange the soundtrack for his "Black Cat, White Cat" (1998).

The content of Kusturica's films does much to shape popular perceptions of Romani brass. They depict Balkan society in fantastical and darkly comical terms, and frequently incorporate romanticized or farcical takes on Gypsy life and culture. Stereotypes about Roma abound, with complicated predicaments related to crime, excess, unconventional lifestyles, romantic passion, and surreal magical experiences. These scenes reinforce popular assumptions of Romani exoticness and zest for life (Iordanova 2008; Malvinni 2004; cf. van de Port 1998). Cinematic portrayals of Romani musicians lend further credence to these tropes as Roma play frenetically, encourage wild abandon among revelers, and create atmospheres of emotional high intensity for patrons. Romani brass music has thus come to connote passion, whimsy, and eclecticism to audiences who were initially exposed to Balkan brass through these films.

Secondly, media popularization of brass music has transformed Serbia's annual Guča Brass Festival from a local fair into a massive commercial event drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors annually (see Chapter 3). It was the explosion of brass onto the international scene in the 1990s that catapulted Guča to widespread fame. With significant increases in the numbers of foreign visitors every year the festival has become a major focus for Serbia's tourist industry, marketed as a space where the world can be introduced to unbridled revelry via brass music as a unique window into Serbian culture (Marković 2008b; Mijatović 2011; Timotijević 2005).

In both official and popular discourses, brass music is primarily praised for its intense energy in Guča's party atmosphere. Festivalgoers I spoke with often cited the thrill of hearing the wild cacophony of multiple brass bands playing under the same restaurant tent. Women wearing hip-scarves and tapping tambourines often stand up on tables, dancing belly dance-like movements while men place tips on their bodies and a brass band plays at their feet. Crowds choke the streets, navigating around stands selling alcohol and clusters of young people dancing

to recorded brass music while spraying all around them with beer from shaken cans. Guča is hailed as a place where visitors come to live out their deepest desires, overloading on alcohol, food, and sex (Marković 2008b; Timotijević 2005). A middle-aged cab driver in Belgrade told me that he desperately needed to experience Guča at least once in his lifetime: "roasted meat, all the beer you can drink, brass bands blaring all around you, and then a sexy woman gets on the table to dance for you…that's it!" Contemporary marketing of Guča thus reinforces associations of Romani brass bands with wild abandon and Balkan exoticness.

Guča's popularization of a Balkan brass party atmosphere has opened performance niches abroad in clubs, restaurants, and at concert venues and festivals for Vranje's Romani musicians. Smaller Gučas have even been established in other European locations to spread the festival's celebrated atmosphere, like the "Guča na Krasu" festival near the Slovenian border in Italy (Hofman 2014:75-79; Šivić 2013:77). Romani brass musicians from Vranje claim that winning competitions in Guča is important primarily for garnering gigs nowadays, despite the chaotic atmosphere of the festival, poor accommodations, and lack of official remuneration for participating bands. Romani brass ensembles list awards from Guča on multimedia advertisements and stencil them onto the heads of ensemble drums alongside their contact information.

For those bands that achieve ultimate fame through Guča, select opportunities to play at high-end venues abroad provide a major boost to their incomes and reputations. Vranje brass musicians have been invited to perform for concerts and festivals in Italy, France, Germany, Canada, and the USA. Since 2002, two winning Vranje ensembles were flown to Beirut to perform for several months at a posh urban club specializing in "World Music" entertainment; more recently, some of these musicians performed at a similar venue in Dubai. Romani

musicians travelling to Beirut earn a substantial salary (1,000-1,500 Euros per month) for relatively short performances, compared to the long hours of continuous music they provide for multi-day weddings in Vranje. Opportunities like this are also desirable because they place Romani brass alongside other internationally regarded genres like jazz, Latin American, and Middle Eastern music. Moreover, all of these spaces carry the prestigious appeal of "the West—" Romani musicians see them as part of the "global North," whose political stability, strong economic conditions, and cosmopolitan lifestyles contrast greatly with poverty and social decline in post-socialist Vranje. Most of Vranje's Romani brass bands are not privy to such opportunities. Nonetheless, many continue to idealize the possibility of landing luxurious and lucrative gigs like these abroad.

## 7.3 Cosmopolitan Artists or Purveyors of Kitsch? Goran Bregović, Boban Marković, and the Politics of (Re-)Presentation

The path to international success, however, is primarily determined by the stereotypical Gypsy hype surrounding brass music. To enter the global market, Vranje's Romani musicians often look to performers who have achieved global fame: Goran Bregović and Boban and Marko Marković. All of these performers play with romanticized notions of Gypsyness and claims to cosmopolitan hybridity in order to market their music, but they do so in different ways. Goran Bregović links elements of the primitivist and hybrid Gypsy tropes; he can cash in on Gypsy exoticism while claiming that his musical bricolage is an extension of a Balkan/Gypsy cultural melting pot where ownership of music is non-existent. While Boban and Marko Marković also perform reified Gypsyness to draw audiences, on the other hand, they enact cosmopolitanism through musical innovation and stage presentation in ways that claim artistic sophistication in opposition to clichés of Romani poverty and primitiveness.

Goran Bregović has become the global face of Balkan music, performing Balkan "folk" music with a pop twist to great international acclaim. Bregović plays with ideas of the Balkans as Europe's "internal Other," "the East within the West," sufficiently primitive and exotic to be titillating but also near enough in geographic and cultural terms to feel safe to Western European audiences (Marković 2013:29-31; Silverman 2013:188-190; cf. Taylor 2007:126). As Europe's quintessential Other within, Roma metaphorically represent the ambivalent place occupied by the Balkans vis-à-vis Western Europe, making the Gypsy trope fundamental to Bregović's success in marketing Balkan music to Westerners. Stereotypes of Roma as "pre-modern" further confer authenticity on Bregović's Romani-inspired "Balkan" musical sounds. Moreover, Bregović associates his arrangements of Gypsy brass music with celebratory abandon of a purportedly excessive Balkan type (Marković 2013:104). The end result has been to heighten popular associations between Romani brass and "wildness," tapping into the cultural stereotype of the primal and passionate Gypsy.

The all-male composition of Romani brass bands lends them well to musical marketing of "Gypsy wildness." Whereas female Romani entertainers have often capitalized on the allure of seductive sexuality and emotional sentimentality, Romani male instrumentalists are stereotyped as uncontrollable and volatile (Silverman 2011, 2013:197; cf. Van de Port 1999). Manliness, exuberance, and brass are closely connected in Kusturica's films. The loud dynamism and frenetic tempo of Bregović's brass repertoires imply a brash, aggressive masculinity that resonates with lyrics and titles that touch on violence ("Kalašnjikov"),[106] alcohol (the 2008 album "Alkohol"), and high-speed driving (the 2007 song "Gas gas").[107] Unbridled male

[106] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqOL7LOR6ko (accessed 10 January 2015).
[107] Released on Bregović's 2007 album 'Karmen: with a Happy End'. See live performance in Guča here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQteDBo2C3w (accessed 10 January, 2015).

sexuality and the objectification of women are also common themes, as in the suggestive 2008 song "On the Back Seat of My Car" or the Romani language lyrics of "Ne Siam Tuke Kurve, Siam Prostitutke" ("I am not your whore, I am a prostitute").[108] Hyper-masculine overtones code the Balkan Gypsyness that Bregović offers as untamed and primal.

Bregović also invokes Gypsyness to mark the Balkan music he arranges as cosmopolitan. He draws on the notion of a Romani penchant for unconstrained movement and liberal cultural borrowing (or cultural theft) in order to position his music as part of a legacy of blurry boundaries and mongrel hybridization in the Balkans (Marković 2009, 2013). This marketing discourse invites Western fans to participate in narratives of multiculturalism and inclusive tolerance by consuming Bregović's "hybrid" music drawn from marginalized peoples (Kaminsky 2015a; Silverman 2013:195). He also uses this narrative to deflect criticisms of his appropriation of Romani music for profit, rejecting claims of musical ownership as historically inauthentic (Marković 2008:18-19, 2009:116-17, 2013; Silverman 2013:195-96). Bregović couples Gypsy essentialism with musical bricolage to produce the "authentic hybridity" in demand on world music markets, transferring Romani cultural cachet to non-Roma while side-lining Romani musicians (cf. Taylor 2007).

As a result of Bregovic's popularity, Romani brass bands from Vranje regularly perform his music in order to boost demand for their ensembles (cf. Marković 2013:109). Many of Vranje's brass musicians claim that even a limited repertoire of Bregović's most popular songs will satisfy most audiences, and consider it essential for generating increased tips from patrons at performances: "Kalašnjikov, Mesečina, Djurdjevdan, and that's that," one musician told me. By

[108] Released in Serbia on Bregović's 2008 album 'Alkohol' and 'Na Zadnejm Sedištu Moga Auta'; see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toxB8nfHvuM (accessed 10 January 2015). The other song is from his 2007 album 'Karmen: With a Happy End', and can be heard here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahVd364v6KU (accessed 10 January 2015). An English translation of the lyrics can be found here: https://gypsylyrics.wordpress.com/ne-siam-kurve-tuke-siam-prostitutke/.

playing Bregović's frenetic pieces, Romani musicians can better embody the "Gypsy foil" in tavern-like scenarios that promise non-Roma the ability to enact fantasies of their wild inner selves—an inwardly oriented Orientalism (van de Port 1999).

When I asked Romani musicians to evaluate Bregović's music aesthetically, however, many expressed indifference or derision. Some claimed that the arrangements lack taste and demand little technical skill, calling the music "*bez veze*" ("senseless") or "*glupo*" ("stupid"). Others argued that there is no room for improvisation, an aspect of musical performance that local Roma greatly prize, and further noted that the break-neck tempos of pieces churn out an undistinguished clamor of sound—several musicians derisively mimed rapid playing or exclaimed "*bam bam bam*" to describe the monotonous pace. This repertoire is never requested or performed at local Romani celebrations. The freneticism popularly associated with Bregović's music is aesthetically undesirable for Vranje Roma, and the wild Gypsy fantasy that underlines the popular appeal of these tunes for others is alien—and alienating—to most in the community. Some Vranje musicians also expressed moral and ethical critiques of Bregović's engagement with Romani music, deriding his work as musical theft from Romani collaborators (cf. Marković 2008; 2009). For these men, Bregović's composing takes high-quality music from Romani hands and clutters it with unnecessary arrangements and a kitschy performance hype. In these discussions, many Roma repeatedly stressed that Goran is not a Rom, and thus lacks the musical knowledge and legitimacy to produce high-quality music.

Roma in Vranje connect much more strongly with Boban and Marko Marković, Romani brass musicians from Vladičin Han near Vranje. Boban clinched his popularity through multiple wins at Guča, and Kusturica subsequently invited him to perform some of the music for his films in collaboration with Bregović. This opportunity catapulted Boban and his orchestra onto the

international music scene, leading to concert tours and providing opportunities to record albums. Unlike most Romani brass bands, Boban and his son Marko rarely play for local celebrations, instead prioritizing international venues. Boban and his band thus constitute the epitome of professional success for south Serbian Romani brass musicians. Vranje's musicians praise Boban and Marko for several reasons. Boban's musicians are all Roma well versed in local musical styles and Romani aesthetic tastes. Roma also point to the band's tight-knit performance style, and the technical skills and virtuoso style espoused by Boban and Marko. Young Romani brass musicians are especially enamored of Marko, working hard to emulate his improvisational techniques and speed during riffs and solos.

Many Vranje Roma I spoke with are especially impressed with the cosmopolitan musical repertoire and professional strategies of this ensemble. Young Roma consider the ensemble's innovative interpretations of Romani brass to be cutting-edge, and thus modern and attractive. The Marković band often combines elements of Romani-style čoček with jazz, hip-hop, Latin dance, and other genres. The band's 2012 music video for the song "Čoček Šljivovica" illustrates how the band brings together local and global sounds to foster a cosmopolitan image.[109] Singing styles and instrumental interludes flirt with Serbian *novokomponovana narodna muzika* ("newly composed folk music"), particularly in terms of vocal ornamentation and the use of accordion, underlining the song's praise for Serbian-style alcohol (*šljivovica*) and roasted meat. At other times, though, Marko raps about material goods like his Mercedes SUV, throwing in lines in English. Such fusions orient the band toward multiple types of musical audiences and highlight the band's musical versatility. Boban and Marko use these sounds to convey a sense of sophistication and playful innovation, even as their music maintains important sonic links to their Balkan and Romani origins. The imagery of the video also depicts Boban, Marko, and the band

[109] See the video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5Teiu7xzE8 (accessed 11 July 2014).

enjoying a lavish lifestyle that conflicts with conventional images of Gypsy impoverishment. Multi-story homes, a private swimming pool, a luxury car, and abundant overconsumption of food and alcohol connote lives of relative wealth and luxury. Conspicuous consumption here implies a prestigious lifestyle that is an extension of their international popularity.

At the same time, the Marković ensemble engages in many of the same musical clichés and strategic essentialisms employed by Bregović (cf. Spivak 1988:205-211). Similar elements include the emphasis on eclectic musical combinations, high-energy music, and exhortations to wild abandon and alcohol consumption. Many images in the "Čoček Šljivovica" music video are also consistent with Gypsy stereotypes; excess and carefree *joie de vivre* can be read alongside (or instead of) signs of wealth and status for audiences seeking Gypsy authenticity. Exotic Balkan Gypsyness shines through in songs from their 2012 album "Čovek i truba" ("Man and Trumpet"), with titles like "[Gypsy] Balkan Karavan,"[110] "Gipsy House," and "Život Cigana" ("Gypsy Life" in Serbian). Moreover, Boban and Marko's ensemble frequently perform Bregović's core repertoire. In short, Boban and Marko regularly use conventional Gypsy imagery to maintain international popularity.

Yet Vranje Roma claim to consistently prefer Marković's music to that of Bregović in spite of their use of similar conventions. Vranje's musicians often stress that Boban and Marko are successful as cosmopolitan innovators because of their "inherent" ethnic talent. Moreover, their creative engagement with diverse musical sources resonates with Romani traditions of musical innovation. Balkan Romani musicians have long functioned as "cultural brokers," creatively developing new repertoires by selectively mining musical materials from other ethnic and regional styles, international music hits, film and TV show music, and more (Pettan

[110] Although officially "Balkan Karavan," the word "Gypsy" is consistently added during repetitions of the song's refrain.

2002:239-44; Silverman 2007:338-39; 2012). Svanibor Pettan argues that Kosovo Romani musicians consistently privileged their own musical sensibilities when adapting music from non-local sources, the source materials merely providing a "starting point" for creative production (2010:177-79, 189-90). Many Vranje Roma also consider musical innovation to be authentically Romani in practice because their musical competence as Roma produces "superior" results. By contrast, Bregović's work is inauthentic because he is a non-Rom who cannot accurately cultivate Romani musical aesthetics. Instead, his repertoire is tasteless and his popularity is based solely on stereotyping.

Many Roma also explain that creating musical fusions à la Boban Marković is a legitimate means to present themselves as fundamentally "worldly" musicians of high caliber. Boban and Marko's successful engagements with other prestigious world musics mark them as modern and sophisticated. Their success abroad fuels local Romani discourses that recast musical hybridity not merely as a way to cater to non-Romani fantasies, but also as a strategy for musicians to control their own artistic labor. In essence, praise of Boban Marković privileges musical cosmopolitanism as a means to elevate Romani performances above the simple re-hashing of primitivist Gypsy clichés. Because Romani musicians remain less powerful than their non-Romani patrons, however, strategies that allow them to self-identify as cosmopolitan artists still exist in ambivalent juxtaposition with their need to fulfill outsider stereotypes in tactical self-marketing. Below, I explore how Vranje brass musicians negotiate these dynamics as more and more of them engage with the burgeoning global market for their music.

## 7.4 "Performing Gypsyness:" Selling Romani Ethnicity to Cosmopolitan Consumers

For Romani brass musicians, Gypsy self-stereotyping is often as indispensable for capturing international audiences as the music itself. Yet Romani performances also frequently

blur the line between essentialized Gypsyness and musical cosmopolitanism, drawing from the popular conflation of the authenticity and hybridity complexes among non-Romani audiences. Romani discursive ambivalence about the import of these performative strategies illustrates two key dynamics. On the one hand, Gypsy essentialism is embraced as a necessary approach to engage with the world music market despite being fundamentally inauthentic. At the same time, however, Romani performers may characterize innovative self-presentations as consummate cosmopolitanism much like that of Boban and Marko Marković. These discourses coexist to seek simultaneous benefits: access to desirable economic opportunities on the one hand, and legitimation of claims for artistic and professional sophistication on the other.

The musical practices of Ivan, the Romani musician whose photo shoot I discussed in the introduction, illustrate this interplay of strategies. Ivan joined the orchestra I photographed in 2011 to keep pursuing international performances after his previous ensemble disbanded. The bandleader is Slobodan Durmišević, a widely respected Vranje musician in his fifties. Despite his large local clientele, Slobodan has recently turned to foreign markets to supplement earnings, particularly during winter when the frequency of local celebrations declines.

The ensemble performs mainly at clubs and for festivals in Slovenia, an attractive market for Romani brass bands. Romani musicians see Slovenia as incontrovertibly part of "the West," citing its strong economy and current European Union membership. Ivan claimed that the band sometimes made six to ten times more money during Slovenian gigs than they would have at a Vranje wedding. He also described in detail lavish lodgings and sumptuous food, showing me photographs of the band relaxing in hotel lobbies and hot tubs. At the same time, Slovenian discourses of cultural Occidentalism vis-à-vis their eastern neighbors make Romani brass alluring as a stereotypically Balkan, Eastern genre (Šivić 2013; cf. Bakić-Hayden 1995,

MacMillen 2011). Popular perceptions of Guča's bacchanalian atmosphere corroborate such stereotypes, drawing large numbers of Slovenian tourists every year and prompting invitations for Romani brass bands to perform in Slovenia.

Slobodan relies on Ivan's youth and prior experience for accessing such gigs abroad, deferring to his vision in questions of repertoire, performance tactics, and client contacts. As with the 2011 photo shoot, Ivan strategically masterminds the band's image with international fans in mind. YouTube videos of the band, posted in 2012 to showcase musical fusion numbers, exemplify tactics aimed at both modern tastes and Gypsy fantasies of non-local audiences. Contact information is featured prominently during the videos, highlighting that these productions are meant to garner gigs.

Neither the authenticity nor the hybridity complex is completely dominant in these videos. The musical repertoire is highly eclectic, involving rehearsed, dynamic shifts in melody, rhythm, and solos to cultivate an atmosphere of high energy and unfettered creativity that corresponds with both the Gypsy authenticity trope and ideals of cosmopolitan innovation. Following performers like Boban Marković, new repertoires draw from various genres thought to be globally popular; musicians use media like Facebook, YouTube, foreign films, and television shows to track developing trends and learn tunes. Ivan's musical fusions maintain a Gypsy authenticity by referencing local and Romani sounds. At the same time, his use of foreign genres implies both boundless Gypsy creativity and the artistic virtuosity of worldly musicians. In one video, the band performs a Serbian folk dance tune infused with jazz titled "Cigansko-Srpski Zez," or "Gypsy-Serbian Good Time," against a stage background with disco themes and lighting.[111] In another, the band performs "Michael Jackson Oro," combining motifs from the

[111] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzroqlbaqeg (accessed 24 June 2014).

pop star's hit "Billie Jean" with elements of Romani-style dance music.[112] Other videos feature covers of Duke Ellington's Caravan ("Karavan") and a Brazilian tune complete with the Portuguese lyrics ("Mosa Mosa," based on the 2008 song "Ai Se Eu Te Pego"), as well as an interpretation of Brahm's "Hungarian Dance No. 5" ("Jocin Valcerato," or "Joca's Waltz"). Performances of two well-known Bregović numbers ("Kalašnjikov" and "Mesečina") and a rendition of the song "Za Beograd" from Serbian cult film "Tamo Daleko" (where two young Roma perform the song as part of the comical plotline) tap more directly into Gypsy essentialism. In the "Za Beograd" video, Ivan pets a live rooster while singing in order to conjure the quirky Gypsy essentialism popularized by Kusturica's films.

Key shifts in instrumentation, repertoire, and musical aesthetics in these videos illustrate additional strategies to appeal to Western audiences. First, the additive meters so integral to Vranje repertoires (e.g., 7/8, 9/8, and 12/8) are almost completely absent. Pieces in 2/4 and 4/4, presumably more familiar to Western ears, predominate instead (see chapter 3; also Silverman 2013:199, 2015). Second, tempi are often faster than is true of Vranje-style performances, where audiences relish slower, "heavy" (*teško*) tunes. [113] By contrast, boisterous and upbeat numbers promote the high energy associated with "Balkan Gypsy Brass" abroad. Third, while clarinet and saxophone are valued in Vranje for their contribution to brass band timbre and their role in improvisation, they do not regularly figure in mainstream presentations of Balkan brass; they are not permitted to participate in official competitions at Guča, for instance (see Chapter 3). On the other hand, piston valve trumpets (called *džez trube*, or "jazz trumpets," by Roma) sometimes replace more traditional rotary valve flugelhorns—Slobodan's son Zoran plays one in several of the band's 2012 videos. Marko Marković exclusively plays a piston valve trumpet, contributing

[112] See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TeFiWouEIQ (accessed 24 June 2014).
[113] See this older-style Vranje Romani čoček: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IwVG2RJv8Y (accessed January 12th 2015).

to perceptions that this instrument is modern and cosmopolitan. Finally, global audiences prioritize the sonic markers of global popular music also seen in the aesthetic precedents set by Bregović and Marković. Newer solo practices draw from jazz in particular by prioritizing speed and staccato playing à la Marko Marković over the slower, more drawn-out sound typical in Vranje.[114] In performances for the world market, Romani musicians generally follow these conventions over local musical styling.

Ivan's band also uses non-musical strategies in performances to achieve popular allure. Quirky clothing and dynamic posturing on stage merge notions of the unconventional Gypsy with Western ideals of postmodern expressive freedom. In most of the videos, the ensemble appears in casual street-clothes combined with ties, hats, and other paraphernalia, referencing modern urban youth and coding their practices as cosmopolitan. Expansive posturing also hints at the masculine wildness popularized by the Gypsy Brass hype. Note that similar elements characterized the band's 2011 photo shoot, where musicians directed penetrating stares at the camera, narrowed their eyes, thrust up their chins, and widened their legs—the drummer even cradled his instrument prominently between his widely spread thighs. The band's dynamic mannerisms during the music video performances also yoke Gypsy volatility to cosmopolitan flair. Some of the musicians bounce and groove to the beats in imitation of global popular dance styles. In one instance, Ivan even doffs his hat and hurls it into the imaginary audience in front of him.

These practices are quite different from the composed demeanor preferred at local celebrations, but correspond to images of passionate Gypsy brass performances à la Kusturica, Bregović, and Boban Marković. Older band members in fact visibly struggle with these new

[114] See Kaminsky 2015a for the "dirty sound" associated with Balkan Romani/Jewish musical hypes in western Europe; cf. my discussion of Vranje musical aesthetics in chapter 3, pp. 62-66.

conventions, revealing the magnitude of these performative shifts. Their rigidly straight backs and locked arms, proper posture for playing the trumpet in Serbia, make their attempts to sway and bounce rhythmically along with the music seem stilted. Strategies that choreograph even bodily comportment on stage illustrate how much Romani musicians feel compelled to embody multivalent forms of Gypsyness (musically, sartorially, kinetically) in response to perceived demand.

These performances imply many romantic tropes about Roma, particularly perpetual innovation and passion. Romani musicians candidly explained to me that non-Roma need to see romantic Gypsy stereotypes in the flesh. Elaborate performances of the Gypsy trope hint that Romani musicians will bring non-Roma into the fantastic realm of Gypsy life. To demonstrate the impact of this strategy, Ivan recounted one performance at Guča where a woman suddenly snatched away a tip that he was receiving from another guest. She rubbed the bill on her hair, smiling all the while, before returning it to Ivan with thanks. "She wanted to get a piece of Gypsy magic, of luck," he explained, noting that he playfully wagged his finger at her in return. Ivan considers these plays on stereotypes to be ironic, almost tongue-in-cheek, but professionally necessary.

Performance practices that engage in strategic essentialism are not new to Vranje's brass musicians, as Roma are usually relatively powerless to control outsider representations of their ethnic identity and music (Silverman 2007:352; 2012). The contemporary performative politics of Vranje's brass bands are driven by the post-socialist crises undermining their professional status locally, while alternate performance possibilities are structured by media flows and commercial music markets. Romantic Gypsy tropes, internationally popular, have become necessary to support Romani professional livelihoods when other viable options are limited.

Yet these strategies also show that Roma are not merely passive victims but rather invested agents who creatively use resources at hand to further their professional interests (Silverman 2007: 338, 352-58). Because musical innovation has become an integral part of the popular attraction to "Balkan Gypsy Brass," Roma also turn to the prestigious cachet of cosmopolitan hybridity to subtly oppose being typecast as primitive Gypsies. Ivan certainly saw the cultural bricolage articulated in the videos as more than just "playing the Gypsy" for foreigners to make money. He explained that it was a chance to break out of the purely local performance context and accrue worldly cachet abroad. His band claimed status as cutting-edge, virtuoso musicians by developing a hybrid musical repertoire that referenced popular global music and crafting stage personas that evoked trendy aspects of urban Western lifestyles. The path blazed by Boban and his ensemble legitimates this discourse of cosmopolitan sophistication for musicians like Ivan who aspire to similar prospects for fame and prestige.

But the overwhelming pressure on Ivan to engage with Gypsy tropes highlights how Roma are consistently re-embedded in hierarchical power structures on world music markets (Silverman 2007). Because most Romani brass ensembles lack Boban and Marko's privileged status, their strategies are discursively ambiguous—the same practices that confer cosmopolitan sophistication on the one hand must also be able to code for Gypsy exoticism on world music markets. At the same time, however, any Romani performers deride popular demand for Gypsy fantasies as constrictive and inauthentic. Next I examine how non-Romani marketing discourses use Gypsy romanticism to access cultural diversity through "authentic hybridity." In ironic contrast to celebratory narratives that conflate Romani visibility on this scene with emancipation, or equate "Gypsy music" with multicultural appreciation, I argue that such projects erase

historical, economic, and cultural specificities of Romani musical performance in the interests of commercial profit (Feld 2001; Hutnyk 2000; Silverman 2007; Taylor 2007).

## 7.5 Gypsies as Cultural Mediators: Musical Fusions and Romani Roots as Symbolic Bridges for Global Citizenship

I discuss below two brass fusion albums featuring Vranje Romani musicians. These albums, and the narratives built around them, in many ways epitomize how Gypsy romanticism and musical cosmopolitanism are yoked together by non-Roma to market Romani music to liberal-minded (primarily Western) audiences. Tropes of Gypsy nomadism, primal emotionality, and creative freedom produce visions of "authentic hybridity" in musical fusion projects. This marriage promises to offer multiculturalism through consumption of eclectic, and exotic, Romani music. Ironically, however, the symbolic power of Gypsy stereotyping for marketing discounts the ways that Romani musical practices are in actuality well-rooted, ignoring critical socioeconomic and cultural dimensions of Romani musicians' professional labor.

Both of the albums I discuss here are the work of a single producer who presents himself as a liberal humanitarian and connoisseur of world musics.[115] His rhetoric promotes common humanity and cultural diversity, respect for oppressed minorities (such as the Roma), and ecological concerns. His music and media projects as a whole emphasize cultural hybridity and liberal agendas for international audiences. These projects bring together musicians from disparate world regions to produce multicultural collaborations, always including south Serbian Romani brass.

This producer cut these two albums with a core group of Romani musicians, a well-known local brass band that he subsequently dubbed "Gypsy Groovz." The first album, *Rivers of Happiness* (2002), features a collaboration between the Romani musicians, a Serbian jazz

[115] I do not name specific musicians or the producer here to protect the participants.

trumpet player, and an Indian percussionist from Madras. The CD comprises primarily local-style Romani repertoire—the numbers are mostly ritual melodies or dance tunes with typical forms of ornamentation, particularly microtonal inflection. Jazz elements are generally confined to solos performed over the Romani repertoire by the Serbian guest musician. The jazz performer takes turns improvising with the lead Romani melody players, mirroring conventional Romani practices at local celebrations. The overall feel of the CD therefore is of Romani-style regional brass music with periodic, light infusions of jazz sound.

Despite the predominance of local Romani repertoire on the album, however, the producer's discourse focuses on romantic tropes of Gypsy music as cultural bricolage in order to market the CD abroad. He claims that the inherently eclectic nature of Romani music is a result of centuries of cultural borrowing and absorption, lending itself well to hybridity. In an online blog entry about the album he writes:[116]

> In the music...you can hear the historical relations to Indian ragas, Sufi trance music, Egyptian and Armenian melodies, Turkish, Bulgarian and Macedonian patterns, the temper of Spanish flamenco, Sardinian and Dalmatian melodic polyphony, Serbian and Romanian love for variation...the Indian percussion player from Madras, had never met [the Romani musicians] before but immediately recognized their story and their music as his own - and added a touch of the ancient Gypsies' Indian roots.

The comments particularly highlight exotic Eastern/"Oriental" influences. While Romani musicians symbolically offer Eastern-ness for Western consumption, they can also tame the music of even more Eastern Others by filtering them through their own practices as quasi-Europeans (Silverman 2013: 190-91; Taylor 2007: 126). Roma thus constitute the perfect arbiters for Western celebratory explorations of global cultural diversity.

---

[116] See http://fiestamaniac.blogspot.com/2013/02/first-appearance-of-gypsy-groovz.html

A subsequent album, released in 2009, is grounded even more explicitly in the philosophy of bringing people together through Romani musical hybridity. The album title itself, *Gypsy Groovz Goes Tutti Mundi: Night Train for Lovers and Thieves,* suggests both a global scope and romantic notions of Gypsy difference.[117] The *Night Train* project involves many more musicians than *Rivers of Happiness*, including brass musicians from multiple ensembles as well as other Romani musicians who specialize in non-brass instruments and genres (accordionists, violinists, guitarists, etc.). After recording a number of pieces with local musicians, the producer made the tracks available online so that other world musicians might participate musically, subsequently mixing in their own contributions. In the CD liner notes re-posted on his blog, he indicates that Rastafarian, Punjabi, Iranian, Israeli, Irish, American, Croatian, Bosnian, and Albanian musicians joined the Romani contingent for the project.[118]

The producer is particularly interested in the multicultural significance of this particular collaboration. He writes the following about two tracks:

> "Hot Water Festival"…is…probably the longest piece in the history of Gypsy music: a 35-minute marathon weaving together the most unlikely combination of melodies that are nevertheless rooted in one and the same ancient tradition. This musical epiphany proves yet again just how brilliantly the Gypsies can mediate between different cultures. Even the politicians present were rendered speechless – completely carried away by this musical catharsis in which rhythms and melodies are brought together with an unfettered freedom that is quite simply irresistible. National animosities are swept aside with an ease that no politician or paper treaty could ever achieve. This is the kind of universal freedom that everyone can understand and celebrate.

Note that Romani musicians naturally break down barriers between diverse participants, allowing anyone to participate equally regardless of heritage or politics. Claims to a shared "ancient tradition" reiterate ideas that authentic Romani music encompasses many world

[117] See the album cover here: http://www.amazon.com/Night-Train-For-Lovers-Thieves/dp/B002I5TVOQ.
[118] See http://fiestamaniac.blogspot.com/2013/02/facts-2.html

traditions as a result of centuries of unfettered cultural borrowing. Assertions of Gypsy eclectic creativity also apply romantic essentialisms to promote hybridity, positioning Roma as perpetually freed from the constraints of national politics and rooted communities. The seeds of musical collaboration therefore already reside deep in Romani practice, allowing non-Romani audiences (as well as music producers) to claim safe access to cultural difference while potentially affirming liberal agendas of tolerance.

In the same notes, the producer highlights the primal passion of Roma to support the transformative power of their music. Gypsy emotionality mediates between tradition (authenticity) and innovation (hybridity) in order to make claims for multicultural tolerance:

> … it was time to counter the ubiquitous clichés of bland common-time rhythms by showcasing some of the deeper-rooted ancient rituals of Balkan music – the only way to convey and understand the true emotional depth and passion of this culture…[During the recording] a musical atmosphere built up that was charged with excitement in this alternation between psychedelic trance, free improvisation and age-old tradition...and all those in it sailed away from the murky shores of reality to a world where the universal truth of human kinship reigns…All the constraints of strict musical arrangements were abandoned; the pleasingly idiosyncratic little "imperfections" of Roma music were embraced and there was a real sense of questing for originality and edginess.

The raw, almost mystical passion of Gypsy music reinforces its universal appeal, promising emotionally-driven cultural transcendence for international listeners. Even the process is quintessentially "Gypsy," with quirky "imperfections" that code the music as both authentic and innovative. Multiple dimensions of the Gypsy trope resolve the conflict between representations of "traditional" music and creative fusions, producing authentic hybridity for global consumers (Silverman 2013: 192-93; Taylor 2007: 142-44).

Gypsy exoticism also extends beyond the musical aspects of the projects. Perhaps the producer's most explicit use of stereotypes to titillate audiences involves photographs of the

Romani brass band taken for the *Rivers of Happiness* CD cover.[119] Images show the musicians wearing bathing suits and entering an open-air thermal spring bathing pool with their brass instruments in hand while Romani women and children bathe. Officially, the photos are meant to increase public awareness about the untapped potential of the thermal springs. Yet these images also reinforce the stereotype of the primitive Gypsy. Roma are constituted as "pre-modern" and thus closer to nature (bathing outdoors in hot springs instead of indoors in bathrooms), "baring all" without shame in images which recall photographs of naked natives in Western popular media. The photos imply a carefree, simple Romani existence unlike that of modern Westerners. The combined effect embeds the environmental and humanitarian concerns of the project (also potential sources of important cultural cachet for liberal-minded audiences) within a narrative that idealizes the unconventional lifestyle of Roma.

Despite the centrality of Gypsy cultural capital to these narratives, however, the professional perspectives and aesthetic input of the Romani musicians themselves were masked or completely silenced by the producer's visions. Romani participants (and music) are important inasmuch as they bear out the narrative linking free cultural exchange, primal affect, and exotic appeal. They are symbolically reduced to empty vessels, however, through which the bonds of common humanity, tolerance, and enlightened global citizenship are conveyed via the musical hybridity that Roma ostensibly epitomize as cultural sponges. This articulation implies, moreover, that on some level Roma themselves do not prioritize (or possess) music of their own, instead trafficking in bricolage drawn from the more grounded communities around them (cf. Silverman 2007; 2012).

Romani evaluations of these albums, on the other hand, critiqued the gross cultural stereotyping as well as erasure of the cultural roots of Romani musical repertoires and

[119] The cover can be seen here: http://www.allmusic.com/album/rivers-of-happiness-mw0000805618.

professional legacies. While some of the musicians were hopeful the *Rivers of Happiness* cover illustrations would stimulate interest in the album, many local Roma expressed displeasure with the exotic feel of the photos. Several musicians indicated that they would be uncomfortable being photographed in bathing gear. They considered this exposure immodest and inappropriate, and disliked the unnatural juxtaposition of musical performance and bathing practices. They were especially unhappy that such images would represent local Romani brass musicians on the international market. Ultimately many felt that the photographs were antithetical to projects that should highlight Romani musical virtuosity and skill, not objectify participants via fantasies about Gypsy life.

Romani complaints about the *Night Train* album reveal additional concerns. Participants explained to me that the producer wanted maximum numbers of local Romani musicians to make the project grandiose, but did not provide sufficient time to work out the musical logistics. For local brass musicians, generational and community-specific differences in their interpretations of pieces presented obstacles for finalizing arrangements. The participation of non-brass musicians in arrangements based on brass band repertoire also made matters difficult. In one case, a young classically trained Romani accordionist had difficulty picking things up by ear and did not ornament his playing according to local Romani ("folk") style. Other Roma described his contribution as adequate but not superb, pointing out that his playing clashed with the overall feel and tonality.

Moreover, many Roma greatly disliked how the other world musical contributions were subsequently mixed into their original recordings. Quite a few felt that the final form of the tracks represents an acoustic cacophony of instruments and styles that plainly did not "go together." One Romani musician noted that the Trinidadian drummers "stuck out" because their

instruments altered the overall timbre, and because they used different conventions for rhythmic improvisation. He also noted that the Russian Romani man in Frankfurt who mixed the album tracks would not have the specific ear for Vranje-style Romani music that might have made for better arrangements. On the whole, Romani opinions held that the producer should have privileged the knowledge and skills of the Romani participants, allowing them to apply Romani aesthetics for innovation to produce far more appealing, but also more authentic, results. Their critiques also suggest that Romani participants should have been in control of this process in order to best represent their music.

Most importantly, Roma I spoke with did not experience the *Night Train* collaboration as a means of achieving multicultural understanding. Their critiques argue that the resulting fusions were highly aesthetically flawed, overturning romantic claims for natural musical connections with other traditions. Their exasperation focuses on the "ignorance" of the non-Rom producer, who imposed his personal economic and ideological interests instead of relying on Romani expertise. By prioritizing stereotypical fantasies of Gypsyness, the producer assumed an essential, singular Romani experience that flattened the complexities of musicians' individual biographies and community-specific repertoires, ignoring the grounded realities of Romani musical practices in favor of romantic tropes of Gypsy authentic hybridity.

Note that these criticisms are not Romani arguments against musical cosmopolitanism per se. Praise for Boban and Marko Marković and pride in fusion projects speaks to Romani interest in creative innovation. However, Romani musicians tend to emphasize that innovation is an extension of traditional Romani musical practice; my consultants argued that Romani professional legacies and innate knowledge render superior forms of improvisation. In stark contrast to the *Night Train* project, for example, Romani participants were generally pleased with

the *Rivers of Happiness* album, pointing out that the fusion of local sounds and jazz was done very effectively to produce sophisticated music because Roma controlled the creative dynamic of the arrangements. They claimed that their performances prioritized local Romani style and musical aesthetics, while the jazz musician "fit in" well during the give-and-take of improvisation that Romani musicians often cultivate. The musicians were particularly pleased to showcase music typical for Vranje celebrations, validating their prestige as professionals who have mastered the elaborate repertoires required to satisfy local clientele. They were clearly invested in demonstrating that—far from being anachronistic, rootless, or cultureless sponges—they have long been, and remain, fundamentally embedded in the complex ethnic, socio-political, and economic fabric of local life.

## 7.6 Conclusion

For two decades now, Romani music has been an in-demand commodity on the world music market. Romantic tropes of Gypsy lifestyles and culture form the semiotic core of this interest, controlled primarily by non-Romani agents. Romani music is marketed in ways that imply a "blank canvas" for non-Romani self-ascription, fostering romantic claims to pre-modern authenticity, a return to forgotten traditions, rejection of conventional lifestyles and national constraints, and an embodiment of cultural hybridity and innovation (Silverman 2013). The positioning of Roma outside of history, nationality, and bounded territory makes their music consumable (and own-able) regardless of one's political or cultural belonging. The ideological work that the conflation of hybridity and authenticity performs promotes commercial interest in Romani music, allowing non-Romani managers and producers to capitalize on the cachet of Romani culture for profit.

Even as the Kusturica-Bregović-Guča complex strongly shapes Romani participation in this market, Vranje Roma constantly tailor strategies to negotiate the resultant power dilemmas. Selling stereotypical Gypsyness back to non-Roma grants a measure of economic agency to Romani performers who have relatively little control of the economic and cultural conditions that shape their participation in global markets (Silverman 2007, 2012; Zirbel 2000). Romani self-exoticization furthermore uses ironic performances to tap into the "disemia" of cultural intimacy, where plays on stereotypes allow less powerful actors to claim (within limits) economic and cultural capital (Herzfeld 1985; 2005:14, 32-33). On the other hand, Vranje brass musicians may counter simplistic representations of Gypsyness by claiming that their musical innovation speaks to their modern sophistication as artists. As such, cosmopolitanist narratives counter those which divest Romani control over musical production by undermining dominant (i.e., non-Romani) interpretations of musical innovation (Abu-Lughod 1986; Oldenburg 1990; Scott 1985). These discourses connect Romani music to prestigious world genres in order to claim the emancipated status of a positively-valenced global cosmopolitanism (Pulay 2014). Romani ethnicity provides a platform for professional agency, emphasizing a privileged, authentic position as real Roma in contrast to non-Romani managers, composers, and producers.

Acts of resistance shed important light on the logics of power, illustrating how power and resistance are co-produced (Ortner 1995:174-75; Scott 1985). Romani attempts to retain artistic control point to their anxieties over ubiquitous non-Romani domination of their engagement with world music markets. The vast majority of Vranje brass bands lack the requisite economic capital, business connections, and media access to place themselves on the international scene; even Romani success stories like Boban Marković work through non-Romani middle-men and cater to stereotypes of "Gypsyness." While Romani discursive

opposition may constitute "weapons of the weak" to invalidate non-Romani representational hegemony, such criticisms rarely attain wider visibility or carry significant clout among non-Roma, minimizing their potential to effect significant change (Scott 1985; Seymour 2006). Instead, they show that the commercial interests and ideological constructs of non-Roma remain privileged.

The semiotic power of Gypsy tropes to market Romani music in world music circles creates an ironic paradox. While international audiences crave contact with "real Gypsies" and their "authentic culture," the romanticization of Romani brass silences the realities of Romani musical practices, aesthetic tastes, and professional status. Stories of Gypsy rootlessness and cultural bricolage ignore how Romani brass bands are grounded in local communities, providing essential musical services integral to ritual and celebratory traditions. The narrative of Gypsy primitivism works against Romani aspirations to be recognized as contemporary, sophisticated artists like other world-famous musicians. Celebratory narratives of the wild, uninhibited lifestyles of Gypsy musicians imply that these musicians are carefree and exist outside of real-world conditions. This stereotype ignores the economic exigencies and social inequalities that critically shape the possibilities—and limitations—of Romani musical labor, implying that their very presence on the world music market translates into economic success and the amelioration of ethnic marginalization (Hutnyk 2000; Silverman 2007, 2013; Taylor 2007, 2013). Because of the ideological salience of imagined Gypsyness for Western audiences—and its profitable returns for non-Romani music brokers—the participation of real Roma remains predicated on their ability to embody the "Gypsy Other" regardless of their own ambivalence about subsequent professional prospects and representational politics.

# 8.

# Conclusion

In this dissertation I argue that ethnic identity politics are critically constituted via intersections of performance, embodiment, and affect in musical spaces. Far from comprising merely an epiphenomenal aspect of local cultural "flavor," I show how Romani musical practices in Vranje, Serbia, are invested with complex, contested meanings influenced by historical legacies, politics, economics, and cultural polemics. My research demonstrates that music informs semiotic struggles in ethnic relations through the visceral import of musical affect and actors' embodied engagements with musical practices. Bodily praxis in musical spaces "grounds" meanings produced through practices, "naturalizing" the cultural significance of musical sounds, performance acts, and ethnic identifications through embodied experience. The symbolic weight of embodied affect in musical practice in turn informs discursive constructs that reproduce social realities—or articulate resistance to the status quo. I contend that musical spaces function as performative domains that channel a dialogic relationship between ethnic ideologies and praxis, between the discourses and the practices that constitute identity politics.

## 8.1 Ethnicity as Strategic Performance and Embodied Performativity: Identity Politics Between Power and Agency

My analysis of ethnic relations in Vranje illustrates the salience of ethnicity as a socially-constructed reality shaped by particular cultural politics of meaning and power. While I acknowledge critiques of monolithic analytical categories of "ethnicity," my research advocates for in-depth scholarly examination of the political production of cultural differences that are encapsulated in the notion of ethnicity. I argue that ethnic identification must be understood, and interrogated, as a contextual and strategic *process*. Anthropological scholarship needs to consider

the cultural work that attributions of "ethnic" distinction enable, investigating how practice and discourse operate in tandem to reposition people vis-à-vis power structures.

In this dissertation I illustrate how attention to performance critically enhances scholarly understandings of strategic, contextual constructions of ethnic identity. I show how the representational politics at the core of ethnic identification are invested with cultural meaning through social performance. In other words, ethnicity is not only a matter of symbolic interpretations of "difference" enacted primarily at the level of social discourse. Ethnicity is performative because cultural difference is actively enacted and policed through cultural practices, "ways of being" and "doing" that not only mark boundary lines but effectively constitute notions self and other through embodiment. To push against reified conceptualizations of ethnicity, I argue that critical scholarship must engage in ethnographically-grounded explorations of identity politics that interrogate how ethnic difference is enacted through practices born out of specific sociocultural contexts.

I have analyzed processes of ethnic identification in terms of cultural identity politics, as domains where lines are drawn between groups of actors who struggle over access to political, economic, and cultural resources. Identity politics here encapsulate the social reproduction and contestation of relations of inequality. Locals articulate the social fact of ethnic identification in Vranje through performance practices that manifest notions of the essential difference of Roma, as it is enacted through complex engagements between discursive utterances, embodied practices, and musical sound and affect. Serbs perform their dominant political, economic, and social position through conventions of interaction with Romani musicians that reference the lower status of Roma on multiple levels. Degrading tipping practices, extravagant demands for personal entertainment, aesthetic evaluations of "good" and "bad" Romani music, and discourses

that privilege Serbian standards for representing Romani culture support Serbian actors' claims to preeminent status. When Romani musicians dress in Serbian peasant attire and praise nationalist pride at the Guča Festival, or enact romanticized tropes of exotic "Gypsyness" for foreign consumers, they engage in strategic essentialism through performance to accommodate their unequal access to economic and cultural capital (Spivak 1988). Roma and Serbs stake claims for representational power in ethnic relations through cultural performance contexts, reshaping how power dynamics are actively reproduced through performative politics.

This thesis also demonstrates how processes of ethnic identification are not primarily agentive acts of creativity and voluntary self-presentation. Rather, I argue that ethnic identity is political because it is performative (i.e., involving performativity): perpetually reconstructed through conventions of practice situated within webs of power and inequality. While the dramatic and creative dimensions of performance may promise agentive transformation of social realities, I show how embodied performances of ethnicity often "cite" established scripts of cultural difference in ways that cause actors to "re-experience" and constantly reproduce the ethnic status quo (Butler 1988, 2011[1993]:xii). I argue that Romani performance practices must be interpreted in terms of their historicity, where specific actions have become conventionalized as "tradition"—they have become part of a compulsory ritualized script that whose repetition undergirds performative enactments of Romani ethnic status (Butler 2002[1990]:xv; McKenzie 1998:221-222). Deviation from conventional performance practices—with attendant expectations to produce pleasure for non-Romani patrons—may also entail censure for Romani performers, whether economic or physical, thereby enforcing normative compliance to a complex of performative acts that reproduce relations of power (Butler 1988, 1990, 1993).

Traditions of musical labor forge strong connections between Romani performance practices and the material and social conditions that have marked their place in Vranje. Historical stigma against professional entertainment since Ottoman times in turn made musical labor more accessible for otherwise marginalized Roma. At the same time, Romani domination of musical performance maps professional stigma onto ethnic stigma, such that Romani performance practices reiterate these connections and "naturalize" their unequal standing in society. The historical and political-economic materialities that have shaped both Romani marginality and musical labor therefore deeply inform the performative reproduction of ethnic relations between Roma and Serbs in Vranje.

The discursive interpretation of performance acts at Vranje musical events is heavily controlled by privileged interests and actors whose ideological take on the meaning of such practices forces others to (re)enact their own domination. As Romani musicians stoop to pick up money thrown onto the ground by patrons, or solicit tips on their foreheads and cheeks by playing their trumpet directly into the ear of Serb patrons, they participate in the performative reproduction of their ethnic marginality vis-à-vis Serbs. Roma who argue that such conventions are merely "local custom," or claim that ritualized performances of servility in customs like the "Pasha's Dinner" (*Pašina Večera*) are desirable because they bring good tips, demonstrate the semiotic power of dominant discourses for controlling the representational meaning of performance practice. These practices are normalized by discourses of custom and celebration, effectively obscuring the projects of power that shape performative conventions (Butler 1988, 2011[1993]:xxi).

My analysis of Romani performance practice intervenes therefore in scholarly considerations of ethnicity by calling for a nuanced consideration of sites of convergence

between performance and performativity theory. While theories of performance that emphasize creative and strategic dimensions of practice are useful for understanding how ethnicity is symbolically enacted in performance, I argue that performance acts also constitute instances of performativity inasmuch as they reference customary or ritualized "ways of doing," reiterate normative constructions of bodily dispositions and relations between participants, and naturalize discursive power by masking the very processes of identity construction that they enact (McKenzie 1998:225-227; Theodosiou 2011:149-160). Inspired by scholarship that utilizes theories of performativity to interrogate a variety of identity phenomena (e.g., Butler 1998, 2002[1990]:xvi; Liechty 2003:23; Theodosiou 2011), I call for greater attention to the performative dynamics of ethnic identity politics, where ethnicity is "naturalized" as social reality through embodied practices of difference that reproduce power relations. To do so effectively, however, we must also think through the ways that bodily experience galvanizes processes of ethnic identification and differentiation.

## 8.2 Embodiment: Bodily Praxis and Power

To better understand how ethnic difference is enacted and internalized, we must consider how social actors *embody* the performative dynamics of identity. My thesis interrogates how ethnic power relations are (re)produced through bodily interactions. Building from anthropological perspectives that show how physical "difference" is often used to legitimate ethnic and racial boundaries, my work explores how cultural difference (or belonging) is powerfully validated via embodied practices. Romani otherness is regularly attributed to inherent genetic or racial difference, as when locals claim that musical talent is rooted in "Gypsy blood." These discursive tropes are variously confirmed or manipulated, however, through Romani bodily praxis in performative contexts. Serbs experience Roma as performers, pointing to

physical evidence of their musical skills in practice or praising their exciting bodily dispositions as they connect with patrons in moments of performance. For both Serbs and Roma, identity and difference are experienced (and understood) through bodies and by contact between bodies.

But ethnic belonging and boundaries are also constituted through the specific ways that actors enact—or must accommodate—relationships in embodied ways. I contend that the semiotic import of identity politics in performance contexts feels natural or inherent because these polemics are processed through bodily dispositions (habitus) and performative interactions. Anthropological scholarship argues that we must think of bodies not as objects, or merely sites of symbolic inscription/interpretation, but rather as the "existential ground…of culture" (van Wolputte 2004:257). We owe a debt to Bourdieu for articulating how bodily praxis—as standardized practices shaped by social dispositions—constitutes a key space for inhabiting social roles (1977:87-93). However, I argue that scholarly inquiry must explore questions of embodiment as critical "ways of being in the world" where bodies are the medium of experience (Csordas 1994; Lyon and Barbalet 1994; van Wolputte 2004). As Csordas argues, "[b]eing-in-the-world is fundamentally conditional, and hence we must speak of 'existence' and 'lived experience'" to understand how bodily experiences mediate sociocultural reality (1994:10). Because bodies constitute active sites of cultural processes, they are also constitutive of social order and relationships; bodies are social, "intercommunicative and active" (Lyon and Barbalet 1994:56). Social identities in turn can be discursively re-produced by shaping bodies and bodily performances (Butler 1988, 1990, 1993; Romas-Zayas 2011; Theodosiou 2011).

Scholarship must examine bodily experiences both in terms of practice and discourse in order to obtain a nuanced picture of the elaboration of identity politics (Romas-Zayas 2011; Theodosiou 2011). Particular claims to status or symbolic meaning in performance spaces are

grounded through physical experience and bodily praxis. When Romani musicians kneel before a Serb patron, or when a celebrant slaps a moistened bill on the forehead of a Romani entertainer, physical interaction signifies inequality by enacting it with and through bodies. The meanings attributed to bodily acts are also mediated by dispositions embedded in unequal relations of power, and subsequently heightened by the affective power of musical practice. Serbs may interpret specific conventions of bodily performance as uncontrollable celebratory gusto instead of as direct attempts to dominate "Gypsy" musicians, naturalizing performative practices that reconstitute the ethnic status quo while glossing differential access to cultural and political-economic capital.

Romani musicians oblige—but also strategically negotiate—these displays through bodily participation, using conventional gestures and dispositions to encourage tipping from excited patrons. They may characterize these interactions as celebratory abandon, too, validating their bodily practices as useful means to earn money and to maintain demand for their unique services. In such moments, Romani bodily dispositions reproduce the ideological "accent" (or discursive interpretation) conferred upon such practices by the Serb majority (Vološinov 1973[1929]). Roma must accommodate the ways that power is inscribed upon such relations through demands placed upon their bodies; at the same time their discursive attempts to obfuscate Romani powerlessness by re-signifying such practices as agentive strategies generally carry less clout (because they are less "audible") than Serb narratives.

Discursive plays on the meaning of practice in turn uphold the embodied performative conventions that signify Romani ethnic marginality. Even when Roma criticize performance conventions as practices designed to humiliate them, they make explicit the semiotic power of specific bodily practices for confirming power hierarchies. Romani musicians regularly give in

to demands to perform in conventionalized, corporeal ways in order to maintain their professional livelihoods. Even resistance is constrained—while Roma can at times avoid or moderate certain dramatic bodily power plays, more mundane and ubiquitous bodily engagements that mark power at musical events may be inescapable.

Bodies are powerful sites of meaning-making here because they function as the ultimate medium of experience, both confirming extant power plays and delineating spaces (and means) of potential resistance. My analysis shows how bodily experience is political—corporeal dispositions and interactions in performance are strategic and constantly negotiated. I argue that the interpretation of performance via cultural politics benefits from finer attention to the dynamics of bodily experience. By attending to how bodily praxis produces meaning through performative interactions, anthropological inquiry can fruitfully expand explorations of semiotic processes involved in identity politics beyond purely verbal, discursive realms. Thorough consideration of bodies as performative sites contributes to a more sophisticated interrogation of the ways that power and agency are naturalized or reconstructed in practice. Moreover, the emotional and affective dimensions of bodily practice and embodiment are critical for understanding the power of performance to articulate and naturalize social relations (Cowan 1990; Bordieu 1977:93; Lyon and Barbalet 1994; Romas-Zayas 2011; Theodosiou 2011; van Wolputte 2004).

## 8.3 Affect and Music: Visceral Dimensions of Performative Politics

My thesis explores how musically-mediated affect shapes the cultural processes that link bodily practice to identity politics. I contend that affect entails social semiotics processed not exclusively through cognitive processes but rather in the mutual constitution of bodily experience and discourse. Affect—as pre-reflexive, non-verbal, and viscerally felt engagement

with various media and other bodies in performance contexts—makes and heightens participants' experiences of musical events. The deep and spontaneous feeling engendered through affect reaffirms connections between practices and meaning during performances, legitimating actors' identifications and relations to others.

My analysis intervenes in current theoretical debates by arguing that affective experiences are only made legible and productive through the social context within which they are manifested. I argue that musical affect naturalizes the cultural import of identity performances through bodily experience, potentially masking the workings of power that privilege certain forms of signification—or validating unequal relations through deeply felt connections between bodies, practices, and musical sound. Affect is a key communicative element in performance acts that reproduce social relations through bodily dispositions, cultural practices, and discursive signification.

I argue against scholarship that situates affective experiences as primarily outside of the realm of social structure, culture, and discourse. Instead, I contend that actors experience affective responses by means of cultural dispositions that are deeply rooted in bodies and remembered practices. Affect is made meaningful as social fact through the cultural politics of performance. Cultural discourse and collective practice together constitute the particular forms of affective experience and displays that are seen as meaningful (or recognizable as "valid") for music-making, whether in Vranje, Serbia, or on international stages. Conversely, social actors make sense of affective experiences through remembered practices and extant, collective discourses that shape the import of, in this case, musical practices.

I have analyzed how locals experience embodied celebratory responses at Vranje musical events as natural and instantaneous. However, I also show how the excitement generated by

certain performance conventions or particular musical sounds is closely connected to broader constructs of family pride, gender roles, class distinctions, and ethnic difference that consolidate the meaning of practices at musical events. When elder women marrying off a son revel in the heavy dance movements and slow drumbeat of the *Svekrvino Kolo* ritual, their affective response and subsequent pleasure stems from their elevated status as "mother of the groom" in a performative moment. Patriarchal values and normative constructs of the gendered roles of women inform the affective experience of this ritual melody and the performance practices of the brass musicians, even as learned notions of the aesthetic beauty of these practices reinforce locals' investment in the ritual reproduction of patriarchy by performing them.

In other contexts, "exotic" rhythms or melodic contours of "Balkan Gypsy" brass music may be exciting to Western audiences at international concerts because of the romantic marketing of Romani music as authentic contact with an "oriental Other." Yet the same musical features may provoke disgust among nationalist Serbs who struggle to reconcile regional legacies of Ottoman heritage with newer discourses of Serbian cultural purity that reject connections with the "Muslim East." The affective power of Romani musical practices powerfully frames identity politics by connecting them to embodied performances. But musical affect remains subject to struggles over meaning that are deeply informed by particular historical contexts and social experiences.

My dissertation illustrates how music is a rich medium for cultural signification, where potential meanings are not fixed but rather contingent, layered, and often contested or ambivalent. My research shows how musical sounds cultivated by Romani musicians are subject to diverse aesthetic evaluations, political-economic significations, and claims for identification. The same musical practices may variously code for Romani inherent talent and pride, Romani

ethnic difference, Romani-Serbian cultural intimacy, Romani "primitiveness," Balkan "otherness," or Serbian national pride.

Yet all of these diverse meanings are confirmed by the affective power of musical performance, where sound and aesthetics are experienced and mediated through actors' bodily engagements. I argue that the meanings of musical practices are socially legitimated by visceral, affective connections with performative acts. Through musical interactions, affect and embodiment combine to powerfully undergird the performative acts that constitute actors' identifications. Serbian patriotism is "naturalized" and bolstered through actors' engagements with particular brass band sounds and repertoires, links that they consider to be objective and inviolable because of the affective and sentimental import of these musical practices. Similar semiotic claims invest regional pride in Vranje's Ottoman heritage, mediated through brass band repertoires and Romani musical practices, or constitute the "exotic lure" of Romani brass as a marker of cultural difference within Europe for western music markets. I contend that the strong link between embodiment and affect generated in musical practice makes identity politics in musical spaces all the more vivid and dynamic, bolstering the semiotic negotiation of power plays and bids for resistance.

## 8.4 The Balance of Power and Agency: Romani Musicians and Control over Representation

My dissertation illustrates how musical performances are active, dynamic spaces within which Romani ethnic difference is referenced and reconstituted on multiple levels—aesthetic, discursive, and performative. In many ways, Romani musical practices and strategies are geared toward improving their economic, professional, and cultural capital. Whereas local performance practices must performatively navigate older, more oppressive constructions of ethnic relations,

Romani bids for popularity at national festivals and on international stages constitute attempts to boost earnings and prestige in alternative spaces. Such strategies may garner increased visibility and earnings to allow innovative Romani performers to claim particular forms of agency, pushing against entrenched legacies of enforced marginality.

Yet I have shown how even these strategies do not constitute total agency, where Roma can select the performances, self-representation, and status they desire in "liberated" alternate spaces. Instead, I illustrate how Romani musicians negotiate circumscribed forms of agency within semiotic domains that are dominated by non-Roma (Silverman 1996, 2007, 2012). Roma generally do not control the means of representation, whether with respect to music, performance practices, or ethnic identification. The ideological frames privileged by non-Roma continue to shape the discursive and performative matrices within which Roma strategize their professional and identity politics. Roma may play non-Romani constructs against one another to gain an edge, creatively deploying strategic essentialisms to navigate the status quo (Spivak 1988). They qualify romantic tropes of "Gypsyness" by emphasizing rooted legacies of professional performance, or invoke discourses of innate talent to reject disparagement of their professional musical livelihoods in the midst of economic crisis. But the economic exigencies of musical labor, contingent upon the sociopolitical marginalization of Roma, often mean that Roma must accommodate the demands of majority clientele—even in the most lucrative of performance contexts. Romani counter-narratives and performative contestations lack the visibility—the discursive clout backed by cultural and economic capital—of non-Romani actors who set the semiotic terms of representation. Roma regularly embrace, mimic, and reproduce the terms of performative engagements in order to "stay in the game."

My dissertation contributes to scholarly investigations of Romani identity in the context of historical marginalization and ongoing socioeconomic exclusion. While most work has sought to critique the political-economic dimensions of Romani identity politics, focusing heavily on questions of policy or the discursive polemics of representation, I argue that scholarship must pay more critical attention to performative dynamics of Romani identification and (re)presentation (e.g., Theodosiou 2011; Silverman 2012). By probing the connections between musical performance, affect, and bodily practice through ethnographic inquiry, my analysis advocates for critical examinations of how non-discursive embodiment and performative practice shape the semiotic context within which Romani identity and agency are signified—and reconstituted. Whereas Roma often lack sufficient political and economic capital to be visible (or audible) in broader cultural discourses about their place in majority societies, the semiotic spaces opened by musical affect and cultural performance may offer spaces where Roma have more voice and expanded prospects for strategic manipulation of cultural identification in practice. I contend that this dynamic makes scholarly explorations of Romani performative practices imperative. Relative to their economic and political exclusion, Roma are indeed musically powerful (Silverman 2007, 2012). But their musical power is also contingent upon the interaction between performative practice and political discourse. Romani musical performances mirror and reconstitute their identity politics—the constant navigation of webs of power through performative engagement with non-Roma.

## Cited Literature

Abu-Lughod, Lila
1986 Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ahmed, Sara
2004 The Cultural Politics of Emotion. New York: Routledge University Press.

And, Metin
1963 A History of Theatre and Popular Entertainment in Turkey. Ankara: Forum Yayınları.

1976 A Pictorial History of Turkish Dancing. Ankara: Dost Yayınları.

Appadurai, Arjun
1996 Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

2001 Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination. *In* Globalization. A. Appadurai, ed. Pp. 1-21. Durham: Duke University Press.

2006 Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger. Durham: Duke University Press.

Astuti, Rita
1995 "The Vezo are not a kind of people": identity, difference, and "ethnicity" among a fishing people of western Madagascar. American Ethnologist 22(3):464-482.

Aubert, Laurent
2007 The Music of the Other: New Challenges for Ethnomusicology in a Global Age. Burlington: Ashgate Publishers.

Avruch, Kevin
2003 Culture and Ethnic Conflict in the New World Disorder. *In* Race and Ethnicity: Comparative and Theoretical Approaches. J. Stone and D. Rutledge, eds. Pp. 72-82. Malden: Blackwell Publishers.

Baker, Catherine
2010 Sounds of the Borderland: Popular Music, War, and Nationalism in Croatia Since 1991. Burlington: Ashgate Publishers.

Bakić-Hayden, Milica
1995 Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of the Former Yugoslavia. Slavic Review 54(4): 917-931.

Banks, Marcus
1996 Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions. New York: Routledge Publishers.

Barany, Zoltan
1994 Living on the Edge: The East European Roma in Postcommunist Politics. Slavic Review 53(2):321-344.

2005 Ethnic Mobilization in the Postcommunist Context: Albanians in Macedonia and the East European Roma. *In* Ethnic Politics After Communism. Z. Barany and R.G. Moser, eds, Vol. 78-107. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Barth, Fredrik
1969 Introduction. *In* Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference. F. Barth, ed. Pp. 9-38. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Bartok, Bela
1947 Gypsy Music or Hungarian Music? The Musical Quarterly 33(2):240-57.

Bauman, Richard
1975 Verbal Art as Performance. American Anthropologist 77(2):290-311.

1992 Performance. *In* Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments: A Communications-centered Handbook. R. Bauman, ed. Pp. 41-49. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bauman, Richard, and Charles L. Briggs
1990 Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life. Annual Review of Anthropology 19:59-88.

Bax, Mart
2000 Barbarization in a Bosnian Pilgrimage Center. *In* Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History. J.M. Halpern and D.A. Kideckel, eds. Pp. 19-38. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Becker, Judith
2004 Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Beissinger, Margaret
2001 Occupation and Ethnicity: Constructing Identity Among Professional Romani (Gypsy) Musicians in Romania. Slavic Review 60(1):24-49.

2007 *Muzica Orientala*: Identity and Popular Culture in Postcommunist Romania. *In* Balkan Popular Culture and the Ottoman Ecumene: Music, Image, and Regional Political Discourses. D. Buchanan, ed. Pp 95-142. Lanham: Durham Press.

Berthome, Francoise, and Michael Houseman
2010 Ritual and Emotions: Moving Relations, Patterned Effusions. Religion and Society: Advances in Research 1:57-75.

Bissell, William Cunningham
2005 Engaging Colonial Nostalgia. Cultural Anthropology 20(2):215-248.

Bloch, Alexia
2005 Longing for the *Kollektiv*: Gender, Power, and Residential Schools in Central Siberia. Cultural Anthropology 20(4):534-569.

Blumi, Isa
2011 Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800-1912. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

2013 Ottoman Refugees, 1878-1939: Migration in a Post-Imperial World. New York: Bloomsbury.

Bookman, Milica Z.
2003 "The Economic Aspects of Yugoslavia's Disintegration". *In* Yugoslavia Unraveled: Sovereignty, Self-Determination, Intervention. R.C. Thomas, ed. Pp. 117-138. New York: Lexington Books.

Bordieu, Pierre
1977 Outline of a Theory of Practice. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Boscoboinik, Andrea
2006 Becoming Rom: Ethnic Development among Roma Communities in Macedonia and Bulgaria. *In* Ethnic Identity: Problems and Prospects for the Twenty-First Century. L. Romanucci-Ross, G.A. De-Vos, and T. Tsuda, eds. Pp. 295-310. New York: Altamira Press.

Bougarel, Xavier
2007 Death and the Nationalist: Martyrdom, War Memory, and Veteran Identity among Bosnian Muslims. *In* The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories, and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society. X. Bougarel, E. Helms, and G. Duijzings, eds. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company.

Bovin, Mette
1998 Nomadic Performance- peculiar culture? 'Exotic' ethnic performances of WoDaaBe nomads of Niger. *In* Recasting Ritual: performance, media, identity. F. Hughes-Freeland and M.M. Crain, eds. Pp. 93-112. New York: Routledge.

Bowman, Glen
1994 Xenophobia, Fantasy, and the Nation: The Logic of Ethnic Violence in the Former Yugoslavia. *In* The Anthropology of Europe: Identities and Boundaries in

Conflict. V.A. Goddard, J.R. Llobera, and C. Shore, eds. Pp. 143-171. Providence: Berg Publishers Ltd.

Boym, Svetlana
2001 The Future of Nostalgia. New York: Basic Books.

Brandl, Rudolf M.
1996 The "Yiftoi" and the Music of Greece: Role and Function. The World of Music 38(1):7-32.

Brenner, Neil
1999 Beyond State-Centrism? Space, Territoriality, and Geographical Scale in Globalization Studies. Theory and Society 28(1):39-78.

Brodkin, Karen
1998 How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Burić, Fedja
2011 Dwelling on the Ruins of Socialist Yugoslavia: Being Bosnian by Remembering Tito. *In* Post-Communist Nostalgia. M. Todorova and Z. Gille, eds. Pp. 227-243. New York: Bergahn Books.

Buchanan, Donna
2006 Performing Democracy: Bulgarian Music and Musicians in Transition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

2007 Bulgarian Ethnopop along the Old *Via Militaris*: Ottomanism, Orientalism, or Balkan Cosmopolitanism? *In* Balkan Popular Culture and the Ottoman Ecumene: Music, Image, and Regional Political Discourses. D. Buchanan, ed. Pp 225-268. Lanham: Durham Press.

2011 Sonic Nostalgia: Music, Memory, and Mythography in Bulgaria, 1990—2005. *In* Post-Communist Nostalgia. M. Todorova and Z. Gille, eds. Pp. 129-154. New York: Bergahn Books.

Bukowski, Charles
1987 Politics and the Prospects for Economic Reform in Yugoslavia. East European Societies and Politics 94(2):94-114.

Bukvić, D.
2011 Vranjanci prizivaju investitore [Vranje invites investors]. *In* Politika. Vranje.

Burawoy, Michael, and Katherine Verdery
1999 Introduction. *In* Uncertain Transition: Ethnographics of Change in the Postsocialist World. M. Burawoy and K. Verdery, eds. Pp. 1-17. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Butler, Judith
1988 Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay In Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. Theatre Journal 40(4):519-533.

2002[1990] Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York. Routledge.

2011[1993] Bodies That Matter: on the discursive limits of "sex". New York: Routledge.

Campbell, John R.
1999 Culture, Social Organization, and Asian Identity: Difference in Urban East Africa. *In* Identity and Affect: Experiences of Identity in a Globalising World. J.R. Campbell and A. Rew, eds. Pp. 169-198. Sterling: Pluto Press.

Caraveli, Anna
1985 The Symbolic Village: Community Born in Performance. The Journal of American Folklore 98(389):259-186.

Causey, Andrew
2003 Hard Bargaining in Sumatra: Western Travelers and Toba Bataks in the Marketplace of Souvenirs. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Chavez, Leo R.
2007 Culture Change and Cultural Reproduction: Lessons from Research on Transnational Migration. *In* Globalization and Change in Fifteen Cultures: Born in One World, Living in Another. G. Spindler and J.E. Stockard, eds. Belmont: Thomson-Wadsworth.

Clammer, John
1986 Ethnicity and the Classification of Social Differences in Plural Societies: A Perspective from Singapore. *In* Ethnic Identities and Prejudices: Perspectives from the Third World. A.C. Paranjpe, ed. Pp. 9-23. Leiden: E.J. Brill Publishers.

Clark, Bruce
2006 Twice A Stranger: The Mass Expulsions that Forged Modern Greece and Turkey. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Cooper, Frederick, and Rogers Brubaker
2005 Identity. *In* Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History. F. Cooper, ed. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Cornell, Stephen, and Douglas Hartmann
1998 Mapping the Terrain: Definitions. *In* Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World. S. Cornell and D. Hartmann, eds. Pp. 15-38. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.

Cowan, Jane K.
1990 Dance and the Body Politic in Northern Greece. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Creed, Gerald
1998 Domesticating Revolution: From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

2011 Strange Bedfellows: Socialist Nostalgia and Neoliberalism in Bulgaria. *In* Post-Communist Nostalgia. M. Todorova and Z. Gille, eds. Pp. 29-45. New York: Bergahn Books.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly
1990 Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience. New York: Harper and Row.

Csordas, Thomas J.
1993 Somatic Modes of Attention. Cultural Anthropology 8(2):135-156.

1994 Introduction: The Body as Representation and Being-In-The-World. *In* Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self. T. J. Csordas, ed. Pp. 1-24. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2011 Embodiment: Agency, Sexual Difference, and Illness. *In* A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment. F.E. Mascia-Lees, ed. Pp. 137-156.

Cunningham, Hilary
1999 The Ethnography of Transnational Social Activism: Understanding the Global as Local Practice. American Ethnologist 26(3):583-604.

Čvoro, Uroš
2014 Turbo Folk Music and Cultural Representations of National Identity in Former Yugoslavia. Burlington: Ashgate Publishers.

Davies, Charlotte Aull
1998 "A oes heddwch?" Contesting meanings and identities in the Welsh National Eisteddfod. *In* Ritual, Performance, Media. F. Hughes-Freeland, ed. Pp. 141-159. New York: Routledge.

deChaine, D. Robert
2002 Affect and Embodied Understanding in Musical Experience. Text and Performance Quarterly 22(2):79-98.

Delaney, Carol
1991 The Seed and the Soil: Gender and Cosmology in Turkish Village Society. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Diawara, Manthia
1998 Toward a Regional Imagery in Africa. *In* The Cultures of Globalization. F. Jameson and M. Miyoshi, eds. Pp. 103-124. Durham: Duke University Press.

Djordjević, Tihomir
1984 [1933] Cigani i muzika u Srbiji [Gypsies and Music in Serbia]. *In* Naš narodni život [Our folk life] Vol. 3. Beograd: Prosveta.

Dowling, Emma
2007 Producing the Dining Experience: Measure, Subjectivity, and the Affective Worker. Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization 7(1):117-132.

Duijzings, Ger
1997 The Making of Egyptians in Kosovo and Macedonia. *In* The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness. C. Govers and H. Vermeulen, eds. Pp. 194-222. New York: St. Martin's Press.

2000 Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo. New York: Columbia University Press.

Dumnić, Marija
2013 The Creation of Folk Music Program on Radio Belgrade Before World War Two: Editorial Policies and Performing Ensembles. Muzikologija 14:9-29.

Dzihić, Vedran, and Dieter Segert
2012 Lessons from "Post-Yugoslav" Democratization: Functional Problems of Stateness and the Limits of Democracy. East European Societies and Politics 26(2):239-253.

Ellis, Burcu Akan
2003 Shadow Genealogies: Memory and Identity Among Urban Muslims in Macedonia. Boulder: East European Monographs.

Elwert, Georg
1997 Boundaries, Cohesion, and Switching: On We-Groups in Ethnic National and Religious Forms. *In* Rethinking Nationalism and Ethnicity: The Struggle for Meaning and Order in Europe. H.-R. Wicker, ed. Pp. 251-272. New York: Berg.

European Roma Rights Centre
2003 Segregated Education for Romani Children in Serbia and Montenegro. Published May 10. URL: http://www.errc.org/article/segregated-education-for-romani-children-in-serbia-and-montenegro/1427 (Accessed June 1 2016).

Feld, Steven
1982 Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

2001 A Sweet Lullaby for World Music. *In* Globalization. A. Appadurai, ed. Pp. 189-216. Durham: Duke University Press.

Fenton, Steve
2003 Ethnicity. Malden: Polity Press.

Friedman, Jonathan
1998 Transnationalization, Socio-Political Disorder, and Ethnification as Expressions of Declining Global Hegemony. International Political Science Review 19(3):233-250.

Gerolymatos, André
2002 The Balkan Wars: Conquest, Revolution, and Retribution from the Ottoman Era to the Twentieth Century and Beyond. New York: Basic Books.

Giddens, Anthony
1991 Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Gille, Zsuzsa
2011 Postscript. *In* Post-Communist Nostalgia. M. Todorova and Z. Gille, eds. Pp. 278-289. New York: Bergahn Books.

Gladney, Dru C.
2007 Cultural Identity in China: The Rising Politics of Ethnic Difference. *In* Globalization and Change in Fifteen Cultures: Born in One World, Living in Another. G. Spindler and J.E. Stockard, eds. Pp. 53-72. Belmont: Thomson-Wadsworth.

Gligorijević, Jelena
2014 World music festivals and tourism: a case study of Serbia's Guča trumpet festival. International Journal of Cultural Policy 20(2):139-54.

Goffman, Erving
1959 The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. New York: Doubleday Publishers.

Golemović, Dimitrije
1997 Mesto i uloga limenih duvačkih orkestara u narodnoj muzičkoj praksi Srbije [The position and roles of brass bands in folk music practices of Serbia]. *In* Etnomuzikološki odgledi [Ethnomusicological perspectives]. Pp. 211-226. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek.

2002 Šta i kako [What and how]. *In* Dragačevski trubač [Dragačevo Trumpeter]. Pp. 12-13.

Gordy, Eric D.
1999 The Culture of Power in Serbia: Nationalism and the Destruction of Alternatives. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Graan, Andrew
2010 On the Politics of "Imidž": European Integration and the Trials of Recognition in Postconflict Macedonia. Slavic Review 69(4):835-858.

2013 Counterfeiting the Nation? Skopje 2014 and the Politics of Nation Branding in Macedonia. Cultural Anthropology 28(1):161-179.

Greenberg, Jessica
2014 After the Revolution: Youth, Democracy, and the Politics of Disappointment in Serbia. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Gregg, Melissa, and Gregory J. Seigworth
2010 An Inventory of Shimmers. *In* The Affect Theory Reader. M. Gregg and G.J. Seigworth, eds. Pp. 1-28. Durham: Duke University Press.

Grossberg, Lawrence
1984 Another Boring Day in Paradise: Rock and Roll and the Empowerment of Everyday Life. Popular Music 4:225-258.

Guss, David M.
2000 The Festive State: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism as Cultural Performance. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Guy, Will
2001 Romani identity and post-Communist policy. *In* Between past and future: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe. W. Guy, ed. Pp. 3-32. Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press.

Hadži Vasiljević, Jovan
1909 Južna Stara Srbija, istorijska, etnografska, i politička istraživanja: Knjiga 1, Kumanovska oblast [Southern Old Serbia, a historical, ethnographic, and political study: Book 1, The Kumanovo District]. Beograd: Nova štamparija Davidović.

1932 Vranjska gradska nošnja ranijih godina [Vranje urban attire in earlier years]. Glasnik etnografskog muzeja u Beogradu [Bulletin of the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade] 7:6-31.

Hammel, Eugene A.
2000 Lessons from the Yugoslav Labyrinth. *In* Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History. J.M. Halpern and D.A. Kideckel, eds. Pp. 19-38. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Hancock, Ian
1987 The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution. Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers.

Hardt, Michael
1999 Affective Labor. Boundary 2 26(2):89-100.

Hardt, Michael, and Antontio Negri
2001 Empire. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Harvey, David
2005 A Brief History of Neoliberalism. New York: Oxford University Press.

2006 Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development. New York: Verso Books.

Hayden, Robert M.
1996 Imagined Communities and Real Victims: Self-Determination and Ethnic Cleansing in Yugoslavia. American Ethnologist 23(4):783-801.

2000 Muslims as "Others" in Serbian and Croatian Politics. *In* Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History. J.M. Halpern and D.A. Kideckel, eds. Pp. 116-124. University Park: Pennsylvania State University.

Hemmings, Clare
2005 Invoking Affect: Cultural theory and the ontological turn. Cultural Studies 19(5):548-567.

Hervik, Peter
2003 Mayan people within and beyond boundaries: social categories and lived identity in Yucatan. New York: Routledge.

Herzfeld, Michael
1985 The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

2005 Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation State. New York: Routledge Press.

Hofman, Ana
2010 Kafana Singers: Popular Music, Gender and Subjectivity in the Cultural Space of Socialist Yugoslavia. Narodna umjetnost [Folk Art] 47(1):141-161.

2012 Socijalistička ženskost na sceni: rodne politike u muzičkim praksama jugoistočne Srbije [Socialist femininity on stage: gender politics in the musical practices of southeastern Serbia]. Beograd: Evoluta.

2014 Music Heritage in Relocation: The "Guča na Krasu" Festival. Dve domovini : razprave o izseljenstvu 39:73-87.

2015 Music (as) Labour: Professional Musicianship, Affective Labour and Gender in Socialist Yugoslavia. Ethnomusicology Forum.

Hoffman, George W., and Fred Warner Neal
1962 Yugoslavia and the New Communism. New York: Twentieth Century Fund.

Hutnyk, John
2000 Critique of Exotica: Music, Politics and the Culture Industry. Sterling: Pluto Press.

Iordanova, Dina
2008 Welcome Pictures, Unwanted Bodies: "Gypsy" Representations in New Europe's Cinema. *In* "Gypsies" in European Literature and Culture. V. Glajar and D. Radulescu, eds. Pp. 235-240. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jagodić, Miloš
1998 The Emigration of Muslims from the New Serbian Regions 1877/1878. Balkanologie 2(2):2-17.

Janković, Ljubica and Danica Janković
1951 Gnjilanci i Gnjilanske Narodne Igre: opšti pregled na narodnu kulturu, stanovnike, istoriske prilike i narodni život u gnjilanskoj oblasti [People and Folk Dances from Gnjilane: a general overview of folk culture, population, historical events, and folk life in the Gnjilane region]. *In* Narodne Igre [Folk Dances], br. 6. Pp. 47-142. Beograd: Prosveta.

Jenkins, Richard
2003 Rethinking Ethnicity: Identity, Categorization, and Power. *In* Race and Ethnicity: Comparative and Theoretical Approaches. J. Stone and D. Rutledge, eds. Pp. 59-71. Malden: Blackwell Publishers.

Kaminsky, David
2014 "Just Exotic Enough:" Swedish Chamber Klezmer as Postnational World Music and Mid-East Proxy. Ethnomusicology 58(2): 254-277.

2015 Introduction: The New Old Europe Sound. Ethnomusicology Forum 24(2): 143-158.

Kaneva, Nadia
2011 Nation-Branding in Post-Communist Europe: Identities, Markets, and Democracy. *In* Branding Post-Communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the New Europe. N. Kaneva, ed. Pp. 3-22. New York: Routledge.

Kapchan, Deborah
2007 Traveling Spirit Masters: Moroccan Gnawa Trance and Music in the Global Marketplace. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Kapferer, Bruce
1979 Emotion and Feeling in Sinhalese Healing Rites. Social Analysis 1(1):153-176.

1984 The Ritual Process and the Problem of Reflexivity in Sinhalese Demon Exercises. *In* Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance. J.J. MacAloon, ed. Pp. 179-207. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

Karakasidou, Anastasia
1997 Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Karpat, Kemal H.
1985 The Ethnicity Problem in a Multi-Ethnic Anational State: Continuity and Recasting of Ethnic Identity in the Ottoman State. *In* Ethnic Groups and the State. P. Brass, ed. Pp. 94-114. London: Croom Helm Publishers.

Kearney, M.
1995 The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism". Annual Review of Anthropology 24:547-565.

Keil, Charles, and Angeliki Vellou-Keil
2002 Bright Balkan Morning: Romani Lives and the Power of Music in Greek Macedonia. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Kenrick, Douglas
2001 Former Yugoslavia: a patchwork of destinies. *In* Between past and future: the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe. W. Guy, ed. Pp. 405-425. Hertfordshire: The University of Hertfordshire Press.

Kligman, Gail
1988 The Wedding of the Dead: Ritual, Poetics, and Popular Culture in Transylvania. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Korkman, Zeynep Kurtulus
2015 Feeling Labor: Commercial Divination and Commodified Intimacy in Turkey. Gender and Society 29(2):195-218.

Kratz, Corinne A.
1994 Affecting Performance: Meaning, Movement, and Experience in Okiek Women's Initiation. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Krstić, Marija
2012 All Roads Lead to Guča: Modes of Representing Serbia and Serbs during the Guča Trumpet Festival. Etnoantropološki problemi 7(2):447-70.

Kuligowski, Waldemar
2011 Nacionalizam običnih ljudi: Etnicizacija muzičke tradicije na primeru Sabora u Guči [Nationalism of Regular People: The Ethnicization of Muzical Tradition in the Case of the Guča Festival]. Antropologija 11(1):67-84.

Ladanyi, Janos, and Ivan Szelenyi
2006 Patterns of Exclusion: Constructing Gypsy Ethnicity and the Making of an Underclass in Transitional Societies in Europe. Boulder: East European Monographs.

Lazić, Mladen, and Laslo Sekelj
1997 Privatisation in Yugoslavia. Europe-Asia Studies 49(6):1057-1070.

Liechty, Mark
2003 Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lory, Bernard
2015 The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans. *In* Entangled Histories of the Balkans, vol. 3: Shared Pasts, Disputed Legacies. R. Daskalov and A. Vezenkov, eds. Leided: Brill.

Lukić-Krstanović, Miroslava
2006 Politika trubaštva- folklor u prostoru nacionalne moći [The Politics of Brass Music: Folklore in the Context of National Power]. Zbornik radova Etnografskog instituta SANU 22:187-205.

Lyon, M.L., and J.M. Barbalet
1994 Society's Body: emotion and the "somatization" of social theory. *In* Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self. T. J. Csordas, ed. Pp. 48-66. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mallon, Florencia
1996 Constructing Mestizaje in Latin America: Authenticity, Marginality, and Gender in the Claiming of Ethnic Identities. Journal of Latin American Anthropology 2(1):170-181.

Malvinni, David
2004 The Gypsy Caravan: From Real Roma to Imaginary Gypsies in Western Music and Film. New York: Routledge.

MacMillen, Ian
2011 From The Center in the Middle: Working Tambura Bands and the Construction of the In-Between in Croatia and its Intimates. Current Musicology 91: 87-122.

Malcolm, Noel
1998 Kosovo: A Short History. New York: New York University Press.

Maners, Lynn D.
2006 Utopia, Eutopia, and E.U.-topia: Performance and Memory in Former Yugoslavia. *In* Dancing From Past to Present: Nation, Culture, Identities. T.J. Buckland, ed. Pp. 75-98. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Marković, Aleksandra
2008a Goran Bregović, the Balkan Music Composer. Ethnologia Balkanica 12:9-23.

2008b "Guča is Guča": Ideological Transformations of a Music Festival. *In* Feste, Feiern, Rituale im östlichen Europa. Studien zur sozialistischen und postsozialistischen Festkultur. K. Roth, ed. Pp. 77-96. Zürich: Lit Verlag.

2009 Sampling Artists: Gypsy Images in Goran Bregović's Music. *In* Voices of the Weak: Music and Minorities. Z. Jurkova and L. Bidgood, eds. Pp. 108-121. Prague: NGO Slovo21.

2013 Sounding Stereotypes: Construction of Place and Reproduction of Metaphors in the Music of Goran Bregović. Ph.D. diss., University of Amsterdam.

Marković, Alexander
2012 Brass on the Move: Economic Crisis and Professional Mobility among Romani Musicians in Vranje. *In* Labour Migrations in the Balkans. B. Sikimić, P. Hristov, and B. Golubović, eds. Pp. 49-78. Berlin: Verlag Otto Sagner.

2013 Beating the Drum to See Poverty: Experiencing Music as Labor among Roma in Vranje, Serbia. "Sounding Board," Ethnomusicology Review. April 8th. URL: http://www.ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/content/beating-drum-see-poverty-experiencing-music-labor-among-roma-vranje-serbia-0.

2015 'So That We Look More Gypsy': Strategic Performances and Ambivalent Discourses of Romani Brass for the World Music Scene. Ethnomusicology Forum 24(2):260-285.

Marushiakova, Elena, and Vesselin Popov
2001 Bulgaria: ethnic diversity- a common struggle for equality. *In* Between past and future: the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe. W. Guy, ed. Pp. 370-388. Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press.

Massumi, Brian
1995 The Autonomy of Affect. Cultural Critique 31(2):83-110.

Mazower, Mark
2002 The Balkans: A Short History. New York: The Modern Library.

Mazzarella, William
2009 Affect: What is it Good for? *In* Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization. S. Dube, ed. New York: Routledge.

McKenzie, Jon
1998 Genre Trouble: (The) Butler Did It. *In* The Ends of Performance. P.Phelan and J. Lane, eds. Pp. 217-235. New York: New York University Press.

2001 The Efficacy of Cultural Performance. *In* Perform Or Else: From Discipline to Performance. J. Mckenzie, ed. Pp. 30-53. New York: Routledge.

Mijatović, Branislava
2003 Music and Politics in Serbia (1989-2000). Ph.D., University of California-Los Angeles.

2011 The Musical Re-branding of Serbia: Srbija Sounds Global, Guca, and Exit. *In* Branding Post-communist Nations: Marketizing National Identities in the New Europe. N. Kaneva, ed. Pp. 213-235. New York: Routledge.

Milovanović, Krsto, and Dragan Babić
2003 Srpska Truba [The Serbian Trumpet]. Beograd: Narodno Delo.

Momčilović, Milan
2011 Tranzicija oduvala velike sisteme [The transition has blown away large systems]. *In* Politika. Vranje.

Morcom, Anna
2013 Illicit Worlds of Indian Dance: Cultures of Exclusion. New York: Oxford University Press.

Motfazi-Haller, Pnina
1998 Beyond Textual Analysis: Practice, Interacting Discourses, and the Experience of Distinction in Botswana. Cultural Anthropology 13(4):522-547.

Nagata, Judith
1981 In Defense of Ethnic Boundaries: The Changing Myths and Charters of Malay Identities. *In* Ethnic Change. C.F. Keyes, ed. Pp. 87-116. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Nagel, Joane
1994 Constructing ethnicity: Creating and recreating ethnic identity and culture. Social Problems 41:152-176.

Navaro-Yashin, Yael
2009 Affective spaces, melancholic objects: ruination and the production of anthropological knowledge. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 15:1-18.

Neuburger, Mary
2004 The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Nieuwkerk, Karin van
1995 "A Trade Like Any Other": Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Oldenburg, Veena Talwar
1990 Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India. Feminist Studies 16(2): 259-287.

Ong, Aihwa
1999 Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality. Durham: Duke University.

Open Society Institute
2010 Roma Children in "Special Education" in Serbia: overrepresentation, underachievement, and impact on life. New York: Open Society Institute.

Ortner, Sherry
1995 Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal. Comparative Studies in Society and History 37(1): 173-193.

Palmer, Gary B., and William R. Jankowiak
1996 Performance and Imagination: Toward an Anthropology of the Spectacular and the Mundane. Cultural Anthropology 11(2):225-258.

Papataxiarchis, Euthymios
1991 Friends of the Heart: Male Commensal Solidarity, Gender, and Kinship in Aegean Greece. *In* Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Parla, Ayse
2009 Remembering across the border: Postsocialist nostalgia among Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria. American Ethnologist 36(4):750-767.

Patterson, Patrick Hyder
2011 Bought and Sold: Living and Losing the Good Life in Socialist Yugoslavia. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Peiterse, Jan N.
2004 Ethnicities and Multiculturalisms: politics of boundaries. *In* Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority Rights. S. May, T. Modood, and J. Squires, eds. Pp. 27-49. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Petrović, Tanja
2011 Nostalgia for the JNA? Remembering the Army in the Former Yugoslavia. *In* Post-Communist Nostalgia. M. Todorova and Z. Gille, eds. Pp. 61-81. New York: Bergahn Books.

Pettan, Svanibor
2002 Rom Musicians in Kosovo: Interaction and Creativity. Budapest: Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy for Sciences.

2010 Lambada na Kosovu: etnomuzikološki ogledi[Lambada in Kosovo: ethnomusicological perspectives]. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek.

Peycheva, Lozanka, and Ventsislav Dimov
2004 The Gypsy Musicians and Gypsy Musicians' Market in Bulgaria. Difference and Integration 4(1): 189-205.

Pogoff, Adam
2013 Brasslands. Pp. 84 minutes. USA.

Potuoğlu-Cook, Öykü
2006 Beyond the Glitter: Belly Dance and Neoliberal Gentrification in Istanbul. Cultural Anthropology 21(4):633-660.

2007 Sweat, Power, and Art: Situating Bellydancers and Musicians in Contemporary Istanbul. Music and Anthropology: Journal of Musical Anthropology of the Mediterranean 11(Winter).

Poulton, Hugh
1993 The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict. London: Minority Rights Publications.

Pulay, Gergo
2014 Staging Ethnicity: Cultural Politics and Musical Practices of Roma Performers in Budapest. Acta Ethnographica Hungarica 59(1): 3-24.

Quintero, Gilbert
2002 Nostalgia and Degeneration: The Moral Economy of Drinking in Navajo Society. Medical Anthropology Quarterly 16(1):3-21.

Qureshi, Regula Burckhardt
2002 Modes of Production and Musical Production: Is Hindustani Music Feudal? *In* Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, and Politics. R.B. Qureshi, ed. Pp. 81-105. New York: Routledge Press.

Rasmussen, Ljerka V.
2002 Newly Composed Folk Music of Yugoslavia. New York: Routledge.

2007 Bosnian and Serbian Popular Music in the 1990s: Divergent Paths, Conflicting Meanings, and Shared Sentiments. *In* Balkan Popular Culture and the Ottoman Ecumene: Music, Image, and Regional Political Discourses. D. Buchanan, ed. Pp 57-93. Lanham: Durham Press.

Reineck, Janet
2000 Poised for War: Kosova's Quiet Siege. *In* Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History. J.M. Halpern and D.A. Kideckel, eds. Pp. 19-38. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Rice, Timothy
1982 The Surla and Tapan Tradition in Yugoslav Macedonia. The Galpin Society Journal 35:122-137.

2002 Bulgaria or Chalgaria: The Attenuation of Bulgarian Nationalism in a Mass-Mediated Popular Music. Yearbook for Traditional Music 34:25-46.

Roma Education Fund
2007 Advancing Education of Roma in Serbia: Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions. Budapest: Roma Education Fund.

Romas-Zayas, Ana Yolanda
2011 Learning Affect/Embodying Race. *In* A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment. F.E. Mascia-Lees, ed. Pp. 24-45.

Roosens, Eugeen E.
1989 Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Rosaldo, Renato
1989 Imperialist Nostalgia. Representations 26(Spring):107-122.

Rouget, Gilbert
1985 Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations Between Music and Possession. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Salamone, Frank A.
1986 Colonialism and the Emergence of Fulani Identity. *In* Ethnic Identities and Prejudices: Perspectives from the Third World. A.C. Paranjpe, ed. Pp. 61-70. Leiden: E.J. Brill Publishers.

Schieffelin, Edward L.
1998 Problematizing Performance. *In* Ritual, Performance, Media. F. Hughes-Freeland, ed. Pp. 194-207. New York: Routledge.

1985 Performance and the Cultural Construction of Reality. American Anthropologist 12(4):707-724.

Schwandner-Sievers, Stephanie
2011 Invisible—Inaudible: Albanian Memories of Socialism after the War in Kosovo. *In* Post-Communist Nostalgia. M. Todorova and Z. Gille, eds. Pp. 96-112. New York: Bergahn Books.

Scott, James C.
1985 Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Seeman, Sonia Tamar
1990 Music in the Service of Prestation: The Case of the Rom of Skopje, Macedonia. M.A., University of Washington.

1998. Notes to *Sulukule: Rom Music of Istanbul*. Traditional Crossroads, CD 4289.

2002 "You're Roman!" Music and Identity in Turkish Roman Communities. Dissertation, University of California-Los Angeles.

2012 Macedonian *Čalgija*: A Musical Refashioning of National Identity. Ethnomusicology Forum 21(3): 295-326.

Seymour, Susan
2006 Resistance. Anthropological Theory 6(3): 303-321.

Silverman, Carol
1996 Music and Marginality: *Roma* (Gypsies) of Bulgaria and Macedonia. *In* Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe. M. Slobin, ed. Pp. 231-253. Durham: Duke University Press.

2003 The Gender of the Profession: Music, Dance, and Reputation Among Balkan Muslim Rom Women. *In* Music and Gender: Perspectives from the Mediterranean. T. Magrini, ed. Pp. 119-145. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

2007 Trafficking in the Exotic with "Gypsy" Music: Balkan Roma, Cosmopolitanism, and "World Music" Festivals. *In* Balkan Popular Culture and the Ottoman Ecumene: Music, Image, and Regional Political Discourse. D. A. Buchanan, ed. Pp. 335-361. Landham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

2011 Music, Emotion, and the "Other": Balkan Roma and the Negotiation of Exoticism. *In* Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe. M. Steinberg and V. Sobol, eds. Pp. 224-247. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.

2012 Romani Routes: Cultural Politics & Romani Music in Diaspora. New York: Oxford University Press.

2013 Global Balkan Gypsy Music: Issues of Migration, Appropriation, and Representation. *In* The Globalization of Musics in Transit: Music Migration and Tourism. S. Kruger and R. Trandafoiu, eds. Pp. 185-208. New York: Routledge.

2015 Gypsy/Klezmer Dialectics: Jewish and Romani Traces and Erasures in Contemporary European World Music. Ethnomusicology Forum 24(2): 159-180.

Simić, Andrei
1973 The Peasant Urbanites: A Study of Rural-Urban Mobility in Serbia. New York: Seminar Press.

2000 Nationalism as a Folk Ideology: The Case of Former Yugoslavia. *In* Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History. J.M. Halpern and D.A. Kideckel, eds. Pp. 19-38. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Sithole, Masipula
1986 The Salience of Ethnicity in African Politics: The Case of Zimbabwe. *In* Ethnic Identities and Prejudices: Perspectives from the Third World. A.C. Paranjpe, ed. Pp. 49-60. Leiden: E. J. Brill Publishers.

Šivić, Urša
2013 Serbian Brass Bands in Slovenia as an Example of "Our" and "Their" Music. *In* Trapped in Folklore? Studies in Music and Dance Tradition and Their Contemporary Transformations. D. Kunej and U. Šivić, eds. Pp. 63-79. Musikethnologie/Ethnomusicology. Berlin: LIT Verlag.

Song, Miri
2003 Choosing Ethnic Identity. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty
1988 Can the Subaltern Speak? *In* Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds. Pp. 271-313.

Stanković, Borisav
2005 [1902] Koštana: komad iz vranjskog života s pesmama [Koštana: a piece of Vranje's cultural life with songs]. Beograd: JPJ.

Stavrianos, L. S.
2000 The Balkans Since 1453. New York: NYU Press.

Stewart, Kathleen
2007 Ordinary Affects. Durham: Duke University Press.

Stewart, Michael
1997 The Time of the Gypsies. Boulder: Westview Press.

2013 Populism, Roma, and the European Politics of Cultural Difference. *In* The Gypsy 'Menace': Populism and the new Anti-Gypsy Politics. M. Stewart, ed. Pp. 3-24. New York: Columbia University Press.

Stojić, Nika Nikola, et al.
2006 Trubačka budilica od Guče do večnosti [Wakened by the trumpet from Guča to eternity]. Čačak: Svetlost.

Stokes, Gale
1990 Politics as Development: the emergence of political parties in nineteenth century Serbia. Durham: Duke University Press.

Stokes, Martin
1994 Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music. *In* Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place. M. Stokes, ed. Pp. 1-27. Providence: Berg Publishers.

2002 Marx, Money, and Musicians. *In* Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, and Politics. R.B. Qureshi, ed. Pp. 139-163. New York: Routledge Press.

Sugarman, Jane C.
1997 Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity at Prespa Albanian Weddings. Chicago: University of Chicago.

2003 Those "Other Women": Dance and Femininity Among Prespa Albanians. *In* Music and Gender: Perspectives from the Mediterranean. T. Magrini, ed. Pp. 87-118. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tanjug
2012 Nezadovoljni trubači prave novi festival? [Unsatisfied brass musicians to make a new festival?]. *In* RTV News. Belgrade.

Taylor, Timothy D.
2007 Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World. Durham: Duke University Press.

2013 Identities and Tourisms in Globalized Neoliberal Capitalism. *In* The Globalization of Musics in Transit: Music Migration and Tourism. S. Kruger and R. Trandafoiu, eds. Pp. 318-325. New York: Routledge.

Theodosiou, Aspasia
2011 Authenticity, Ambiguity, Location: Gypsy Musicians on the Greek-Albanian Border. Saarbrucken: Verlag Dr Muller.

Thomas, Hylland E.
2004 Ethnicity, class, and the 1999 Mauritian riots. *In* Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority Rights. S. May, T. Modood, and J. Squires, eds. Pp. 78-95. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, Marie, and Ian Biddle
2013 Introduction: Somewhere between the signifying and the sublime. *In* Sound, Music, Affect. M. Thompson and I. Biddle, eds. Pp. 1-24. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Timotijević, Miloš
2005 Karneval u Guči: Sabor Trubača 1961-2004[Carnival in Guča: The Brass Festival 1961-2004]. Čačak: Legenda.

Tochka, Nicholas
2014 Composing on Commission: Entrepreneurship and the Changing Social Basis of Popular Music Collaboration in Postsocialist Tirana, Albania. Culture, Theory, and Critique 55(2): 194-211.

Todorova, Maria
1997 Imagining the Balkans. New York: Oxford University Press.

2011 Introduction: From Utopia to Propaganda and Back. *In* Post-Communist Nostalgia. M. Todorova and Z. Gille, eds. Pp. 1-13. New York: Bergahn Books.

Trifunoski, Jovan
1951 Kumanovsko-Preševska Crna Gora [The Kumanovo-Preševo Crna Gora Region]. Srpski Etnografski Zbornik, Srpska Akademija Nauka [Serbian Ethnographic Journal, Serbian Academy of Science]. Beograd: Izdavačko preduzeće Narodne Republike Srbije.

1960a O arbanaškom stanovništvo vranjske kotline [On the Albanian population in the Vranje Valley]. Etnološki pregled [Ethnological Review] 2:163-168.

1960b Cigani u vranjskoj kotlini [Gypsies in the Vranje Valley]. Etnološki pregled [Ethnological Review] 22-23:197-207.

Tsing, Anna L.
2005 Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connections. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Turner, Victor
1986 The Anthropology of Performance. New York: PAJ Publishers.

Van Wolputte, Steven
2004 Hang on to Yourself: Of Bodies, Embodiment, and Selves. Annual Review of Anthropology 33:251-269.

Verdery, Katherine
1996 What Was Socialism, And What Comes Next? Princeton: Princeton University Press.

1998 Transnationalism, Nationalism, Citizenship, and Property: Eastern Europe since 1989. American Ethnologist 25(2):291-306.

Vickers, Miranda
1998 Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo. New York: Columbia University Press.

Vološinov, V. N.
1973[1929] Marxism and the Philosophy of Language. New York: Seminar Press.

Vukanović, Tatomir
1978 Etnička istorija i kulturna baština Vranjskog gravitacionog područja u doba oslobodjenja od Turaka 1878 [Ethnic histories and cultural heritage of the greater Vranje region after its liberation from the Turks, 1878]. Vranje: Radnički Univerzitet.

1983 Romi (Cigani) u Jugoslaviji [Roma (Gypsies) in Yugoslavia]. Vranje: Nova Jugoslavija.

1987 Muzička Kultura u Starom Vranju [Musical Culture in Old Vranje]. Vranje: Nova Jugoslavija.

Waterman, Christopher Alan
1990 Juju: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Weeks, Kathi
2007 Life Within and Against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post-Fordist Politics. Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization 7(1):233-249.

Weine, Stevan M.
2000 Redefining *Merhamet* After a Historical Nightmare. *In* Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History. J.M. Halpern and D.A. Kideckel, eds. Pp. 19-38. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Weismantel, Mary
2001 Cholas and Pishtacos: Stories of Race and Sex in the Andes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

West, Paige, and James G. Carrier
2004 Ecotourism and Authenticity: Getting Away from It All?. Current Anthropology 45(4):483-498.

Williams, Raymond
1977 Marxism and Literature. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, Janelle L.
2005 Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.

Zakić, Mirjana, and Danka Lajić-Mihajlović
2012 (Re)Creating the (Folk Music) Tradition: The National Competition of Brass Orchestras at the Dragačevo Trumpet Festival. New Sound 39(1):58-79.

Zang, Theodore
1991 Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Gypsies of Bulgaria. New York: Human Rights Watch.

Zirbel, Katherine E.
2000 Playing It Both Ways: Local Egyptian Performers Between Regional Identity and International Markets. *In* Mass Mediations: New Approaches to Popular Culture in the Middle East and Beyond. W. Armbrust, ed. Pp. 32-60. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Zlatanović, Sanja
2003 Svadba: priča o identitetu [The Wedding: A Story About Identity]. Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU [Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts].

2006 Djorgovci: an ambivalent identity. Romani Studies 16(2):133-151.

2007 The Roma of Vranje: Kurban With Five Faces. *In* Kurban in the Balkans, B. Sikimić and P. Hristov, eds. Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Science and Arts.

2008a Romski kurban u pet slika[Romani kurban in five scenarios]. *In* Krvna Žrtva: Transformacije jednog rituala[Blood Sacrifice:transformations of a ritual]. B. Sikimic, ed. Pp. 67-98. Beograd: Balkanološki Institut SANU.

2008b The Literary Opus of Bora Stanković and the Construction of a Local Identity. Ethnologia Balkanica 12:147-166.

**Discography**

Boban i Marko Marković Orkestar. 2012. *Čovek i truba*. Belgrade: City Records. Compact Disc.

Ekrem and Gypsy Groovz. 2002. *Rivers of Happiness*. Munich: Enja. Compact disc.

Goran Bregović. 2007. *Karmen: With a Happy End.* France: Mercury. Compact Disc.

Goran Bregović. 2008. *Alkohol (Šljivovica & Champagne)*. Belgrade: Music Star Production. Compact Disc.

Gypsy Groovz Orchestra. 2009. *Night Train for Lovers and Thieves*. Hamburg: Network Medien GmbH. Compact disc.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

Copyright Permissions for Chapter 6

UIC

Alexander Markovic <amarko2@uic.edu>

# Author Permissions for Publication

**Alexander Markovic** <amarko2@uic.edu> Fri, Apr 7, 2017 at 3:19 PM
To: Enrico.Woida@biblion.de

Greetings Mr. Woida,

My name is Alexander Marković, and I am the author of a chapter, "Brass on the Move: Economic Crisis and Professional Mobility among Romani Musicians in Vranje, Serbia," published in the 2012 volume called "Labour Migrations in the Balkans" (ed. Sikimic, et al). I understand that Biblion Media is the new publishing entity for the Otto Sagner press, which published the volume at the time.

I am writing to ask about copyright and author permissions for my work. I am using a significantly changed version of my 2012 book chapter in my doctoral dissertation, and I need approval from the publisher to re-use the material. Can you please let me know what I need to do to obtain permission? I appreciate your help- please let me know as soon as possible!

Best,

Alex Marković

--
Alexander Marković, Ph.D.
Department of Anthropology
University of Illinois-Chicago

# Author Permissions for Use of Published Work in Dissertation

**Enrico Woida** <enrico.woida@biblion.de> Fri, Apr 21, 2017 at 2:26 AM
To: Alexander Markovic <amarko2@uic.edu>

Dear Mr Marković,

thank you for your Email.
Biblion Media authorise you to re-use your material from 2012.

Best regards,

Enrico Woida

--
Enrico Woida (Leitung Biblion Media)

Biblion Media GmbH
Geschäftshaus „Grauer Wolf“
Hainstraße 11
04109 Leipzig

Telefon: +49 341 26 82 08 87
Mobil: +49 176 23 56 15 02

enrico.woida@biblion.de
www.biblion.de
www.facebook.com/biblionmedia

Von: Alexander Markovic [mailto:amarko2@uic.edu]
Gesendet: Mittwoch, 19. April 2017 04:30
An: Enrico.Woida@biblion.de
Betreff: Author Permissions for Use of Published Work in Dissertation
[Quoted text hidden]

# APPENDICES

## Appendix B

Copyright Permissions for Chapter 7

Taylor & Francis Group

## PUBLISHING AGREEMENT

This is an agreement under which you, the author, assign copyright in your article to Informa UK Limited registered in England under no. 1072954 trading as Taylor & Francis Group, Registered Office: Mortimer House, 37–41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH (hereinafter 'Taylor & Francis') to allow us to publish your article, including abstract, tables, figures, data, and supplemental material hosted by us, as the Version of Record (VoR) in the Journal for the full period of copyright throughout the world, in all forms and all media, subject to the Terms & Conditions below.

Please read this agreement carefully, complete it, and return a copy to us by email, fax, or hard copy immediately, to avoid any delay in the publication of your article.

Postal address: Taylor & Francis Journals Production, 4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon OX14 4RN, UK

Fax: +44 (0) 207 017 6336 Email: T&Fproduction@tandf.co.uk

**ARTICLE TITLE:** **'So That We Look More Gypsy': Strategic Performances and Ambivalent Discourses of Romani Brass for the World Music Scene ('Article')**

**AUTHOR(S):** **Alexander Markovic**

**JOURNAL TITLE:** **Ethnomusicology Forum ('Journal')**

**Please complete and sign below.**

**Please tick *either* box A *or* box B, *BUT NOT BOTH***

- ☒ **A** I own copyright, and I am assigning copyright in my article to Taylor & Francis. In the case of a multi-authored article, I confirm that I am authorized by my co-authors to make this assignment as their agent on their behalf. The co-authors have agreed the priority of the assertion of copyright and the order of names in the publication of the article.
- ☐ **B** I am a civil servant or an employee of a Government, Government Agency, International Organization, or Commercial Corporation which is granting a non-exclusive licence to publish the article and which hereby recognizes Taylor & Francis as the sole licensee for the publication of the final, definitive, and citable Version of Record (VoR). In the case of a multi-authored article, I confirm that I am authorized by my co-authors to enter into this licence as their agent on their behalf. The co-authors have agreed the priority of the assertion of copyright and the order of names in the publication of the article.

**If you have ticked B, please indicate which of the statements below apply to you (and your co-authors):**

- ☐ I am an employee of the UK, Canadian, Australian, or another Commonwealth Realm Government, and the Crown retains and asserts copyright.
- ☐ I am a US Government (including NIH) employee and there is no copyright to transfer.
- ☐ I am a contractor of the US Government (includes NIH contractors) under contract number: _____
- ☐ I am an employee of the European Commission and copyright is asserted and retained by the European Union.
- ☐ I am an employee of the World Bank and copyright is asserted and retained by that entity.
- ☐ I am an employee of the Food & Agricultural Organization and copyright is asserted and retained by that entity.
- ☐ I am an employee of a Government, Agency, or International Organization and copyright is retained by that entity. Name of entity: _____
- ☐ I am employed and the copyright belongs to my employer (or is a 'work made for hire' under US law). Name of corporation: _____

## ASSIGNMENT OF COPYRIGHT

I hereby assign Taylor & Francis with full title guarantee all rights of copyright and related publishing rights in my article, in all forms and all media (whether known at this time or developed at any time in the future) throughout the world, in all languages, where our rights include but are not limited to the right to translate, create adaptations, extracts, or derivative works and to sublicense such rights, for the full term of copyright (including all renewals and extensions of that term), to take effect if and when the article is accepted for publication.

I confirm that I have read and accept the full Terms & Conditions below including my author warranties, and have read and agree to comply with the Journal's policies on **peer review** and **publishing ethics.**

Signed: ..... Name (Print): Alexander Marković

Position: Ph.D. Candidate Date: 5/6/15

**THIS FORM IS A LEGALLY BINDING DOCUMENT. WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU RETAIN A COPY OF IT AND CONSULT A LEGAL ADVISOR IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.**

1. Your article is defined as comprising (*a*) your Accepted Manuscript (AM) in its final form; (*b*) the final, definitive, and citable Version of Record (VoR) including the abstract, text, bibliography, and all accompanying tables, illustrations, data, and media; and (*c*) any supplemental material hosted by Taylor & Francis. This assignment and these Terms & Conditions constitute the entire agreement and the sole understanding between you and us ('agreement'); no amendment, addendum, or other communication will be taken into account when interpreting your and our rights and obligations under this agreement, unless amended by a written document signed by both of us.

## TAYLOR & FRANCIS' RESPONSIBILITIES

2. If deemed acceptable by the Editors of the Journal, we shall prepare and publish your article in the Journal. We may post your accepted manuscript in advance of the formal publication of the VoR. We reserve the right to make such editorial changes as may be necessary to make the article suitable for publication, or as we reasonably consider necessary to avoid infringing third-party rights or breaching any laws; and we reserve the right not to proceed with publication for whatever reason.
3. Taylor & Francis will deposit your Accepted Manuscript (AM) to any designated institutional repository including PubMedCentral (PMC) with which Taylor & Francis has an article deposit agreement; see 4 iv (*a*) below.

## RIGHTS RETAINED BY YOU AS AUTHOR

4. These rights are personal to you, and your co-authors, and cannot be transferred by you to anyone else. Without prejudice to your rights as author set out below, you undertake that the fully reference-linked VoR will not be published elsewhere without our prior written consent. You assert and retain the following rights as author(s):
   i. The right to be identified as the author of your article, whenever and wherever the article is published, such rights including moral rights arising under § 77, Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988, and, so far as is legally possible, any corresponding rights we may have in any territory of the world.
   ii. The right to retain patent rights, trademark rights, or rights to any process, product or procedure described in your article.
   iii. The right to post and maintain at any time the Author's Original Manuscript (AOM; your manuscript in its original and unrefereed form; a 'preprint').
   iv. The right to post at any time after publication of the VoR your AM (your manuscript in its revised after peer review and accepted for publication form; a 'postprint') as a digital file on your own personal or departmental website, provided that you do not use the VoR published by us, and that you include any amendments or deletions or warnings relating to the article issued or published by us; and with the acknowledgement: 'The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is available in <JOURNAL TITLE> <date of publication> http://www.tandfonline.com/ <Article DOI>.'
      a) Please note that embargoes apply with respect to posting the AM to an institutional or subject repository. For further information, please see our list of journals with applicable embargo periods: PDF | Excel. For the avoidance of doubt, you are not permitted to post the final published paper, the VoR published by us, to any site, unless it has been published as Open Access on our website.
      b) If, following publication, you or your funder pay an Article Publishing Charge for retrospective Open Access publication, you may then opt for one of three licences: CC BY, CC BY-NC, or CC BY-NC-ND; if you do not respond, we shall assign a CC BY licence. All rights in the article will revert to you as author.
   v. The right to share with colleagues copies of the article in its published form as supplied to you by Taylor & Francis as a digital eprint or printed reprint on a non-commercial basis.
   vi. The right to make printed copies of all or part of the article on a non-commercial basis for use by you for lecture or classroom purposes provided that such copies are not offered for sale or distributed in any systematic way, and provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is given.
   vii. The right, if the article has been produced within the scope of your employment, for your employer to use all or part of the article internally within the institution or company on a non-commercial basis provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is given.
   viii. The right to include the article in a thesis or dissertation that is not to be published commercially, provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is given.
   ix. The right to present the article at a meeting or conference and to distribute printed copies of the article to the delegates attending the meeting provided that this is not for commercial purposes and provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is given.
   x. The right to use the article in its published form in whole or in part without revision or modification in personal compilations, or other publications of your own work, provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is given.
   xi. The right to expand your article into book-length form for publication provided that acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal is made explicit (see below). Where permission is sought to re-use an article in a book chapter or edited collection on a commercial basis a fee will be due, payable by the publisher of the new work. Where you as the author of the article have had the lead role in the new work (i.e., you are the author of the new work or the editor of the edited collection), fees will be waived. Acknowledgement to prior publication in the Journal should be made explicit (see below):

      **Acknowledgement:** This <chapter *or* book> is derived in part from an article published in <JOURNAL TITLE> <date of publication> <copyright Taylor & Francis>, available online: http://www.tandfonline.com/ <Article DOI>

If you wish to use your article in a way that is not permitted by this agreement, please contact permissionrequest@tandf.co.uk

5. You warrant that:
   i. All persons who have a reasonable claim to authorship are named in the article as co-authors including yourself, and you have not fabricated or misappropriated anyone's identity, including your own.
   ii. You have been authorized by all such co-authors to sign this agreement as agent on their behalf, and to agree on their behalf the priority of the assertion of copyright and the order of names in the publication of the article.
   iii. The article is your original work, apart from any permitted third-party copyright material you include, and does not infringe any intellectual property rights of any other person or entity and cannot be construed as plagiarizing any other published work, including your own published work.
   iv. The article is not currently under submission to, nor is under consideration by, nor has been accepted by any other journal or publication, nor has been previously published by any other journal or publication, nor has been assigned or licensed by you to any third party.
   v. The article contains no content that is abusive, defamatory, libellous, obscene, fraudulent, nor in any way infringes the rights of others, nor is in any other way unlawful or in violation of applicable laws.
   vi. Research reported in the article has been conducted in an ethical and responsible manner, in full compliance with all relevant codes of experimentation and legislation. All articles which report *in vivo* experiments or clinical trials on humans or animals must include a written statement in the Methods section that such work was conducted with the formal approval of the local human subject or animal care committees, and that clinical trials have been registered as applicable legislation requires.
   vii. Any patient, service user, or participant (or that person's parent or legal guardian) in any research or clinical experiment or study who is described in the article has given written consent to the inclusion of material, text or image, pertaining to themselves, and that they acknowledge that they cannot be identified via the article and that you have anonymized them and that you do not identify them in any way. Where such a person is deceased, you warrant you have obtained the written consent of the deceased person's family or estate.
   viii. You have complied with all mandatory laboratory health and safety procedures in the course of conducting any experimental work reported in your article; your article contains all appropriate warnings concerning any specific and particular hazards that may be involved in carrying out experiments or procedures described in the article or involved in instructions, materials, or formulae in the article; your article includes explicitly relevant safety precautions; and cites, if an accepted Standard or Code of Practice is relevant, a reference to the relevant Standard or Code.
   ix. You have acknowledged all sources of research funding, as required by your research funder, and disclosed any financial interest or benefit you have arising from the direct applications of your research.
   x. You have obtained the necessary written permission to include material in your article that is owned and held in copyright by a third party, which shall include but is not limited to any proprietary text, illustration, table, or other material, including data, audio, video, film stills, screenshots, musical notation and any supplemental material.
   xi. You have read and complied with our policy on publishing ethics.
   xii. You have read and complied with the Journal's Instructions for Authors.
   xiii. You will keep us and our affiliates indemnified in full against all loss, damages, injury, costs and expenses (including legal and other professional fees and expenses) awarded against or incurred or paid by us as a result of your breach of the warranties given in this agreement.
   xiv. You consent to allowing us to use your article for marketing and promotional purposes.

## GOVERNING LAW

6. This agreement (and any dispute, proceeding, claim or controversy in relation to it) is subject to English law and the parties hereby submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Courts of England and Wales.

# VITA

## Alexander Marković

**EDUCATION**

**Ph.D.** University of Illinois-Chicago, Anthropology, May 2017
Dissertation: "Gypsy Fingers Are Unique! Identity Politics and Musical Performance among Romani Musicians in Vranje, Serbia"

Committee: Dr. Mark Liechty, Chair; Dr. Molly Doane; Dr. Gayatri Reddy; Dr. John Monaghan; Dr. Carol Silverman (University of Oregon)

**M.A.** University of Illinois at Chicago, Anthropology, 2007

**B.A.** University of Illinois at Chicago, *summa cum laude,* Anthropology, 2006
Honor's Thesis: Folk Dance Styling and Regional Identities in Serbia. Directed by Dr. Laura Junker.

**RESEARCH INTERESTS**

Cultural anthropology; ethnicity, nationalism, and identity politics; performance and performativity; political-economy of music, dance, and ritual; post-socialism; commodification of identity/culture; media; diasporas and migration; gender and sexuality; the Balkans; the Roma

**GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS**

**External Grants**

2009 International Research Exchanges Board (IREX), "Individual Advanced Research Opportunities" grant for doctoral dissertation research in Serbia. $18,920.

**Dissertation Writing Fellowships**

2012 Graduate Fellowship for the Study of Eastern Europe, to support dissertation writing. University of Illinois Foundation. $4,500.

2011 Dean's Scholar Award to support dissertation writing. Graduate College, University of Illinois-Chicago. $20,600.

**Internal Research Grants**

2008 Provost's Award for dissertation research. Graduate College, University of Illinois-Chicago. $2,000.

2007 Charles Reed Memorial Fund for dissertation pilot research. Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois-Chicago. $500.

**External Scholarships**

2012 Kef/Dick Crum Scholarship, to participate in Eastern European Folklife Center's Balkan Music and Dance Workshop in Iroquois Springs, NY**.** $900**.**

## PUBLICATIONS

**Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles**

2015 "'So That We Look More Gypsy': Strategic Performances and Ambivalent Discourses of Romani Brass for the World Music Scene." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 24(2): 260-285.

**Book Chapters**

2012 "Brass on the Move: Economic Crisis and Professional Mobility among Romani Musicians in Vranje." *In* Labour Migrations in the Balkans. Biljana Sikimić, Petko Hristov, and Biljana Golubović, eds. Berlin: Verlag Otto Sagner, pp. 49-78.

**Web-Based Publications**

2013 "Beat That Drum! Exploring the Politics of Performance Among Roma Brass Musicians in Vranje, Serbia." *Forum Folkloristika* 1(2). Eastern European Folklife Center (EEFC). http://www.eefc.org/folkloristika_2-1.shtml.

2013 "Beating the Drum to See Poverty: Experiencing Music as Labor among Roma in Vranje, Serbia." Sounding Board, *Ethnomusicology Review*. Department of Ethnomusicology, University of California: Los Angeles, CA. April 8. http://ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu/content/beating-drum-see-poverty-experiencing-music-labor-among-roma-vranje-serbia-0#disqus_thread.

**Other Publications**

2013 CD liner notes, *Brasslands: A Motion Picture Soundtrack*. Evergreen Music: New York, NY.

**Publications in Preparation**

Invited chapter: "From Bakija Bakić to Marko Marković: South Serbian Romani Brass Between Ottoman Past and World Music Present." Contribution to edited volume on Romani popular musics and musicians, Global Studies in Popular Music series, Routledge.

Article manuscript for submission to *Cultural Anthropology*: "Old Vranje, New Patriotism: Ottoman Legacies, Nationalism, and Roma as Cultural Mediators in Vranje, Serbia."

Book prospectus: *Gypsy Fingers Are Unique! Romani Music and Ethnic Politics in Vranje, Serbia*.

**INVITED TALKS**

2011 "The Politics of Performance:" Identity Politics, Power, and Ritual in Romani Brass Band Performances in Vranje, Serbia." Opre! Concerts and Symposium on Romani (Gypsy) Music and Culture. November 21. New York University: New York, NY.

**CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION**

**Conference Organization**

2013 Co-organizer, Second City Graduate Anthropology Conference. March 9. University of Illinois-Chicago.

**Panels Organized**

2009 Session Organizer, with John Michels. "Global Constraints, Local Strategies," Central States Anthropological Society, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. April 4.

2009 Session Organizer, with John Michels. "Engaging Change: Local Survival Strategies in a Globalizing World," Society for Applied Anthropology, Santa Fe, New Mexico. March 18.

**Papers Presented: International, National, and Regional Conferences**

2016 Socialist Nostalgia as Neoliberal Critique: Romani Musical Labor and Economic Precarity in Vranje, Serbia. American Anthropological Association, Minneapolis, MN. November 16.

2016 Feeding the [Serbian] Pasha: Affective Labor, Ethnicity, and Performance Politics Among Romani Musicians in Vranje, Serbia. Society for Ethnomusicology, Washington, D.C. November 10.

2015 Beating the Drum to Wake the Bride: Music, Affect, and Memory at Romani Weddings in Vranje, Serbia. Society for Ethnomusicology, Austin, TX. December 5.

2015 Intimate Familiars, Uncivilized Strangers: Roma Between Narratives of Balkan Culture and European Belonging in Vranje, Serbia. American Anthropological Association, Denver, CO. November 20.

2014 Showing the Sheet: Virginity and the Shifting Politics of Gender at Romani Consummation Celebrations in Vranje, Serbia. American Anthropological Association,Washington, D.C. December 7.

2014 To Look More, You Know, Gypsy: Embodying and Critiquing Tropes of "Gypsyness" and "Balkan Brass" on the World Music Scene. Society for Ethnomusicology, Pittsburgh, PA. November 14.

2014 Playing With Forms, Playing With Stereotypes: Improvisation and Romani Identity Politics in post-socialist Vranje, Serbia. Study Group for Music and Dance in

Southeastern Europe, International Council for Traditional Music: Belgrade and Valjevo, Serbia. September 27.

2014 Economic Crisis, Ethnic Tension, and the Cultural Politics of Memory among Romani Musicians in Post-Socialist Vranje, Serbia. Association for the Study of Nationalities, New York City, NY. April 26.

2013 Ottoman Past—European Future? Debating the "Proper" Role of Romani Brass Music in Serbia's National "Brass Brand." American Anthropological Association, Chicago, IL. November 23.

2013 "Gypsy Groovz" and Balkan Brass: How Vranje's Romani Musicians Perform "Gypsy-ness" for Global Markets and Cosmopolitan Audiences. "(Self)Representations: Romani Musics and Cultures in Diaspora." Initiative for Romani Music, New York University. New York City, NY. April 26.

2013 *Pusto Tursko*—Cursed Turkish: Post-Yugoslav Nationalism and the Re-Imagining of Romani Musical Performance in Vranje, Serbia. American Ethnological Society and Association for Political and Legal Anthropology, Chicago, IL. April 12.

2012 Performing "Gypsyness" for "Cosmopolitan" Publics: Transnational Performances and Identity Politics of Roma Musicians from Vranje, Serbia. American Anthropological Society, San Francisco, CA. November 25.

2012 Gypsy Fingers are Unique! Identity Politics and Narratives of Marginality at Romani Musical Performances in Vranje, Serbia. "Music and Marginality in the Balkans" Conference, University of Chicago: Chicago, IL.

2011 Of Bellydance and Brass: Nationalism and the Re-Imagining of Romani Musical Performance in Vranje, Serbia. Society for Ethnomusicology, Philadelphia, PA.

2011 Born To Be Musical: Romani Identity and Musical Performance in Vranje, Serbia. Central States Anthropological Society, Iowa City, IA.

2010 Gypsy Fingers Are Unique: Musical Performance, Economic Crisis, and Romani Identity in southeastern Serbia. American Anthropological Association, New Orleans, LA.

2009 Authenticity for Sale: Musical Performance and Romani Identity in southeastern Serbia. Central States Anthropological Society, Urbana-Champaign, IL. April 4.

2009 Commodifying the "Local:" Music, Identity, and Transnationalism among Romani Musicians in southeastern Serbia. Society for Applied Anthropology, Santa Fe, NM. March 18.

**DEPARTMENTAL TALKS**

2015 Beating the Drum to Wake the Bride: Exploring Music, Ritual, and Affect at Romani Weddings in Vranje, Serbia. Anthropology Graduate Student Organization Brown Bag series. February 25. University of Illinois at Chicago: Chicago.

2008 "Of 'Gypsies' and Brass: Researching Identity Politics and Musical Performance in Vranje, Serbia". Anthropology Graduate Student Organization Brown Bag series. October 10. University of Illinois at Chicago: Chicago.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS**

2016 Lecture: "Čoček, Čučeko, Kyuchek: Ottoman Legacies, Contemporary Practices". June 29. Mendocino Balkan Music and Dance Workshop, Eastern European Folklife Center: Mendocino, CA.

Lecture: "Romani Dance in Vranje, Serbia: Forms, Style, and Cultural Context". January 29-31. Madison Folk Ball Annual Workshops. University of Wisconsin: Madison, WI.

Workshop on Balkan Romani dance (co-taught with Carol Silverman, University of Oregon). January 29-31. Madison Folk Ball Annual Workshops. University of Wisconsin: Madison, WI.

Workshops on Serbian dances from eastern Kosovo and Pontic Greek dances from Nikopolis/Garasarin region. January 29-31. Madison Folk Ball Annual Workshops. University of Wisconsin: Madison, WI.

2015 Lecture: "Ritual Masquerades in the Balkans". June 27-July 4. Mendocino Balkan Music and Dance Workshop, Eastern European Folklife Center: Mendocino State Park, CA.

Workshops on Serbian dances from various ethnographic regions. June 27-July 4. Mendocino Balkan Music and Dance Workshop, Eastern European Folklife Center: Mendocino State Park, CA.

2014 Workshops on Romani and Serb dances from southeastern Serbia. August 9-16. Iroquois Springs Balkan Music and Dance Workshop, Eastern European Folklife Center: Rock Hill, NY.

Workshops on Romani and Serb dances from southeastern Serbia. June 28-July 5. Mendocino Balkan Music and Dance Workshop, Eastern European Folklife Center: Mendocino, CA.

2013 Workshops on Romani and Serb dances from Vranje. August 10-17. Iroquois Springs Balkan Music and Dance Workshop, Eastern European Folklife Center: Rock Hill, NY.

Workshops on Romani and Serb dances from Vranje. June 22-29. Mendocino Woodlands Balkan Music and Dance Workshop, Eastern European Folklife Center: Mendocino State Park, CA.

Lecture: "Dances and Dance Styling of Serbs and Roma in Vranje, Serbia". Spring Festival of Balkan Music and Dance. March 23. University of Chicago: Chicago, IL.

Workshops on Romani and Serb dances from Vranje. Spring Festival of Balkan Music and Dance. March 22-24. University of Chicago: Chicago, IL.

2012 Lecture: "Music and Dances of the Belgrade region, Serbia". November 2. Serbian American Museum-St. Sava: Chicago, IL.

Lecture: "Music, Dance, and Ritual among Roma in Vranje, Serbia". August 15. Iroquois Springs Workshop, Eastern European Folklife Center: Rock Hill, NY.

Lecture: "Music and Dance in Vranje, Serbia". April 7. Serbian American Museum-St. Sava: Chicago IL.

Lecture: "Dance, Music, and Ritual in Serb and Romani Weddings in Vranje, Serbia". Spring Festival of Balkan Music and Dance. March 24-25. University of Chicago: Chicago, IL.

Workshops on Romani and Serb dances from Vranje. Spring Festival of Balkan Music and Dance. March 24-25. University of Chicago: Chicago, IL.

**UNIVERSITY AWARDS AND ASSISTANTSHIPS**

2016 Spring, Summer, & Fall teaching assistantship, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2015 Conference Travel Award. Graduate College, University of Illinois-Chicago. To attend American Anthropological Association Conference, Denver, CO. $200.

Ph.D. Student Conference Travel Award. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois-Chicago. To attend Society for Ethnomusicology Conference, Austin, TX. $500.

Conference Travel Award. Graduate Student Council, University of Illinois-Chicago. To attend Society for Ethnomusicology Conference, Austin, TX. $275.

Spring & Fall teaching assistantship, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2014 Conference Travel Award. Graduate College, University of Illinois-Chicago. To attend American Anthropological Association Conference, Washington, D.C. $200.

Ph.D. Student Conference Travel Award. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois-Chicago. To attend Society for Ethnomusicology Conference, Pittsburgh, PA. $500.

Conference Travel Award. Graduate Student Council, University of Illinois-Chicago. $275. To attend Society for Ethnomusicology Conference, Pittsburgh, PA.

Early Career Conference Travel Award, European Academic Network for Romani Studies. To attend Study Group for Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe Conference, International Council for Traditional Music, in Belgrade/Valjevo, Serbia. 500 Euros ($586 U.S.).

Spring & Fall teaching assistantship, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2013 Spring, Summer, & Fall teaching assistantship, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2012 Ph.D. Student Conference Travel Award. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Illinois-Chicago. To attend American Anthropological Association Conference, San Francisco, CA. $500.

Conference Travel Award. Graduate Student Council, University of Illinois-Chicago. To attend American Anthropological Association Conference, San Francisco, CA. $275.

2011 Ph.D. Student Conference Travel Award. Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Illinois-Chicago. To attend Society for Ethnomusicology Conference, Philadelphia, PA. $500.

Conference Travel Award. Graduate Student Council, University of Illinois-Chicago. To attend Society for Ethnomusicology Conference, Philadelphia, PA. $300.

Conference Travel Award. Graduate College, University of Illinois-Chicago. To attend November 2011 Society for Ethnomusicology Conference, Philadelphia, PA. $200.

Spring teaching assistantship, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2010 Fall teaching assistantship, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2009 Spring teaching assistantship, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2006-2008 Spring & Fall teaching assistantships, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2005 Fall teaching assistantship, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois at Chicago.

2002 FMC National Merit Scholarship. $1,000.

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

2017 Instructor. Graduate-undergraduate seminar, "Ethnographic and Qualitative Methods" (11 students). Spring Semester. Anthropology Department, University of Illinois-Chicago.

Instructor. Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (300 students). Spring Semester. Anthropology Department, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2016 Instructor. Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (17 students). Summer Semester—Session 1 (4 weeks). Anthropology Department, University of Illinois-Chicago.

Instructor. Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (300 students). Spring Semester. Anthropology Department, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2015 Instructor. Upper level undergraduate seminar, "Historical and Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Youth Culture" (23 students). Fall Semester. Anthropology Department, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2008-2009 Instructor. Two semesters of Introduction to Geography (270 students per semester). Anthropology Department, University of Illinois-Chicago.

2005-2016 Teaching Assistant. Discussion sections for introduction courses in Anthropology, Cultural Anthropology, Archaeology, Physical Anthropology, Geography, and Cultural Geography. Anthropology Department, University of Illinois-Chicago.

**FIELD RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

2011 Vranje, Serbia. Research with local Serbs and Roma consisting of interviews, participant observation, documenting musical events, and media research. (4 weeks)

2009-10 Vranje, Serbia. 12 months of research with local Roma and Serbs consisting of interviews, extensive participant observation, documenting and recording musical performances, and media and archival research.

2008 Vranje, Serbia. Documentation of Romani weddings, participant observation, and informal discussions with Serb and Romani informants (5 weeks).

2007 Vranje, Serbia. Initial contacts with local Romani and Serb communities, and with several local Romani brass band ensembles; several informal interviews (6 weeks).

2006 Leskovac and Vranje, Serbia. Initial contacts with local Romani community and musicians, several informal interviews, as well as documentation of several Romani and Serbian weddings (6 weeks).

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

2013 Submission Reviewer, *The Student Anthropologist* journal, Special Issue on Methodology and Technology.

**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

American Anthropological Association
Society for Ethnomusicology
International Council for Traditional Music
Association for the Study of Nationalities
American Ethnological Society
Society for Applied Anthropology
Central States Anthropological Society

**LANGUAGES**

*Serbian*: speaking and reading (native), writing (good)
*Spanish:* speaking and reading (good), writing (competent)
*Greek:* speaking (fair), reading (fair)
*Romani*: speaking and reading (fair)