CHALGA TO THE MAX!
MUSICAL SPEECH AND SPEECH ABOUT MUSIC ON THE ROAD BETWEEN BULGARIA AND MODERN EUROPE

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May 16, 2012

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To Gencho Gaintadzhiev

За Генчо Гайтанджиев

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hope very much that the manuscript shows how sincerely I apologize for that moment of insensitivity.

Eran Livni

CHALGA TO THE MAX!
MUSICAL SPEECH AND SPEECH ABOUT MUSIC ON THE ROAD BETWEEN BULGARIA AND MODERN EUROPE

This dissertation explores a discourse of democratic modernity in EU-member Bulgaria, which revolves around a hybrid popular music called chalga. I argue that chalga does not function as the name of a defined music genre. Rather, Bulgarians use it as a self-reflexive voice of ambivalence regarding the recontextualziation in liberal democracy of the socialist language ideology of evolutionary modernization: *navaksvane*—catching up—with Europe. On one hand, chalga indexes musical images that resonate with the current *zeitgeist* of modern European culture: aesthetical and social heterogeneity as well as commercial mass media. On the other hand, Bulgarians take this Ottoman-derived word as a non-referential index that invokes anxieties of Balkanism—a discursive trope of European modernity that has invented the Balkans as its liminal incomplete Self. As the ethnographic chapters of the dissertation show, Bulgarians deal with their ambivalence to chalga by seeking paternalist figures capable of imposing the language regimes of *navaksvane* when performers and audiences digress too much into coded zones of Balkan liminality. Regimenting modern popular music with top-down control points also to the political communication implicit in chalga. Cognizant of their inferior location vis-à-vis "real modern societies," ordinary Bulgarians seek paternalist leaders who can address them on an intimate level but are powerful enough to impose norms and practices circulating to Bulgaria from loci that represent the Occident. The expectation to have such leaders is not exclusive to democracy. It defined the political culture during socialism and even before. What is special to the contemporary era is the

discursive formulation of such leadership, which I define as paternalistic populism. Bulgarians regard democracy as working in their country when it is guided from above by an authoritarian boss (*shef*), who knows how to anticipate the popular will, how to ally with bigger and external forces in order to overcome the society's marginality, and most importantly, how to act with "barbarous" Balkan aggression so as to put the nation in modern European order.

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Richard Bauman

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Donna A. Buchanan

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Ilana Gershon

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Jane E. Goodman

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Susan Seizer

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Introduction

Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas[1]	*Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas*
Chalga to the max—the party is here.	*Chalga do dupka—kupona e pri nas.*
We will get totally smashed today,	*Shte se napiem mnogo zdravo dnes,*
Farewell, no worries, the party is the best!	*Sbogom, chista sŭvest, kupona e na shest!*

Chalga to the Max (*Chalga do dupka*)—Tsvetelina and DJ Niki, 2005[2]

Scope

On January 14, 2008, when Bulgaria celebrated its first year of European Union membership, a popular Bulgarian web site (www.dir.bg) published a short news item about a survey conducted by the Bulgarian Association of Business and Touristic Information. The survey solicited from the public symbols that could represent the nation in the EU official institutions. The news item informs readers that, as expected, people chose well recognized national symbols, such as the monastery of the Rila Mountains, the Cyrillic alphabet, the citadel of Tsarevets, and Rose oil. The majority of the votes went to "the Madara Rider," a rock relief from the early medieval Bulgarian kingdom (8th century AD), which meant that it would represent the country on Euro bank notes.

On the following day (January 15, 2008), dir.bg released a follow up report that despite its appearance as serious news item seems to mock the survey. The item states that the report on the survey received hundreds of comments from readers who suggested alternative and much less glorious Bulgarian national symbols.[3] The item

[1] These are the biggest cities in Bulgaria (respectively). Sofia is the capital. Plovdiv is the second a historical regional center of Ottoman Thrace (nowadays southeastern Bulgaria, northwestern Turkey and eastern Greece). Varna and Burgas are the largest Black Sea cities.

[2] "Цветелина и DJ Ники Генов - Чалга до дупка / Tsvetelina & Niki Genov - Chalga... (Офиц. видео)," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJh4OQrS7Mw.

[3] The original report: "What is The Most Bulgarian Symbol?"—"Кой е най-българският символ?" January 14, 2008, accessed October 25, 2014,

says that "[U]nfortunately…..the majority 'saw' Bulgaria through the lens of corruption, simplemindedness (*prostotiia*), Mafiosi, incompetent politicians, broken roads and car accident victims." Readers keyed this contemporary portrayal to local cultural imagination with *Hitar Petŭr* (Shrewd Peter) and Bai Ganio—both idioms of Bulgarians' derogatory self-labeling: "a peasant nation, simpleminded people." The first is the stupid-wise Bulgarian folktale protagonist; the latter is the 19th century literary hero-villain created by the writer Aleko Konstantinov (2010 [1895]). A sheep was selected as a political metaphor for Bulgarians constantly seeking authoritative leaders. Another reader suggested a symbol of garbage thrown all over to denote local disrespect for public norms. A picture of a ragged Bulgarian flag among more decent looking national flags waving in front of the European Parliament in Strasburg[4] alluded visually to the strong local sense of "Bulgarian exceptionalism," a case of "crypto-colonialism"[5] (Herzfeld 2002). The common local historical narrative relates to Bulgarians as the first European nation whose five centuries of occupation by the Ottoman Empire derailed them from the 'normal' European course of historical development. As a result, Bulgarians see themselves as if they were delayed in developing modernity, constantly lagging behind the rest of Europe. People also chose articles of food from the traditional cuisine, such as *kebapche* (minced grilled meatball), *rakiia* (fruit brandy), *shopska salata* (a vegetable salad with feta), and

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http://dnes.dir.bg/news.php?id=2541512&c=1&act=post&error404#sepultura&nt=12. The follow up report: "Bai Ganio, Shrewd Peter, Azis, Tripe—the Real BG symbols"—"Бай Ганьо, Хитър Петър, Азис, шкембето - истинските БГ символи," January 15, 2008, accessed October 25, 2014, http://dnes.dir.bg/news.php?id=2544926.

[4] "Shabby Bulgarian Flag is on display in Strasburg"—"Дрипаво Българско знаме се вее в Страсбург," December 30, 2007, accessed October 25, 2014, http://olddnes.dir.bg/gallery.php?id=2524189&page=0.

[5] Herzfeld defines "crypto-colonialism" as the "curious alchemy whereby certain countries, buffer zones between the colonized lands and those as yet untamed, were compelled to acquire their political independence at the expense of massive economic dependence, this relationship being articulated in the iconic guise of aggressively national culture fashioned to suit foreign models. Such countries were and are living paradoxes: they are nominally independent, but that independence comes at the price of a sometimes humiliating form of effective dependence." (2002: 900-901).

shkembe chorba (tripe soup), as symbols of Bulgaria's "unrefined" culinary culture. Bulgarians point to tripe soup in particular as a paradigmatic example of how the national cuisine might not fit with EU hygiene standards.

According to the follow up report, most of the alternative votes went to chalga—a popular music phenomenon that boomed in Bulgaria in the late 1980s and has been dominating the local cultural scene in the last three decades. With many sarcastic references, readers linked chalga to the customary symbols of national self-derogation. The report maintains that "[I]n a way the name of Azis was noticeable; and more often the back parts of his body. One reader saw them going well alongside the [communist *e.l.*] red flag with the five-pointed star and the fez (the Bulgarian visual reference to 'Oriental' Turkey *e.l.*). In a biblical style another reader envisioned the holy trinity: Azis' a…[ass, *e.l*], Slavi's pumpkin [a slang word for bold head *e.l.*], and Boiko's thug-face [*mutra e.l*]."

Let me explain the above references briefly (see selected pictures bellow). Azis (figure 1) is the stage name of Vasil Troianov Boianov—the mega-star singer, whose carnivalesque-like performance has guided me to the deepest meanings in the chalga discourse, above all, ethnicity and gender. My initial intention was to center my ethnography on Azis. However, at the early stage of my fieldwork I preferred to take a more open-ended approach and let my encounters fashion the research focus.

Slavi Trifonov (figure 2) is a prominent singer-producer and a TV host who has been one of the first local entrepreneurs who recognized the commercial potential of hybridizing Balkan popular musics with Bulgarian socialist folklore and pop (called *Estrada*; see in detail chapter 1) and global pop.

Boiko Borisov (figure 3) alludes to the political subtext of chalga. The news item was published when he was a rising star in the local political scene, then serving

as the mayor of the Bulgarian capital of Sofia. In July 2009, the party Borisov founded—"Citizens for European Development in Bulgaria" (CEPB)—won the parliamentary elections by a landslide and led the country until 2013. At the time of completing this dissertation, Borisov heads the parliamentary opposition and builds his power toward returning to national leadership. As a prime minister, Boiko Borisov continued the pro-EU liberal agenda of almost all Bulgarian governments "since the arrival of democracy" (*sled kato doide demokratsiiata* is the colloquial term for the political era after 1989). His political power stems from his populist persona, which combines charismatic paternalism, police background (as head of the Police), family connections within the former socialist oligarchy (his father, Metodi Borisov, was a high official in the Ministry of the Interior), affiliation with the post-socialist shady security business (he was the bodyguard for Todor Zhivkov, the legendary leader of Communist Bulgaria), martial and soccer masculine sportsmanship, and village roots. The word "*mutra*" (with which Borisov is characterized in the news item) means literally "animal face." In post-socialist Bulgaria it became a slang idiom for Mafia-thugs with a stereotypical look of wide face, bold/shaved head, small eyes, short neck, and protruded lower jaw in the style of Marlon Brando in "The Godfather." Especially during the 1990s, chalga was perceived as celebrating the new money elite of *mutri* (the plural of *mutra*), who, on their part, sponsored chalga singers and producers financially (more in detail chapter 1).

Interestingly, none of the three men identify themselves publically with chalga. They characterize themselves in ways that fit the first news item and refer the derogatory item in general to Bulgarians, but not to themselves. Azis usually defines his music as popfolk (which is a debated synonym of chalga) with aspirations of becoming a global pop star. Trifonov characterizes his musical fusion as ethno-rock.

In chapter 2 I will present an item on Trifonov's late-night TV show (Slavi's Show, bTV), in which he attacks the appearance of a chalga singer in a school musical textbook. Boiko Borisov denounces chalga unequivocally. He even expressed many times his special hostility to Azis and Slavi Trifonov. Despite this denial Bulgarians tend to associate the three men with aesthetics, cultural values, as well as social environment of a music-scape, which they call "chalga" and which, according to dir.bg's semi-parodic news item as well as to my fieldwork informants, represents most eminently (and regretfully) Bulgarian national identity in the post-socialist democratic era.

Fig. 1—Azis (from the front page of "Beauty Coiffure" magazine, Feb. 2010)[6]

[6] Picture is taken from "Azis-Азис," JoyReactor, accessed October 25, 2014, http://joyreactor.cc/tag/%25D0%25B0%25D0%25B7%25D0%25B8%25D1%2581.

Fig. 2—Slavi Trifonov[7]

Fig. 3—Boiko Borisov[8]

Objectives and Argument

Emerging from Bulgarians' references to the three figures above is a double voice of collective affirmation countered with collective derogation, which the dir.bg news items captured so well. My goal in this dissertation is to explore the social life of this double speech, to analyze how it functions within Bulgarian national imagination, and to explain why people in Bulgaria invoke this voice particularly in regard to music they call chalga. The historical context of my study is the ongoing transition from one model of national modernity to another. Bulgarians would most likely react to this context with bitter irony because—to paraphrase the words of a villager in Gerald Creed's (1997) ethnography of a post-socialist village—they see

[7] Picture is taken from the news report "Мистериозни слухове съпровождат липсата на Слави Трифонов от екран," January 31, 2009, accessed October 25, 2014, https://frognews.bg/news_10001/Misteriozni-sluhove-saprovojdat-lipsata-na-Slavi-Trifonov-ot-ekran/.

[8] Picture is taken from Kerin Hope, "Bulgaria's PM Watches His Rating Slide," *Financial Times*, October 11, 2010, accessed October 25, 2014, http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/2010/10/11/bulgaria/?Authorised=false.

their national life as a never-ending transition, from Ottoman rule to monarchy, from monarchy to socialism, and from socialism to democracy. These transitions had final points of beginning and end from the political perspective. The country was carved out of the Ottoman Empire at the Congress of Berlin (1878) in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War (1877-78). It became a fully independent monarchy in 1908. Between September 9, 1946 and November 10, 1989 Bulgaria was a socialist country allied with the Soviet Union and its satellite countries in Eastern Europe. Since November 11, 1989 Bulgaria has become a democratic country that joined the European Union on January 1, 2007.

Exploring the Bulgarian transitions from the cultural perspective shifts the language time frame from past and present simple to present perfect and present perfect progressive. Bulgarians have been experiencing their national sociality as a journey of becoming an organic part of modern Europe, which has never been completed. All the political regimes since the foundation of this country in 1878 have attempted to gain popular support by promoting nation-building that would transform Bulgarians from post-Ottoman Balkan subjects to modern European citizens. The keyword in this transformation is *navaksvane* or "closing the gap." This means that Bulgarians see themselves as a pre-modern European nation that was occupied by the Ottoman Empire and therefore did not take part in the development of modernity. Hence the goal of national independence is to close the historical gap and catch up with "the rest of Europe." Completing the cultural path of *navaksvane* has always required believing in a future in which modernity would finally be attained. To be modern has entailed performing the cultural formulation of the prototype that stands metonymically for the "rest of Europe" or, more idiomatically, "real European societies." In the Bulgarian kingdom the cultural formula was ethnic homogeneity like

in France, Germany, and UK (unlike the multiethnic Ottoman and Hapsburg empires). In the Bulgarian socialist republic the cultural formula was a classless proletariat nation. In democratic Bulgaria the cultural formula centers on pluralistic and liberal individualism as defined by the EU.

I argue that the double voice of self-affirmation and self-derogation in the two news items expresses more than a comic relief of carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1984). It points to a deep social anxiety about the fact that, even though Bulgarians accept the current formula of cultural modernization, the goal of becoming a real part of Europe has not been realized and most likely will not be realized in the future, just as it never was in the past. Ethnographers of post-socialist Bulgaria have all captured the voice of disillusionment with socialist modernity coupled with suspicion to the current model of national modernity: democracy and capitalism (Buchanan 2006; Creed 1997, 2011; Ghodsee 2005, 2009; Pilbrow 2001; Rice 1994). Understanding the anxiety of the recent transition from socialism to democracy, I argue, requires us to open a *longue durée* perspective to the discourse of transition itself, particularly what national modernity and/or being an integral part of modern Europe actually means to Bulgarians in their everyday life. This is what I propose to accomplish with my ethnography of chalga's social life.

Exploring Bulgarian modernity through chalga follows in the footsteps of scholars, who analyze the politics of power and domination underlying the epistemology of modernity in Europe (Z. Bauman 1991; Foucault1970; Latour 1993), vis-à-vis the West's immediate Other (Said 1978) and in former European colonies (Chakrabarty 2000; Chatterjee 1993). Within this body of literature I mostly engage with the Bulgaria-American historian Maria Todorova (1997) whose concept of "Balkanism" is fundamental to any study of modernity in post-Ottoman southeastern

Europe (or the Balkans), at large and Bulgaria, in particular. Todorova argues that the Balkans is Europe's "incomplete self." Meaning, modern Europeans invented the Balkans as liminal locus of Europe's "authentic" and "barbarous" ethnicities from which modern Western civilization has evolved into a higher form of sociality: the nation-state. Similarly to the other regional-political contexts, modernity arrived to the Balkans as a mission of civilization and modernization, in which European powers endeavored to enlighten the "barbarous natives" by promoting ideologies of rationality, national homogeneity, and social evolution. They traveled in one-directional channel of flow—from the European center to its peripheries—and were translated in local cultural contexts under the auspices of local modernity brokers.

The Bulgarian historian Diana Mishkova (2006) complicates Todorova's argument by suggesting that to understand the circulation of European modernity in the Balkans one should analyze the channels through which different ideas about "Europe" have been circulated, mediated and represented in Balkans since the mid 19th century thereby foregrounding local discourses about modern national politics, economy, science, and culture. In other words, Mishkova seeks to explore "the Balkan perspective of the West and its civilization not (only) in the sense of its stereotypes, perceptions and applications, but above all as a contextualized debate about modernity and society; a debate that would take into account pragmatic and empirical as well as utopian and anti-utopian components" (ibid: 31 f.n 5). This perspective which Mishkova ties with "Occidentalism"—a counter discourse of "Orientalism" (e.g. Buruma and Margalit 2005)—does not deny that the language of communication about modernity was first originated in Europe and then traveled to Bulgaria (the locus of Mishkova's analysis). However, there is neither one monolithic picture of Europe nor a defined European center. Narratives and ideas about Europe

were originated in Russia, France, Britain, Germany and the modernizing Ottoman capital of Istanbul; they traveled to the emerging Bulgarian national discourse via protestant missionaries, Bulgarian students in Europe as well as via "more developed" Balkan brokers, above all Greek, Serbian and, to lesser extent also, Romanian elites. In this sense, the first Bulgarian modernizers articulated nation-building not so much vis-à-vis an imagined Western center but in regard to those different representatives, brokers and mediators of European modernity in the Balkans. Mishkova argues that Bulgarians' stigma of having an "incomplete" national Self—the central perspective that underlies the second news report—did not originate through a direct contact with "the West," but was developed within Bulgarian national discourse and circulated back to Europe.

Building upon utopian ideas spread by Greek intellectual circles, Bulgarian literati believed in resolving this stigma by becoming or evolving into Europeans: modernizing by means of attaining "the principles of enlightenment" (learning, reason and rationality). Hence, Mishkova concludes, studying discourses of national identity in the Balkans requires us to look beyond the ways in which the European powers constructed the Balkans as the "barbarous" or "backward" mirror image of "modernity" and "civilization." Instead she calls for a historical and comparative analysis of the ideological function of "Europe"—its normative, symbolic and encoded meanings—which is "significant and evident however only as a metaphor of modernity rather than by ideological semantics of its own" (ibid: 59).

Mishkova's analytical framework helps my study of chalga utilizes to explore ambivalent voices Bulgarians express toward the current stage in the project of national modernization. I particularly relate to the concept of Occidentalism in chapter 1 in which I link chalga with a discursive trope of Bulgarians living on the

road between the Balkans and Europe. The other chapters relate to Mishkova more implicitly. Chapter 2 examines how Bulgarian intellectuals adapt to democracy their role during socialism—brokers of modernization—by debating intertextual links between folklore ditties and a contemporary animal tale that connotes with chalga. Chapter 3 explores how Bulgarians shift through references to chalga between modern occidental and Balkan oriental discursive spaces. Chapter 4 illuminates how Bulgarian ethnic minorities, above all Roma, struggle through chalga with a legacy of assimilation as the only path of participation in the modern occident.

The Bulgarian scholar Rumen Avramov (2003) adds an economic historical perspective that helps me to tie chalga with a local debate about how to form capitalism (which Avramov considers the economic and cultural category of modernity) in a society without modern capital. Avramov uncovers the politics of inequality that are absent from Mishkova's analysis of modernity circulation. Shifting the focus from European enlightenment to European creditors reveals how texts about European modernity have been transfigured[9] (Ganokar and Povinelli 2003) through powerful mechanisms of exchange rather than being translated via linguistic codes of meaning-value into texts about Balkan (and particularly, Bulgarian) modernity.

Avramov argues that large-scale political changes in Europe have pushed small and peripheral European societies, such as Bulgaria, to a state of economic crisis, which they could resolve only by entering into debt cycles with major European creditors. Throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries Bulgaria's creditors were France, Germany, Russia (later, USSR) and the UK. At the turn of the 21st

[9] "[F]ocusing on transfiguration rather than translation—the refunctioning of a text as such for different demanding-sites—orients our analysis toward the calibration of vectors of power rather than vectors of meaning-value. We will care more about the distribution of power than of meaning, more about institutions of intelligibility, livability, and viability than about translation. Indeed meaning value, its sovereignty or dissemination, will cease to command our attention in regimes of recognition, and instead we might focus on the social forms these regimes demand" (Ganokar and Povinelli 2003: 396).

century those creditors became the EU and global financial institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank. The formula of aid has always been identical: money for reforms. In order to receive crucial credit or cash infusion, Bulgarian governments were required to build economic forms and mechanisms according to the creditors' economic models. For creditors, "cash for reforms" has provided invaluable opportunity to conduct economic experiments on the continent's periphery; for Bulgaria, participating in such experiments has been the sole way to deal with its existential state of crisis: the least developed area in eastern European economic backwardness in relation to western European capitalism (Chirot 1991). The outcome of this dynamics is what Avramov calls "culture of conditionality;" "[T]he formula 'money for reforms' is the basic bargaining principle in economic transactions between Bulgaria and its creditors. Hence, financial dependence is the catalyst of economic and even societal modernization for a peripheral country. Debt history is the core of modernization history. Foreign advisers and institutions are its key agents (seemingly inspecting the implementation of reforms *e.l*)." (ibid: 10).

Avramov defines this sort of conditionality as cultural in a sense that reforming the Bulgarian economy according to creditors' models produced "its own intellectual realm: distinct symbols, ideological and doctrinal orthodoxy, a specific language" (ibid: 26). Bulgarian education has been formulated to produce scientific knowledge that accords with the current prospect of economic transition: post-independence national, post-WWII communist, Post-Cold War (neo)liberal. The political discourse is divided between the proponents and opponents of the current program of modernization, i.e. between Eurocentric-integrationists and nationalists-xenophobes. Bulgarian public institutions (the National Bank, the judicial system, the Parliament, the central and local Governments) have been known both locally and in

Europe as "forms without content." These bodies perform the protocol of European civic life in order to fit with debt conditions but in a rigged manner with no "genuine" civic engagement. On the subjective level, modern economic identity is built in Bulgaria on a paradox Avramov terms "communal capitalism" (2007). Having no economic capital of modernity, the Bulgarian nation-state is formally (or poetically) independent but in practice is heteronomous to the modernization conditions of its creditors. This heteronomy goes down to the social level. The Bulgarian citizen formally enjoys individual agency. However, since the overwhelming majority of Bulgarians are too poor to practice this right in the market, they can perform the poetics of modern individual agency only by belonging to egalitarian collectives run by paternalist leaders who hold the material means for performing individualism. The concept of "communal capitalism" is central in chapter 1. It helps me to explain how poetics of popfolk artificial stardom mediate relationship of dependency between singers-clients and patron-bosses, called idiomatically *shefs*.

Drawing upon Todorova, Mishkova and Avramov, this dissertation argues that, while textual and audio-visual images called chalga are basically not political, they provide Bulgarians with special political means to debate, negotiate, identify themselves and make sense of the current project of *navaksvane*—closing the gap between Europe and the Balkans. The reason is that, just as Shrewd Peter, Bai Ganio,[10] *rakiia*, and *kebapche*, chalga keys speech to the metadiscursive dialectics of Bulgarian discourse of modernity: transition from the incomplete margins of the Balkans toward the center, i.e. the imagined domain of occidental Europe. Transition from marginality has defined the beginning and the end of the 20th century in the

[10] The Bulgarian historian Rumen Daskalov (2001) identifies a similar debate over the evolutionary dialectics of Bulgarian national identity in the intellectual discourse surrounding the literary anti-hero Bai Ganio. I do see a clear difference between chalga and bai Ganio, who was invented, above all, as a critique rather than emancipation of Bulgarians' alleged "backward" tendencies (e.g. Kraev et al. 1999: 63).

former-Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian dominions in southeast Europe. European powers turned the Balkans into "the powder keg of Europe" before WWI while "balkanization" became a Western metonym of violent ethnic fragmentation most recently broke out during the Yugoslav Civil War. The "threatening" image of the Balkans arrived twice to the center of European political discourse during the 20th century. The first time was the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), which were shortly followed by the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian crown prince in Sarajevo, the opening event of WWI. The second time was the bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia in the aftermath of the Cold War. In both cases the Balkans metaphorically denoted in the West the fragility of European modernity (Bjelic and Savic 2005).

In a time of political transition, when the hegemony of the European-oriented elite over national self-imagination has come under question, chalga has emerged as an idiom of anxiety regarding the contemporary stage of transition. Buglarians are not the only Balkan nation in the region that claim modernity by denouncing the modern quality of local pop music that emreges from the margins. For instance, urban Turks blame *arabesk* for the crisis of Kemalist modernism (e.g Stokes [1992] and Özbek [1997]); western-oriented Greeks disclaim *laiko* for resurfacing the nation's Oriental-romeic cultural roots under the proto-European hellenic facade (Kalimopoulou and Panagiotis 2009; Papageorgiou 1997); former Yugoslavs identify *turbo-folk* as the music of Milosevic's para-military goons (e.g. Baker 2010, Gordy 1999, Rasmussen 2007, 2002); and ethnic Romanians draw with *manele* the border of ethnic tolerance as regards Roma (Beissinger 2007; Giurchescu and Radulescu 2011). Exploring the discourses of such Balkan popular musics I realized that their performers, creators and audiences almost never speak for themselves; their experience barely receives any attention. Most often, they will appear publically only as objects of elite's critiques,

reenactors of the modernity scripts (e.g. chagla performers, creators and audiences disclaim chalga in press interviews), or play the role of backward trashiness for the entertainment media.

To grasp personal voices, my study investigates how Bulgarians integrate democracy into their social reality by debating how chalga fits or does not within the maxim of *navaksvane*—closing the historical gap between the Balkans and Europe, or in Todorova's terminology, becoming a complete part of the European Self. I argue that, with the original national symbols in the survey of dir.bg, people reiterate the official national voice of Bulgaria's location of in Europe. The semi-parodic symbols do not contradict this celebration but nuance it with an unofficial ambivalent voice, which takes Balkan marginality into account. The centrality of chalga on the alternative list shows that this music is not just an additional contemporary symbol. It is a prime discursive site for making sense of Western democracy.

In many different ways Bulgarians address through references to chalga Katherine Verdery's (1996) question, "What was socialism and what comes next?.". Developing an ethnographic scope to the way chalga mediates an almost two centuries old European discourse of Balkan modernization, I rely on Bauman and Briggs (2003:309) in offering an answer that draws upon Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr's (1849) epigram: *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* ("the more things change, the more they stay the same"). In my mind, the fact that the phenomenon of chalga invokes so many anxieties about the state of modernity in Bulgaria does not indicate a modernity crisis or a postmodern turn. Just as they did in previous periods through other cultural forms, Bulgarians debate through chalga what they need to do in order to overcome their experience of marginality, i.e. to close the historical gap and finally complete the process of becoming part of Europe's modern Self.

This dissertation connects Verdery's question with another question I encountered oftentimes in many different versions during my fieldwork, "can Bulgarians simply be a modern nation without going through another period of transition toward the current cultural model of modern Europe?" Inherent in this question is the broader issue whether Balkan liminality can open venues of social emergence for Europe instead of being only a residual space of marginality. "Welcome to Bulgaria" (figure 4) shows a common way of taking chalga as an example why the answer to this question is "no." This is an artistic metal sign that was created for an exhibition titled "The Temptation of Chalga" (*Izkushenieto na chalgata*) at the Sofia City Gallery (May 2009), which attempted to reflect upon "the experience of post-socialist transition through this bright, shiny, noisy, scandalous, kitschy cultural phenomenon" (from the official press release of the exhibition). Balkanist liminality is reflected from the wild and empty mountainous landscape to which a narrow rural road leads. Reference to the threats of Balkanization appears in the gun bullets that pierce the sign as a warning to newcomers of the brutal violence hidden in this pastoral landscape.

Fig. 4—“Welcome to Bulgaria,” from the exhibition “The Temptation of Chalga,” Sofia City Art Gallery, May, 1-31, 2009, picture: Eran Livni

Fig. 5—“БГ Сувенири” (“BG souvenirs”) by Alla Georgieva, from the exhibition “The Temptation of Chalga,” Sofia City Art Gallery, May, 1-31, 2009, picture: Eran Livni

The picture above (figure 5) is another example from the same exhibition of debating Bulgarian liminality in the era of democracy through chalga. In this picture folklore authenticity, a most valued cultural capital of socialist Bulgaria, finds a new market in sex-labor and pornography. This reference is a common way of expressing protest against the capitalist economic formulation of Bulgarian democracy, which has, presumably, forced highly skilled folklore female singers (trained by state music schools) to become chalga bimbos (or, more explicitly, prostitutes, see chapters 1 and 2).

My study aims to revisit the prevalent association of chalga only with this perspective of self-derogation, which has induced both Bulgarians and Western observers alike to regard chalga as a name of music that is essentially backward and its popularity indicates essential Bulgarian backwardness. In my opinion, when people in Bulgaria relate to chalga as essentially backward, they reiterate the Euro-centric authoritative gaze, which has identified the Balkans as a locus of backwardness in the margins of modern Europe. In other words, Bulgarians tend to denounce chalga in public as a matter of performing modern face and avoid being looked upon as backward. While not intending my dissertation as mere celebration of chalga (of which I consider myself a diehard fan), I show that, when people in and outside Bulgaria judge local music images as a priori as backward, label them with a derogatory name like chalga and associate them primarily with images of pornography, sex-labor, violence, and illicit money, they ignore the complex and multivalent social experience of democracy these images and their generic label mediate.

The anthropologist Gerald Creed (1997) dealt with the experience of liminality and marginality in rural Bulgarian setting during the last years of the

socialist regime and the first few years of post-socialism. He showed how Bulgarian villagers domesticated socialism and then attempted to use similar strategies to accommodate the arrival of capitalism. He concluded that Bulgarians complied with the socialist regime and at the same time sabotaged it, a strategy that he describes as "conflicting complementarities. Shifting the scope to urban Bulgarian settings I employ Creed's "conflicting complimentarities" to analyze how chalga allows Bulgarians domesticate Euro-Atlantic regime of modernity in the aftermath of the Cold War. Why domestication? Because Bulgarians do not experience European modernity as a colonizing force to which they are subaltern. On the contrary, modernity represents the promise of becoming a "normal" European nation whose people can celebrate themselves with the symbols appearing in the first news item. On the other hand, playing the surrogate role of backward Europeans, Bulgarians experience modernity from the perspective of the derogatory symbols that appear on the semi-parodic list. Each of the four dissertation chapters show from a different angle how Bulgarians shift between complying with and sabotaging the post-socialist language ideology of modernity. "Conflicting complematarities" frames explicitly chapter 3, in which I analyze how chalga's ethnic register of *kiuchek* help Veselin Karchinski and his social environment both to uphold and undermine the post-socialist collapse of ideological borders between the traditional/backward village and the modern city. This strategy resonates more implicitly in the other chapters as well. In chapter 1 I show how poetics of artificially in popfolk stardom help Bulgarian singers negotiate hegemonic norms of pop music authenticity. In chapter 2 I examine a conflict between two concepts of irony: a digressive one that maintains ambivalence of compliance with and sabotage of authoritative narratives and a polysemic one that refers ambivalence to inherent ambiguities between signifier and signified. Chapter 4

shifts the scope to Roma right activists who sabotage the national legacy of ethnic assimilation by organizing a Romani cultural festival around Gypsy *kiuchek* and upholding this legacy by marginalizing this festival from the national public.

My study is particularly attentive to the personal voice of compliance and sabotage in chalga. People in Bulgaria usually agree that it symbolizes the local cultural landscape. They deny though that they personally perform, produce, listen to or have anything to do with this kind of "backward music" (*izostanala muzika*). I take the challenge posed by the Bulgarian ethnomusicologist and folklorist Ventsislav Dimov (2001) who writes that efforts to define and locate chalga remind him of the Indian tale about blind people who were asked to describe elephant only by touching it. Each person generalized the animal according to the limb he felt; one described it as a pillar, another as a big tent, the third as a humongous snake. Dimov's conclusion provides a glimpse to the uncanny (Bhabha 1992, 2004) experience of Bulgarian liminality—being almost but not quite European. He likens chalga to a quantum, meaning, this music is everywhere but nowhere, because, above all, chalga has remediated the role of folklore—the vernacular culture of ordinary days and festivities—to global media. I discuss at different points in my thesis chalga's three personifiers mentioned at the beginning of the introduction—the singers Azis and Slavi Trifonov as well as the politician Boiko Borisov—to explain why chalga mediates such negative meanings about Bulgarian society, to shed light on the actual people who perform, produce and consume it, where, and in what ways they do so.

Chalga, Popfolk, Chalgiia, Ethnopop, Ethnojazz

The word uncanny (the original German for uncanny is *unheimlich*) signifies a sense of being "out of home." While this term is most identified with Freud (2003) Ernst Jentsch ([1906] 1997) first introduced in the early psychoanalytic discourse to

define a state of mind and feeling, which he described as "lack of orientation." Dimov (2001) advocates the term ethnopop to reconstruct his sense of home—being a citizen of a modern European nation—which fell in crisis after 1989. He suggests this generic label as an etic meta-label of multiple emic musical phenomena, which are connected, in his mind, with the experience of a post-Cold War postmodern globalized world. I do not use this term for a couple of reasons. First, it has not gained currency in the local Bulgarian discourse. Second, and more importantly, the basic argument of my study is that chalga is not a postmodern phenomenon but a recontextualized speech act (more in detail in a moment) within the Bulgarian discourse of modernity, which stems from the metadiscourse of modernity in the Balkans, i.e. Balkanism. Hence, I oftentimes use the term "popfolk," which relates to the media industry of the music, in order not to detach my ethnographic communication from real life experience while also avoiding embarrassing my interlocutors. In this dissertation I use mostly the label chalga because it persists in the secondary literature and in the Bulgarian media as well as in the Balkanist imagination of my western readers and also because this is the preferred term of my interlocutors in numerous information situations. Especially in chapter 1, I explain pragmatic and semantic distinctions Bulgarians make between chagla and popfolk.

All the secondary literature with which I have engaged mentions that "chalga" resonates with the Orientalist character of Bulgarian marginality (most eminently coined by the historian Mary Neuberger [2004]: "the Orient within"). The word originates from the Turkish word *çalgı*, which means "musical instrument." Just as many Turkisms in Bulgarian, "chalga" indexes Balkan imagination, which is oriented to the society's Ottoman heritage, unlike the modern European one, for which European languages are the source of lexical borrowings. My ethnographic account

will discuss in depth how Bulgarians employ the Turkism of "chalga" to elaborate the political, ethical, esthetic, class, and ethnic meanings of the Ottoman vs. Occidental orientation conflict. Beforehand, I need to take on the tricky task of providing a short background of this genre with minimal Balkanist essentialisms.

Historically, *chalga* has alluded to the traditional Ottoman genre of *chalgiia*—music bands of travelling musicians (called, *chalgadzhii*) who performed a trans-Balkan hybrid soundscape in multiethnic urban settings (e.g. Buchanan 2006; Gaitandzhiev 2000; Levy 2010, 2007; Silverman 2012). During the socialist era, the government tried to eradicate *chalgiia* in its musical project of nation building by replacing it with state-produced Bulgarian village folklore (Buchanan 2006; Rice 1994). The heterogeneous character of this music symbolized to Bulgarians a departure point on the course to evolving (proletarian) national homogeneity—the political formulation of European modernity. Hence, *chalgiia* was excluded from the Bulgarian public musical culture. It survived nonetheless in the semi-legal marginal form of travelling tavern bands and Romani orchestras. The neo-*chalgiia* trend of "wedding music" in the early 1980s signaled the end of the socialist musical regime. Eclectic music bands that used to play in private occasions, above all at wedding parties, became the prime cultural alternative to the state-run European-style popular music genre of *Estrada*.[11] The bands' popularity signaled the collapse of centralist control over the music market and the emergence of a new private commercial one. "Wedding music" became synonymous with the clarinet musician Ivo Papazov-

[11] While there is a growing scholarly interest in Eastern European rock music during the socialist era (e.g. Reyback 1990; Zhuk 2010), the showcase genre of socialist popular music, *Estrada,* is still barely researched. The only study thus far is David MacFadyen's trilogy *Estrada* in pre-Soviet (2003), Soviet (2001), and post-Soviet (2002) Russia. One can find popular publications in Bulgarian from the late socialist era on prominent Bulgarian *Estrada* singers, such as Lili Ivanova and Vasil Naidanov, and also on the state-run popular music festival "The Golden Orpheus" (*Zlatniyat Orfey*, Genov 1992), but no comprehensive study on this music genre.

Ibriama, who earned world fame during the post-Cold War World Music wave.[12] Both Bulgarian and Western scholars consider Papazov-Ibriama the reviver of *chalgiia* thanks to his cross-ethnic Turkish and Romani background as well as his unique improvisation style that he exported globally as "Balkan Jazz" in the 1990s and currently promotes locally as "the authentic *chalga*."

While not subscribing to the narrative of authenticity, the Bulgarian ethnomusicologist Claire Levy (2005, 2007) uses the generic label of ethnojazz to capture the post-socialist *chalgiia* of Pazov-Ibriama (in addition to other musicians, such as "Karandila" brass band and "Ikadem" jazz ensemble), which she identifies as an alternative site of national identity that embraces rather than rejects Balkan-Ottoman multiethnic legacy. Levy's approach is a very useful alternative to the dominant Balkanist formulation of chalga; I rely on it in the following chapters.

I find, though, the historical link between post-socialist *chalga* and Ottoman *chalgiia* insufficient to understand the industrial and mass mediated version of this popular music genre that has carried since the late 1990s the more commercially and politically correct label of popfolk (see chapter 1). My fieldwork centered particularly on this form. I found it richer with social nuances since, in addition to traditional *chalgia,* it draws upon popular musics from other Balkan countries (including Turkey), Bulgarian canonic folklore, socialist *Estrada*, as well as global pop (especially Arabic *shabaiya*, Isreali *Muzika Mizrahit*, Indian Bollywood music, and Latin American Reggaeton). I relate briefly to the hybrid character of popfolk in chapter 1, though the issue of global musical circulation in Bulgaria is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The reason is that this issue requires a different track of fieldwork, which centers on copyright, business networks, and media technology. I

[12] See, for instance, Ivo Papzov and his Wedding Band on *Sunday Night* TV music show: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCweFfcV7Xo, accessed October 25, 2014.

see this dissertation as a beginning point of a long-term research project, and therefore I decided to leave a more specific and thorough dealing with questions of circulation for the next stage of my study.

Theoretical framework: performance studies, popular music and the nation, learning how to ask about chalga

(i) Performance Studies

At large, my study is located in the ethnographic paradigm of performance studies as formulated in linguistic anthropology and folklore. Performance studies scholars explore how texts and utterances get situated in actual contexts and how performers' competence and responsibility to enact formal poetic cues create communal communication. Bauman writes, "performance calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of expression and gives license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity" (1977:11). While centering on the interplay between acts of expression and their formal codes, performance scholars are interested in the capacity of heightened attention events to transform (or at least to suspend temporally) social structure. This capacity resides in the control of performer over the audience afforded "by the formal appeal of his performance" (ibid: 16). Turner (2001) explores the impact of expressive cultural forms on everyday social life by observing performance as liminal or liminoid events. People reflect on, negotiate, contest, and re-enforce their own social structure by creating ritualistic or playful sites in which they perform anti-structure. Caton (1993) draws upon Bakhtin and Medvedev's (1985) concept of inner and outer orientation of genres to argue that essential to the aesthetic organization of expressive forms like Yemenite tribal oral poetry is their practical task, such as to help Yemenite tribes communicate with each other as well as state authorities.

Seizer's (2005) analysis of the function of the word "special" in *Special Natkam (Drama)* helps me to look at quantum-like sense of uncanny in the Turkish-derived word "chalga," especially when often positioned in speech in reference to the Bulgarian-derived word *narodna muizka* (folklore music). This Anglo-Tamil hybrid, Seizer writes, "makes the term *special* meaning not only a floating signifier with myriad referential possibilities but also a *nonreferential* index (Silverstein 1995[13]). That is, the meanings generated by using this assimilated English loan word are not limited to referential meanings—a special actor, a special drama, a special genre, and so forth, wonderfully diverse and floating as these may be—but also index the presence of an indulgent attitude toward the English language itself….*Speshal Natakam* thus links this form of theater to a certain idea of foreign cosmopolitanism as desirable, a notion first made available to Indians of a certain class through the advent of the British Raj" (Seizer 2005: 29).

Chalga is not a definite foreign presence in the Bulgarian language, which is saturated with Turkish-derived words due to centuries of living alongside ethnic Turks and dealing with official matters in the Ottoman language—a hybridity of Turkish, Arabic and Persian. However, in a reverse manner to the word *special* in Tamil, change indexes strong anxieties about indulging in nostalgia for Ottoman cosmopolitanism, which both European imperial and, consequently, Bulgarian national modernizers have classified since the 19th century as essentially non-modern, uncivilized and backward. In other words, turning from *narodna muzika* to chalga indexes not closing the gap with Europe but reopening it.

Mine is not a study of a specific music genre called chalga that has distinguishable aesthetic and social characteristics. Rather it is ethnography of

[13] "Shifters, Linguistic Categories and Cultural Description." An earlier version (Silverstein 1976) is cited elsewhere in the dissertation.

Bulgarians who locate themselves personally vis-à-vis a discourse about Bulgarian liminality—that is, a post-Oriental nation-state in an ongoing attempt to catch up (i.e. *navaksvane*) with changing models of modern Europe. Chalga is the topic of this study because it both provokes and frames a wide field of communicative practices performed in direct or metaphoric references to a field of aesthetical musical sounds, lyrics and visuals to which people in Bulgaria point with the uncanny referential/nonreferential index of chalga.

Feld and Fox (1994) invite ethnomusicologists and linguistic anthropologist to study music through a twofold phenomenology of voice; one voice is "as an embodiment of spoken and sung performance, and the other is a more metaphoric sense of voice as a key representational trope for social position and power" (26). Hanks (1987) suggests a similar perception to studying genre, which he considers a field of cultural production as well as a point of social orientation. I prefer discussing chalga as voice rather than genre for three of reasons. First, I argue that "genre" connotes in Bulgaria with the rational epistemology of modern Europe while chalga stands as an anti-genre, as suspense of rationality, which for Bulgarians means also lack of identity (see in detail chapter 2). Second, voice emphasizes the pragmatic quality of chalga, a self-reflexive speech act (Austin 1975), register (Agha 2005) or voice (Keane 2000) Bulgarians perform in direct reference to music but, more largely, in regard to a language ideology of European modernity for which Bulgaria marks the internal margins. This voice is self-reflexive because it keys communication, musical and non-musical alike, to the politics of music in contemporary Bulgaria. Third, voice alludes to the question of subaltern representation raised by Spivak (1988), but locates the context of the question not in the colonial world but within the margins of Europe. Hence, with utterances about chalga I uncover a sort of heteroglossia, which is specific to Bulgaria and, at the same time, points to a wider social experience of being

quite but not completely part of the modern establishment, not being a colonial subaltern but also not being a European hegemony.

Bauman and Briggs provide me with the most immediate theoretical sources for exploring how the self-reflexive voice of chalga emerges vis-à-vis European voices of modernity (particularly the discourse of Balkanism) and their politics of difference and unequal power. My references to Bauman and Briggs particularly build upon their argument that language is a third epistemological realm (additional to nature and society [Latour 1993]) in the European project of advancing its hegemony in the name of modernity (Bauman and Briggs 2003). They particularly point to the role of scientists and intellectuals in rationalizing language through the collection, classification and purification of texts according to an a-priori metadiscursive binary of modernity and its dialectical counterpart, tradition. Bauman and Briggs (1990) shift the focus from texts as objective manifestations of the essential and a-historical sphere of language and reason to the performance of language ideologies about modern vs. traditional society and nature in texts. Texts are always embedded in history because the performance of text enacts a triad procedure of contextualization: decontextualziation, recontextualization and entextualziation. That is, people claim power to relate self-reflexively to language ideologies in everyday life. They do so by poetically operating on texts thereby situating them in detachment from and/or alignment with other texts, which social hierarchies have canonized to represent genres of modern or traditional contexts.

Politics of power comes into play in acts of alignments or detachment between texts and contexts comes from the fact that "[T]he process of linking particular utterances to generic models thus necessarily produces an intertextual gap. Although the creation of this hiatus is unavoidable, its relative suppression or foregrounding has

important effects. On the one hand, texts framed in some genres attempt to achieve generic transparency by minimizing the distance between texts and genres, thus rendering the discourse maximally interpretable through the use of generic precedents. This approach sustains highly conservative, traditionalizing modes of creating textual authority. On the other hand, maximizing and highlighting these intertextual gaps underlies strategies for building authority through claims of individual creativity and innovation (such as are common in 20th·century Western literature), resistance to the hegemonic structures associated with established genres, and other motives for distancing oneself from textual precedents" (Briggs and Bauman 1992: 149).

Positioning texts and utterances in relation to chalga complicates this picture, due to the indexical ambiguity of chalga, its being on the borderline between referential and nonreferential signifier. People invoke it oftentimes to denote a context that is presumably known and defined. Attempts to articulate the generic rules of chalga reveals that Bulgarians use it metapragmatiaclly to cue that a text or utterance widens intertextual gaps with respective paradigmatic texts of European modernity. The Turkish origin of the word locates this gap with the counter-vector of the Bulgarian project of nation-building, *navaksvane* (catching up) with Europe and, at large, with metadiscursive anxieties of Balkanism. I show in the following chapters that this sense of widening the gap is invoked when people from different parts of the Bulgarian society do not merely digress from generic codes of modernity but create a sense of Balkan liminality (i.e. being Europe's incomplete Self). The ambivalent process of compliance attended by sabotage referred to in the previous section takes place when people in Bulgaria hybridize poetic devices that canonically index European modernity with their own that index the opposite domain of the Orient. This

hybridity resembles Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque (1984). Yet, pragmatically, it is not a comic manner of relief limited to festivities but a strategy of survival, of domesticating superimposing macro modern powers onto the micro everyday lives of ordinary Bulgarians.

My study builds on ethnomusicological and pop music studies inquiries about the semiotics of music sounds and non-musical meanings, such as resemblances between musical structures and ideational or social systems (Rice 2001), communicative practices involved in interpretative speech about music (Feld 2005b), social and aesthetical systems emerging from sonic resemblances between music and its surrounding ecological (Feld 2005c) or business (Negus 1999) environments, or the production of emotional effect by musical icons and indices (Turino 1999). I locate my study in particular within a body of anthropological scholarship (e.g. Askew 2002; Chade-Poulsen 1999; Condry 2006; Dent 2009; Fox 2004; Stokes 1992; White 2008) that analyzes the embeddedness of popular music in discourse and the ways in which language politics underlie the performance, reception and circulation of popular music. In the following chapters I show that classifying music performance as chalga has less to do with musical texts than with discursive contexts: when popfolk singers lip-sync (chapter 1), when pedagogues locate a contemporary animal tale too close to canonized folkloric songs (chapter 2), when a former villager celebrates a family occasion with the Gypsy dance of *kiuchek* in an urban bar (chapter 3), and when festival attendants do not maintain division of labor between stage performers of *kiuchek* and being part of the audience (chapter 4). Likewise I show that people attempt to legitimize musical texts by changing their generic label, calling them popfolk rather than chalga and thus keying speech and music performance toward *navaksvane*.

Throughout the chapters I often relate to "iconization," "erasure" and "fractal recursivity"—the three semiotic processes "by which people construct ideological representations of linguistic differences" (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37). These concepts cast light upon Balkanist anxieties that underlie Bulgarians' classification of musical texts as chalga or popfolk—the caution whether an icon or index fits or does not fit with modern European musical genres. Holding the notion that their language (including music), like all other Slavic languages, is indeed located "on the threshold between barbarism and civilization" (ibid: 63 quoted from Müler 1855:65), people in Bulgaria recognize the power of words to stir movement to and from imagined Europe (or, more precisely, language ideologies that represent European modernity). Irvine and Gal write that the invention of the Balkans was a recursive act. Starting in the 18th century, European political figures, intellectuals and missionaries began imagining Western civilization by producing a contrast image of a backward orient in the southeastern margins of Europe (see also Bjelic and Savic 2005). Bulgarian nation-builders attempted to shake off this image with a language reform, specifically, cleansing from the language icons of recursivity—that is, Turkish-derived words—and replacing them with either Slavic words or words borrowed from Western European languages.

The nonreferential index to Turkish is what widens the intertextual gap of musical texts labeled as chalga with paradigmatic texts of modern music genres. This is also what keys the register of chalga with risk, which comes from the fact that, when Bulgarians utter explicitly or imply indirectly the word "chalga," they suggest dissonance between musical utterances and modern social structure. They do so not by framing an expressive event in genre, but by calling into question the very existence of genre as a faculty of modern rational thought. People in Bulgaria

evaluate the rational quality of communication by asking whether its symbols are organized in genre or whether they lack genre, i.e. whether they are chalga. In regard to music, chalga indexes sound and visual images, which arguably have no form and hence do not qualify to be called music but mere noise (Atali 1985). The dichotomy, Atali writes, between music and noise resonate with the division of the world in Ancient Greece between civilization and barbarians. Greeks considered themselves civilized because they spoke an intelligible language. "Barbarians" is a nonreferential index that heightens the common sound of non-Greek languages that come to Greek ears as animal-like growl *br-br-br*.

My analysis explores what aesthetic qualities and judgment value people ascribe to music in contrast with chalga. Additionally I look at the ways in which distinctions between "real" music and chalga aim to accomplish tasks and comment on actual issues in Bulgarian social life. To be a chalga performer, I argue, does not involve simply playing or singing music to audience; rather such a person has to create scenes of encounter in which people carry cultural responsibility and competence to suspend different Bulgarian social structures by framing musical or non-musical utterances as chalga.

Observing speech act events of chalga as "scenes of encounter" highlights risk as a metapragmatic device of performing dual voice of transparency and gap with speech genres of modernity. Conceptualized by Keane (1997), "scenes of encounter" relates to highly stylized ritual exchange of couplets and objects that takes place in public between representatives of affined groups in Anakalang, Eastern Indonesia, and whose goal is to reaffirm group identity, authority, power and agency through the performance of mutual recognition. The ritualized symbolic exchange of recognition is intended to be stable and predictable but also to open the possibility of failure. In

order to be real the ritual is not only supposed to control risk but also to instigate it. The performance of exchange is hazardous because the formalized texts and objects mediate webs of iconicities that index present and past tensions, relationships and contingencies within Anakalang society (including the living and the dead) and between Ankalangese groups and the outside world, mainly Dutch colonizers and the Indonesian state. The emergent quality of the ritual, then, stems from the dependency of identity and agency in recognition and the risk that invoking those webs would end with failure to attain it; "[i]f a round of exchange constructs the identity of the transactors, and serves to recognize the other, slippage represents the possibility of denial and shame. Conversely, success is conceptualized not in the orderly or the mechanical working of reciprocity but in gamble won" (ibid: 91).

What is most relevant to my study in "scenes of encounter" is the distinction Keane defines between voice and agency. He explains that voice means the competence as well as responsibility of negotiators to animate ritual speech, which stands as a symbolic alternative to fight and always carries the risk of turning into actual fight. Agency is performed on two levels. First, it is embedded in the ritual itself whose "performance structure groups together the persons in whose name the event takes place along with others who benefit from it, who direct it, or whose intentionality it mediates" (ibid: 140-141). Second, people perform agency in their "capacity to motivate, respond to, and resolve authoritative, recognizable actions and events" (ibid) that come up in regard to the ritual. Importantly, Keane stresses that, in contrary to the common Western view of voice and agency, Anakalangese do not establish locate relate them to any human individualistic subjectivity, but attribute them performatively to supernatural subjects.

Shifting the ethnographic location to Bulgaria, I argue that, as a self-reflexive speech act or register, chalga keys scenes of encounter to exchange of words and things that represent intentions, powers, authorities, interests, and persuasions about the liminal location of Bulgaria vis-à-vis voices of modern Europe. This exchange, I argue, starts from the fact that imagining music called "chalga" indexes highly sensitive (and oftentimes tabooed) fields of social meanings and relations that stem from the language ideology of modernity and its respective debate over what it means to catch up with Europe after the fall of socialism. The explication of these meanings and relations puts people at actual risk of losing face, social ties and even life. At the same time, invoking risks through utterances of chalga is attractive because no other word can heighten attention to the basic idea of shared Bulgarian sociality that emerges from the dialectics of evolution from the perceived Balkan margins to the core of Europe.

Chalga scenes of encounter are not explicitly formulaic; they do not have ritualistic script and course of actions. However, being present in many such scenes, I learned their implicit semiotics and pragmatics of negotiation. Over the course of my ethnography I figured out the specific verbal and material associations with chalga which could heat or calm debates in particular circumstances as well as the specific contexts in which people can utter "chalga" explicitly or invoke it indirectly via metaphors, hints, avoidance, and allusions. Drawing upon my extensive experience, I construct the ethnographic chapters as four scenes of encounter, in which the risk of chalga prompts Bulgarians to negotiate with each other different aspects of social agency, namely political economy (chapter 1), education (chapter 2), class (chapter 3), and ethnicity (chapter 4).

Locating social formation in hazardous performed scenes of encounter goes

against distinctions of traditional collectivity whose social life center on repetition, predictability and the reduction of risk vs. modern collectivity established on unpredictability and risk. This distinction is fundamental to the European concept of national folklore that represents pre-modern social life in which time was cyclical and organized in a unified space (this is what Bakhtin [1981] calls "pastoral" or "idyllic" chronotope). Giddens (1990) and Beck (1992) point to the disembodiment of time from space as the shift from traditional to modern future-oriented societies, which turned the basis of collectivity from shared predictability to shared risk. Beck calls modern societies "risk societies" because, above all, dealing together with unpredictable future constitutes the social contract.

Using Keane's concept of "scenes of encounter"— agency constructed via performances of hazard communal negotiation—I avoid associating risk with individualistic agency, the ideological faculty of modern European subjectivity. As I will discuss in chapter 1, one of the anxieties that chagla invokes is a perceived failure of Bulgarians to imagine themselves as a society of individuals. For Bulgarians, this presumed failure indexes a failure to become modern. In "real modern societies," as Bulgarians tend to call Western Europe, people have emotional and material constitution to see collectivity of individuals. Citizens perform agency by taking risks and responsibility for their own actions. In Bulgaria, on the other hand, individuals can exist only within authoritarian collectives. The Bulgarian economic historian Rumen Avramov formulates this notion crudely in regard to what he considers as Bulgarians' failure to adopt the individualistic value of capitalism: "Bulgarians are individualist when it comes out to appropriate gains or collective wealth, but they are fierce collectivists when the issue is distribution of losses" (2003: 6). The cultural ideal, he maintains, is a pseudo-individual who lives in "a risk-free, passive, non-

innovative, egalitarian economic world" (ibid). I will relate to his observation particularly in the first chapter in regard to a sort of political economy that emerges in the production, performance, and consumption of chalga.

The scenes of encounters in the dissertation chapters take Avramov's notion of failure into consideration while complicating the link between risk and agency. Chalga mediates a dual risk of performance. One is a risk in the sort defined by Butler in regard to gender (1990), a risk of failing to perform modern European norms of individualistic agency. The second risk is the constructive one defined by Keane. This risk is embodied in rituals of communal agency, which Bulgarians call into play with speech acts of chalga. These rituals require of Bulgarians to explicate implicit present and past tensions and affinities within Bulgarian society and between Bulgaria and the language ideology of modern Europe.

I link Keane's ideas of voice and agency with Briggs' (1996) concept of discursive authority. The case of chalga reveals how popular music does not only function as instrument for political discourse of nation building nor does it expose only national crises. Popular music is also a prime site for contesting the power to voice images of national modernity and to draw continuities or discontinuities between socialism and democracy. The mass mediation of popular music prompts society members to debate semiotic meanings, communicative practices, and normative codices of living in a modern nation-state. This debate is hazardous because it invokes longstanding tensions regarding the politics and language ideology of modernity that underlie metanarratives of national imagination. In the case of Bulgaria, chalga arouses questions of who holds the power over closing the gap between the Balkans and modern Europe.

(ii) Popular music and the nation

Drawing upon studies of music and politics in Bulgaria,[14] a nearly decade of research (2003-2012), as well as more than two years of ethnographic fieldwork (2007-2009) me to narrate present-day Bulgarian voices, which comment about the transformation of their nation from Soviet-style socialism to liberal democracy within the EU. On one hand, people tend to accept liberal democracy as the sole political model of national post-socialist sociality. On the other hand, they usually relate to this political organization as a top-down order that has replaced totalitarian socialism rather than as a bottom-up system of freedom. Chalga calls this ambivalence to attention. Oftentimes chalga keys speech to an equation of democracy with national decay. By this I mean that people give chalga as an example of how democracy led to the collapse of the regime of values between public and private, high and low, and explicit and implicit. Ironically, by expressing such opinions openly in public and over mass media, people consciously exercise their democratic right to criticize, not only to hail, the new political order (which they could not do before 1989). This dual approach to chalga prompts me, then, to explore how Bulgarians envision local democracy when claiming that their nation, unfortunately, has no capabilities to develop grassroots democratic culture, according to Western standards.

Edward Said's two methodological devices of "strategic location" and "strategic formation" (1979: 20) allow me to develop a critical perspective that avoids essentializing any particular formulation of West against the Orient in regard to chalga, on one hand, but also takes the "Balkanism" into account, on the other. The ethnographic support for this critical perspective comes from Michael Herzfeld

[14] Buchanan (2006, 2007, 1996), Dimov (2001), Gaitandzhiev (1990), Kraev et al. (1999), Kurkela (2007, 1997), Levy (2007, 2005, 2002), Peicheva (2008, 1999), Rice (2002, 1996, 1994), Silverman (2012, 2007, 1996), Statelova (2003, 1993) and others.

(1989) who finds in the discourse of modern Greece—another post-Ottoman Balkan nation-state—the anthropological self-reflexive perspective in which marginality functions as a looking glass at the dialectical conflict between "the exotic" (or "primordial") and "the modern European." This dialectics is basic to Bulgarians' experience of chalga as failed democracy. At the same time, chalga provides Bulgarians with exclusive communicative means of domesticating democracy, both sabotaging and accepting this top-down order, thereby negotiating local terms of European integration as agents rather than as inferior objects of Western power.

The questions animating this study began developing long time ago, many years before I knew anything about Bulgaria. I am first generation born in a recently founded country of post-holocaust immigrants, Israel. Since early age, my being-in-the world was cultivated with Hebrew-speaking pop music (mainly rock), which, as I understood later, mediated to me and to my social environment a language ideology of modern Israeli nation that erased our families' recent memories of dislocated Jewish refugees. Thus, I discovered only as a mature adult other musical cultures in Israel, above all Jewish liturgy, Romanian music—my parents' place of origin, and Arab music of the native population of my town (and country) whose existence I was trained to ignore. On the other hand, "my music," the music that represented my self and my social surrounding (Turino 2008), replicated what was going on in the "true" land of pop music, the US and Western Europe. As an adolescent I was absolutely sure that Hebrew-speaking Western-style pop was the most "authentic" Israeli culture. I listened to English speaking popular music, but I took it for granted that US-UK English speaking pop was the universal standard of any local popular music. I bought LPs, collected posters of Israeli music stars, went to rock concerts and listened to top chart radio shows. To me *Kaveret* and *Tamuz* were as important as the Beatles and the

Rolling Stones. There were Hebrew-speaking popular musics of other Israelis (or more precisely, Israeli Others). Most prominent was a Hassidic music that hybridized Jewish *klezmer* and American folk-pop. Additionally there was music that had no defined generic name but sounded and looked like a mishmash of oriental musics between the Arab world and Greece. Religious pop seemed ridiculous and harmless to the environment that shaped me as well as to myself; the oriental one was more intimidating. It had commercial life of modern pop but aesthetics of the Middle East. My Western musical environment completely dominated the national public sphere so we could learn how not to pay attention to oriental musics. I did not know then that the Israeli popular music to which I listened was part of the nation-building project (Regev and Seroussi 2004). Created by the cultural *Ashkenazi* (Jew from European countries) establishment it was aimed to mediate that Israel was a modern nation part of the global Occident thereby silencing the majority of *Sepharadim* (Jews from the Muslim or post-Ottoman world) whose music reminded the inconvenient truth about the location of the newborn country within the Arab Orient (Saada-Ophir 2006).

The change of the Israeli musical climate in the 1980s announced most prominently that something had changed in the country (e.g. Horowitz 2010). This "oriental" music suddenly received public attention. The media began covering the emergence of oriental music stars defining them generically as belonging to "central bus station music" or "cassettes music" (allusion to the liminality of its media and site of dissemination). The talk about oriental music expressed worries about the musicians' perceived low quality but greater commercial popularity than any of my "normal" pop music star. That was the first time I understood that I felt at home with my surrounding musical culture, because I was a product of the *Ashkenazi* establishment of the nation that marginalized the *Sepharadim* as well all other Jews

who did not come from Europe. Being part of the establishment meant that our segment of the Israeli nation ruled the discourse of genre. Pop music fits with our Western-oriented perception of what it meant to be modern. The emergence of what became known as Israeli Oriental or Mediterranean music signaled to me that this establishment was not so powerful anymore. This understanding prompted me to begin dealing with my own feeling of being at home, including the inferior position of Romanian Jews within the *Ashkenazi* establishment. The political implications of this musical change were explicit. The music I grew up on propagated the secularist ethos of the nation's founders; Oriental music was associated with the neo-traditional Zionist ideology of the rightwing party that became the political home of all those who felt rejected by the *Ashkenazi* establishment. Reflecting back on this Oriental music, I realize that it was not completely different in style from my Israeli music. I received Oriental music as the Other because, as a field of cultural production, it developed outside the cultural discourse of the *Ashkenazi* establishment. Even at the time of the Oriental music revolution, most singers still sought recognition though assimilation. For instance, the emblematic star, Zohar Orkabi erased his Yemenite origin by taking the Russian-sounding family name of Argov. Shimshon Tawil became "a pure" Hebrew by turning into Shimi Tavori. Even a more recent star like Eyal Biton preferred to take his mother's maiden name, Golan, to access more easily the mainstream.

Musical memories from my Israeli past came back to me when I read Ventsislav Dimov's simile of quantum, that is, chalga being simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. Especially after developing in person dialogue with this Bulgarian music scholar, whose investigations aim at deconstructing self-consciousness formed by the socialist language ideology, I understood that his

uncanny feeling of chalga's absence-presence was indeed a product of a political change which threw him to the realm of experience of being "out of home."

To complicate the story, I tried to reconstruct my sense of home, my feeling of being at home, by familiarizing myself with Israeli Oriental music. To provincialize my European musical indoctrination I went to study the music of the Orient (the Mediterranean, The Muslim world, and India). Again, this decision was political not less than cultural. I did not believe anymore in the socialist Zionist ideology on which I was brought up. I went further to the political left seeking a post-Zionist Israeli immersion in the Middle East. This path introduced me to a popular Jewish liturgical tradition (called *piyyutim*), particularly of Jerusalem Jews whose origins was in Aleppo, Syria. I learned this musical tradition with a tutor from this community and attended synagogue musical gatherings. Gradually, I learned that its musical repertoire consisted entirely of covers from the classical era of Arab popular music (1920s-late 1960s), mainly from Egypt. The genre of *piyyutim* was invented still in the Arab lands. Community elders wanted to keep young men from violating the Sabbath by going out Friday night to Arabs' coffeehouses, so they decided to bring coffeehouse music to the community. I learned this music genre in the way every member of that community accessed it; I listened to the Arabic original songs and learned how to imitate the singing with the Hebrew lyrics. People knew Arabic originals by heart and always judged each other's performance in regard to the Arab model singers (Umm Kulthum, Abd al-Wahab, Farid al-Atrash, Abd al-Halim Khafiz etc.). In recorded and live performance, though, people were careful never to sing in Arabic, but only the liturgical Hebrew translation. Singing in Arabic was completely inappropriate. On one occasion a professional *paytan* (singer of *piyyutim*) who was performing in a concert was so drawn by the excitement of his singing (the Arab term

for musical excitement is *tarab*, enchantment, e.g. Shannon 2009) that he violated this unwritten rule and turned to sing the Arab original on stage. The audience immediately recognized the reference and reacted with such great anger that the singer had to apologize for his act publically and receive the pardon of the major Rabbi of Israeli *Sepharadim*. Looking back at this incident I understand that especially because Jews from Muslim societies had not erased the strong cultural ties of Jewish Israel with the Muslim Arab world, they were much more aware of the language ideology of Zionism in regard to which they stood ran the risk of feeling uncanny, being "out of home."

Going in further detail into this experience is too much beyond the scope of this dissertation. A study of the politics of Israeli music, especially *piyyutim*, will have to wait for another time. I brought it up because these two musical memories from Israel guided my research journey in Bulgaria as well as the writing process. My personal and communal sense of being a modern Israeli emerged from my communication with music culture whose politics and language ideology were invisible to me until I began deconstructing my own feeling of home. More precisely, my way to feel "out of home" in Israel came from deciphering the politics and language ideology of the musics on which I was brought up. I failed reconstructing my sense of home when I confronted the politics and language ideology of my adopted Oriental music. The same analytical operation I do with chalga. I ask how my research subjects deconstruct and reconstruct their personal and communal sense of being modern Bulgarians by debating the politics and language ideology of an "out of home" musical phenomenon, which they connect through the register of chalga with the discourse of *navaksvane* with modern Europe, and more immediately, with the transition from Soviet to Euro-American political systems.

My ethnography is informed by scholars who investigate the special role of seemingly non-political popular music in mediating modernity formation as well as modernity crisis (or at least cracks) in national societies in the margins of "modern Europe." In this sense I go beyond the paradigm of East and West and look at the Balkanist case of Bulgaria as part of a larger experience of being on the playfield between competing hegemonies of modernity. A common trope of such studies is that, throughout the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries, popular music has indexed similar dialectics of modern globality and locality (or authenticity, essence or roots). First name Condry's (2006) study of Japanese hip-hop reveals the forces that taking part in the formation of Japanese glocalization. Applying his phenomenological approach to the context of my study (particularly in chapter 1), I explore through chalga the global and local political forces that have shaped Bulgarian nation building and subject formation. Indices of locality vary from Slavic and Turkish-derived words to poetic references to religious, ethnic, and traditional practices; globality is performed through instruments and images used in Western musics as well as Western idioms of musical performance and reception. Not less importantly, mass media and commercial means of production, consumption and circulation are essential markers of participation in one of the two forms of post-WWII modern economy: liberal capitalism and etatist socialism.

Danielson (1998) helps me link voice and nation building. Her study shows how Umm Kulthum and a circle of Egyptian music modernizers hybridized the Egyptian *asil* (root) culture (Quranic recitation, village songs, Arab classical poetry, and modal [maqamat] Tarab music) with modern European idioms of musical performance (stage concerts, films, radio broadcasts, studio recorded LPs, Western instruments, and formal European outfit). The popularity of this hybrid music went

beyond musical fandom. Egyptian nationalists saw in it the image of a post-colonial nation-state, whose citizens' consciousness emerges from the tie between the traditional Muslim village and the modern secular city. Gamal Abd al-Nassir, the leader of the republican revolution appropriated Umm Kulthum to propagate a vision of Egypt as a leader of a pan-Arab socialist nationalism, a modern version of Muslim Arab empires. Nassir's political program collapsed after Egypt's defeat by Israel in 1967. Nevertheless almost 40 years after her death, Egyptians still relate to Umm Kulthum's music as the core of their national imagination. Danielson's star-centered approach is implicit in the first chapter. However, I shift the analytical focus from voice as a representation of authenticity (like Umm Kulthum) to voice as a device of performative personality—a discourse of self that comes into being through interaction with other people and in regard to relevant ideologies of selfhood.

White (2008) presents a case in which the Rumba music scene in Zaire, which emerged through hybridity of village music, urban and global pop music, provided Mobutu Sese Seko with a powerful venue to establish his narrative of nationhood based on his paternal authority. Creating a network of financial patronage over singers and bandleaders, Mobutu instrumentalized musicians' ability to reach diverse and dispersed groups in order to implement his populist policy of *animation politique*—a system of mobilizing masses through dancing in music concerts funded by the state. This study is highly relevant to the case of chalga from two aspects. First, in the early post-socialist period, chalga denoted sounds that entered to the vacuum left by the socialist realist versions of political mobilization through music: folklore and *Estrada* (socialist pop). After the 2009 general election that brought Boiko Borisov to power Bulgarians who opposed him blamed his government for selling its neoliberal populist

rhetoric by "stupefying" the people with chalga. I will relate to this perception specifically in the conclusions.

Music mediates national crisis or cracks, for instance, in Stokes' (2010) study of how three popular music personalities (Zeki Müren in the 1950s, Orhan Gencebay in the 1970s-1980s, and Sezen Aksu since the 1990s) created sites of cultural intimacy, or more precisely love, with symbols and tropes erased from Turkish public culture. Particularly arabesk music (Stokes 1992)—a hybridity of Turkish folklore, Egyptian popular music and Western pop—created a vernacular public sphere that drew upon the modernist principles of Kemalism (secularism, republicanism, nationalism, revolutionism, etatism) but without the language of evolution of official Kemalism thereby exposing the politics of power and difference implicit in Kemalism's rational positivism. Three perspectives of cultural intimacy language help Stokes to capture a popular musical voice that does not correlate with its equivalent political one. This voice is equally personal and national, subjective and communal, not an obvious nexus to Bulgarians (see the previous section).

Stokes links musical hybridity to sentimentality which nation-state secularized thereby turning it into an "unwarranted discourse" (Brathes 1979) spoken by uncountable number of people by warranted by no one; "it is disparaged, or derided by them, severed from authority but also the mechanisms of authority (sciences, techniques, arts)" (ibid: 1, quoted from Stokes 2010: 32). Barthes writes that by this reversal of values to the secular rational language of the nation-state "it is sentimentality that today constitutes love's obscenity (Barthes 1977: 175)" (ibid). Berlant and Warner (1998) provide Stokes a second perspective to the social economy of cultural intimacy; who marginalizes affect, how, and to what ends. They argue that intimacy is not a private space outside the realm of the public but a realm through

which hegemonic heteronormative public establishes itself. This is the role, for instance, the heterosexual nucleus family plays for the nation; "[N]ational heterosexuality is the mechanism by which a core national culture can be imagined as a sanitized space of sentimental feeling and immaculate behavior, a space of pure citizenship" (ibid 549). Debates around popular music, then, are vantage point for Stokes to the "wide currents of anxiety that surround intimacy, the ever-intensifying efforts to secure its meanings and repetitious evocation of threats to it" (Stokes 2010: 37). The third perspective to cultural intimacy is Herzfeld's (1997) "community of the flawed," or "communal dirty laundry." That is, "aspects of social identity that are considered source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality…"(ibid: 3). Embarrassment and rueful self-recognition— Herzfled's key markers of cultural intimacy—are particularly relevant to the case of arabesk. They prompt its prime inventor, Orhan Gencebay, to perform this music but to struggle to change its generic name to a more "respectable" one. Stokes' threefold concept of intimacy is central to chapter 3. Shifting the ethnographic focus from music performers to the post-socialist class of urbanized peasants—above all a fruit and vegetable street vendor named Veselin Karchinski—I show how chalga frames zones of intimacy in which people communicate a sense of communal failure to live up to the official ideals of Western-style national modernity. This sense of failure is so painful that any intimate communication exposes individuals to very high personal risks.

Dent's (2009) study of country music in Brazil argues that cultural intimacy is not a space of communal digression from global modernity to a primordial locality but a performative voice with which nation-state members negotiate their place in history, such as Brazilian rural and urban identities in the post-dictatorial era of

neoliberal democracy. Dent explains that people in Brazil sometimes express embarrassment of country sometimes because of its rural poetics that do not fit with national ideology of urban progress mostly represented by samba, sometimes they deem it unseemly for men to wail about love, and sometimes because people judge the music as too much imitating the American global hegemon. "But at other moments, Música sertaneja (the more commercial Nashville-style country *e.l*) becomes the single truest and most perfect encapsulation of the Brazilian "heart" (*coração*)" (ibid: 12). In other words, country hybridity mediates experience of neolibralism, which does not appear in economic or political discourses, as the music allows people comment upon the economic and social changes since the return of democracy. The embarrassment of ruralty that comes up from this mediation indicates that free, despite neoliberal promises of freedom, free market has not freed Brazilians from the long-standing national preoccupation with class divisions "marked along financial, racial and gender lines" (Dent 2009: 241). Dent concludes that studying the performativity of cultural intimacy means to analyze shame and embarrassment as modes of self-identification enabled by particular genres that key self-identification to a world beyond those genres. "In order to address the experience of accountability to the audience inherent in all human interaction (including rueful communal self-recognition *e.l*), participants must make use of structures of voicing grounded in locally instantiated horizons of communicative practices (Hanks 1996). These horizons are crosscut by generic possibilities that carry with them incumbent role-inhabitances" (ibid: 13). Dent's approach to intimacy is particularly relevant to chapter 3, in which I discuss how, by cuing his chalga utterances with shame countered with affinity, Veselin Karchinski and his social environment domesticate

the refashioning of the post-socialist social base from national peasantry to globalized ethnicity.

(iii) Methodological considerations: learning how to ask (Briggs 1986) about chalga

Stemming from the risk involved in the chalga register, I had to be very cautious how and when to invoke it in my ethnographic scenes of encounter. Questions crucial to conducting ethnography of such a sensitive topic as chagla were where to locate my research sites, how to discuss chalga with my Bulgarian interlocutors, how to explore it over the media, and how to access the chalga production, performance, and media circles. The *first* question, the question of location is, of course, essential to ethnographers of media who trace the flow of localities over virtual world systems (e.g. Ginsburg et al. 2002). What I found special in chalga is that Bulgarians use it as a device of orientation in their post-socialist social landscape organized around the same discursive binaries that define the socialist period (Buchanan 2006: 8), such as European vs. "Oriental," modern vs. traditional, urban vs. rural, homogeneous vs. multiethnic, classless vs. class, consumer vs. producer, elitist vs. populist, authentic vs. hybrid etc. Historically, chalga strikes Bulgarians with the loss of the state's capability to fit the actual cultural landscape to the official vision and genres of cultural purity.

Back to Catherine Verdery's question of "What was Socialism and What come next" I ask, has chalga destroyed Bulgarian post-socialist locality by "orientalizing" it (as most local intellectuals maintain), or has chalga democratized this locality by making it more inclusive? Also, what does chalga indicate about the traditional tendency of Bulgarian society to rely on top-down paternalist hierarchies? During the first decade after the democratic changes, Bulgarian intellectuals traced the new national locality in reference and/or analogy to the locus of chalga. The journalist

Martin Karbovski (1999), for instance, describes Bulgaria as "chalgaria"—a land of lost "civilized" locality transformed into a barbarous terrain. The literary scholar Aleksandar Kiossev (2002) identifies in chalga the return of schizophrenic "homo Balkanikus," which socialism failed to integrate (i.e. to "civilize," "modernize," "Europeanize"). Dimov (2001) attempts to imagine through chalga Bulgarian locality with no clear organic basis. Chalga reminds him of many festive and mundane practices of Bulgarian local life, at the same time as its mediated character breaks the familiarity with an unattainable notion of a globalized world. Different approaches come from US scholars, who identify in chalga either neo-Ottoman cosmopolitanism (Buchanan 2007) or attenuated nationalism (Rice 2002). I will illuminate a less discussed aspect of this academic discourse; that is, through chalga Bulgarians experience modernity not as a defined locus but as competing ideologies of location that prescribe them different paths of moving from the Balkans margins to different European centers (Berlin during WWI and WWII, Moscow during the Russo-Ottoman war and the Cold War, EU Brussels after 1989 etc.).

Location takes more corporal articulations in definitions of chalga as a lowbrow culture locate. Following Bakhtin (1984), Kraev et al. (1999: 20) and Statelova (2003), for instance, relate it metaphorically at the lower stratum of the social body associating it with carnal pleasures in contrary to intellectual pleasures of modern art forms. Following this perception, Bulgarians usually associate this music with the Balkan tavern (*zavedenie, kruchma*)—establishment for social drinking and eating—in which Bulgarians can cast off restrains of modernity and socialize in an intimate Balkan manner (see chapter 3). My methodological decision was to illuminate the ideological underpinnings of location by not looking for chalga in any particular space, but exploring the multiple perspectives to the regional and global

location of post-socialist Bulgaria from different associations of chalga with place. I explored the discourse of place that emerges from the interplay between chalga texts, performances, economy, and reception. Specifically I examined how designations of chalga in space and speech helped interlocutors to explain how democracy has both changed and maintained existing divisions of public and intimate communications. I found, for instance, that people defined their intimate space according to where they would listen to chalga with pleasure, while public space was defined as places where listening to musics associated with chalga would cause irritation and embarrassment, like in school class (chapter 2), high class neighborhood (chapter 3) or outside the ethnic Gypsy ghetto (chapter 4). People within the popfolk media and music industry commonly protected their modern dignity by elaborating an opposite division between modern European and intimate Balkan spaces. They were professionally engaged with producing audio and visual images that connote with chalga but utterly disclaimed it as a matter of personal taste. Even popfolk performers testified that they performed this music because this was what the audience demanded, but by no means they would listen to it for fun, but to more "sophisticated" pop genres like Greek, Turkish, or Serbian pop or American R'n'B.

The *second* question—how to communicate chalga with interlocutors—stems from the question of location and power, particularly (but not limited to), the ways people define through chalga intimate Balkan and modern European spaces. To address this question, I had to learn idiomatic codes of Bulgarian modern and intimate communication. For instance, in my pre-dissertation fieldwork I paid attention that people became very suspicious when they saw me recording speech or taking notes. In some cases people refused to speak; others limited their speech to basic clichés about chalga (it is crude, cheap, and kitsch music. This is not a Bulgarian music, "I

never listen to chalga" etc.). Gerald Creed (1997) explains this reaction as a defense mechanism against the police state that monitored the citizens in attempt to catch subversive speech. His methodological solution worked for me very well. Like Creed, I trained my memory to retain field data without relying on any external device. Assuming that my mind was intuitively tuned to registering relevant information, I maintained a methodological separation between reflection and documentation. I reflected upon my actions in real-time. Not to forget details I used to find an opportunity to write a few words in my notepad. After returning from an intensive field experience I used to take some rest in order to let the memory sink in. On the following day I used to transfer the data from my memory to my journal. To reduce mental control in favor of an associative and introspective stream of consciousness, I always sat in a public place, usually a café, and handwrote my memories in Hebrew (my native language). Journal writing sessions usually took 3-4 hours.

I found that people felt more comfortable with non-verbal documentation. In particular, my camera was an effective documentation tool. Chalga is a mediated form, which highlights visuality not less than sound. Going to the field with DSLR designated for me a role in chalga's field of cultural production. I could record small visual details with it. Documenting with my camera led to a job offer as a stills photographer in one of the popfolk record labels. This role allowed me to shoot pictures in most sensitive situations and use my camera as an ethnographic recording device. My pictures were also effective prompts when discussing chalga with my informants. I learned, for instance, what kind of visual depictions of singers were attractive or unattractive to the audience, which pictures were sensitive, which ones I could give to my colleagues as souvenirs, and which pictures I had to keep to myself. My communication with Iordan, A Roma-rights activist, over pictures of the audience

in a Romani music festival called *Romfest* (chapter 4) is the only case in the dissertation, in which I discuss my visual ethnography. Otherwise, this experience remains implicit in my analysis. A more in-depth discussion of my photographer-ethnographer work will wait for the next incarnation of this project.

Another issue that remains mostly implicit in my study is that to earn my interlocutors' trust I had also to avoid formal interviews, which, as I was told, people associate with police interrogation and the socialist secret services. Spending a few weeks in a popfolk radio station I saw how cautious studio guests were when speaking on-air. The difference between formal and informal speech was pretty significant, both in terms of content (how far one would be ready to go away from the common derogatory narrative of chalga) and poetics (standard vs. dialect Bulgarian, crude vs. educated lexicon). I established a close relationship with a PR person in the popfolk record label where I worked, who told me that singers, backstage professionals, the media, and the audience relate to interviews about chalga only as advertisement texts; they never expect them to mediate real or sincere information. This PR person explained to me how she used to prepare singers for interviews by dictating to them answers, which they had to learn almost by heart. Customarily, she used to speak in first person instead of singers for interviews published in print.

My way of avoiding formal interviews was, first, never to initiate contact with potential field informants. I always asked people, who already trusted me, to introduce me and guarantee that I was not going to abuse any piece of information. Then, I avoided handling one-on-one meetings in form of question-answer about chalga but developed an open-ended unfocused conversation. The flow of conversation usually indicated the sort of engagement with chalga people were ready to express, which oftentimes was different from what I would expect. For instance,

the common stereotype of popfolk lyrics writers is that they write songs en masse as a matter of fact (i.e. in 5 minutes on a napkin) by relating always to the same topics (such as love, material goods, and entertainment) with a poor colloquial vocabulary. Despite my undeniable temptation I avoided raising this stereotype with a prominent popfolk lyrics writer (who is also a publishing poet) with whom I held a few café meetings. Instead, we talked about the professional life in the music firms. Gradually our discussions developed toward the practice of song writing. This poet revealed to me that she used to spend substantial time in web forums following young Bulgarians' discourse, learning how to address their topics of interest with the right words and expressions. Another piece of information that this poet disclosed to me was about an intimate feminine rapport she had for a few years with one popfolk singer. Many hours of personal conversations between these two women led to a series of love hits, which built the singer's stardom.

My emphasis on informal conversation is visible in all the chapters. Particularly chapter 2 and chapter 3 are centered on two informants (Gencho Gaitandzhiev and Vesko Karchinski, respectively) with whom my communication went beyond ethnographic interests. My close relationship with these two Bulgarians allowed me to hold question-answer sessions with them, in which I was more their cultural disciple than interviewer. In general, my ethnographic narratives very rarely depict voices attained in formal interviews. I tailored my authorial voice from encounters between my own perspective and perspectives of people with whom I traveled, met on the road, or met for a few unstructured conversations.

The *third* question— how to explore chalga over the media—helped me to pay close attention to two separate yet intersecting worlds of the popfolk music and the register of chalga. It was fairly easy to follow the popfolk music scene since it is fairly

small and formalized in gigs (chapter 1). Popfolk media consists of four record labels (*Payner, Ara Music, Diapason Records,* and *Sunny Music*), two TV stations (*Planeta Televizia* and *Fen TV*), two nationwide radio stations (*Radio Veselina, Radio Veronika*) in addition to regional ones (in Sofia, for instance, *Radio Signal+* [1993-2011] and *Radio Romantika; Ultra* in southwestern provinces), one print magazine (*Nov Folk* [1998-2013]), "Folk" newspaper sections (e.g. *Weekend* and *Noshten trud*), and a number of websites. Non-generic media in principle does not broadcast popfolk songs. "Everything but chalga" is the unwritten code of "mainstream" TV and radio channels. On the other hand, I witnessed during my fieldwork that popfolk singers-celebrities have increasingly become essential component of entertainment shows and magazine items (for instance Azis' picture on the front page of "Beauty Coiffure" magazine, figure 1). Slavi Trifonov exceptionally has a dual media life of a popfolk singer and a nationwide media persona holding his late-night talk show "Slavi's Show" (*Shouto na Slavi*, bTV) since 2000 (see chapter 2). Azis also had for a couple of years a failed attempt to hold a similar TV talk show (Azis' Evening Show, TV2).

Exploring chalga on the non-generic popfolk media was a more difficult task since it is deeply embedded in the large media discourse of Bulgarian post-socialist democracy. Periodically I could observe news items with direct reference to chalga, usually scandalous news items about the malfunctioning of Bulgarian democracy. Following newspapers and magazines on daily basis provided me with rich ethnographic material. One such scandal is at the center of chapter 2. More often I used to encounter media references to chalga as short ephemeral comments, jokes, and epithets. Building semiotic fluency of chlaga's related discourse helped me identify indirect references, which aimed at provoking negative reactions by relating to problems Bulgarians associate symptomatically with the music (such as artificial

capitalism [chapter 1], corruption [chapter 2], class segregation [chapter 3] and ethnic discrimination [chapter 4]) without violating the current language ideology of European modernity.

Finally, I knew that resolving the *fourth* question of how to access chalga's production, performance, and media circles was most crucial for my research. It aimed to provide me with an alternative point of view to the dominant public voice in Buglaria, which, from its modern position, classifies this music as the antonym of European nationality, culture, civil society, progress, in short essentially backward Balkan. The result of this discourse is that chalga backstage professionals as well as performers are extremely suspicious and distrustful especially of academics and journalists, whom they immediately perceive as haughty and sensation seekers (respectively).

I defined a couple of strategies of overcoming such suspicions. Firstly, the rule of not initiating contacts independently had to be stricter in this context. I developed connections incrementally, being careful not to show too much excitement (in other words, not to disclose that I was a diehard chalga fan). In a few cases, people distanced themselves from me when I was too eager to widen my connection network. On the other hand, my need to be patient and careful with initating contacts was an invaluable point of self-reflection. Secondly, to develop relationships of long-term trust I offered communications on the basis of "favor-for-favor" (*usluga za usluga*). My initial idea was to provide writing and translation jobs, which I did a few times. As I mentioned above, having DSLR camera was more effective; without planning I found an access to chalga's field of cultural production when I was invited to work (for money or barter) as a stills photographer. This role was extremely powerful. Being a hired observer made sense of my presence on video clip shooting sets,

recoding studios, clubs, public gatherins, and conerts. Chapter 4 narrates my ethnographic observations which I experienced as the photographer of *Romfest 2008* (chapter 4). My camera also gave me license to move freely between different social spaces (such as chalga and popfolk, private and public, and the stage and the audience). For instance, the role of popfolk photographer allowed me to take pictures in music clubs, which oftentimes host semi-criminal audiences. I was usually instructed ahead of time about the sections of the club I should avoid photographing. Such instructions led to developing internal information about the business and political ties of the popfolk network. I could also develop new connections with people whose trust I earned by emailing them files with their pictures. The mediation of camera in my communications was for me an invaluable resource of self-reflection on my position as a modern academic ethnographer. As I mentioned above, my reflections are embedded in my analysis.

Overview of the dissertation chapters

The *first* chapter is titled "The Same Thing but Totally Different: Marta and Reni Performing Artificial Popfolk Star Personage." I analyze how two singers, Marta and Reni, perform personage of popfolk star with poetic devices of artificiality, particularly lip-syncing. Artificiality, I argue, has two opposing indexical values: fakeness and authenticity. As a key of fakeness, it invokes nostalgia to a lost socialist modern culture. As a key of authenticity, it recontextualizes this culture in the current political order. Singers perform artificiality to communicate to the audience that they are real pop stars. They are tied with network of dependency to record label of other business sponsors, called *shef*s.

In the *second* chapter, titled ""I Beg Your Pardon, My Children are Learning This:" Bulgarian intellectuals Legislating and/or Interpreting Chalga" I discuss a public

scandal over musical textbook for 3rd graders, which was allegedly "contaminated" with chalga. The head author of the textbook, Gencho Gaitandzhiev, attempted to cultivate pluralistic consciousness, which would tolerate multiple and even contradicting meanings. Without intending, he ended up inviting the wrath of academics and journalists and ultimately prompting the publisher to stop the textbook. Analyzing a few scenes of encounter that revolved around the musical textbook, I explore how Bulgarian intellectuals recontextualize in democracy the role of socialist intellectuals: the cultural legislators and safeguards of the regimes language ideology of modernity.

In the *third* chapter, "Marina's Prom, or the Hazards of Dancing *Kiuchek,*" I turn to the dialectical counterpart of the intellectual elite: Bulgaria's social base, the *narod*. I ask how non-elite Bulgarians both reject and reaffirm the socialist discourse of evolution from traditional peasantry to modern urbanity when negotiating what they see as hazards of modernity corruption and pseudo-modernity. At the center of the chapter stands Veselin Karchinski, a native of the village of Goritsa and current resident of Sofia. I explore how he negotiates his inferior class position as an "urbanized peasant" with expressions of shame and affinity with chalga. Associating chalga with urbanized peasants is a common discursive device of protesting against the alleged devolutionary course of the society—modern Bulgaria devolves into a traditional village. Chalga is formulated as an antithetic indicator of corrupted peasantry; people who listen to this music in the city run the risk of being marked not just as peasants (*selyani*), but even worse as Gypsies.

The *fourth* and closing ethnographic chapter, titled "Romfest 2008: Between Ethnic Assimilation and Multi-Ethnicity" analyzes how Bulgarian-Roma perform the stereotypical category of Gypsy *kiuchek* when seeking ethnic recognition, on one

hand, and simultaneously disclaiming it when seeking communal access to the Bulgarian nation. My scenes of encounter are related to *Romfest*, a national festival for Romani music and dance, which I attended in 2008 as the festival's photographer. I analyze the dilemma of the festival organizers, who were all assimilated Roma-rights activists. On one hand, they avoided associating the festival with Gypsy *kiuchek* in order to maintain the modern framing of the event. On the other hand, they centered the festival on *kiuchek* performances because, for them, it was the most effective medium of breaking the segregated walls of the Gypsy ghetto. In avoiding associations with chalga they sought the endorsement, funding, and support of the nation-state, which, on its behalf, does not recognize Romani ethnicity as a political category and prompts Romani integration only through assimilation in the Bulgarian majority. At the same time, the organizers marginalized the festival from the public eye in order to make it attractive to Roma people, who presumably would not gather in a public event unless it includes *kiuchek*.

The conclusive chapter—"Democracy or the Return of Paternalistic Populism?"—outlines an imagination of democracy, which I witnessed in chalga music before it arrived to the official political field. My fieldwork has informed me that Bulgarians can tolerate chalga voices if they are subjected to paternalist musical figures, who would impose the language ideology of modernity when performers and audiences digress too much into performance of Balkan liminality. In the same manner I found throughout my research that ordinary Bulgarians seek a paternalist leader, who can communicate with Bulgarians on an intimate level but is powerful enough to impose on Bulgarians hegemonic norms and practices of European modernity. The expectation of such leader is not exclusive to democracy. It has defined the local political scene since the foundation of nation-state Bulgaria. What is

special to the contemporary era is the cultural formulation of such leadership, which I define as paternalistic populism. This definition goes back to the semi-parodic news report with which I opened the introduction, specifically the "holy trinity" of the chalga stars Azis and Slavi Trifonov and the political leader Boyko Borisov. What I learned from chagla is the reason *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* ("the more things change, the more they stay the same") is my answer to Katherine Verdery's question—what was socialism and what comes next?. Throughout an almost decade of researching this reflexive speech act about music, I realized that people in Bulgaria expect of functioning democracy to be guided from above by an authoritarian boss (*shef*), who knows how to anticipate the popular will, how to ally with bigger and external forces in order to overcome the society's marginality, and most importantly, how to act with barbarous Balkan aggression to put the nation in a modern European order.

Chapter 1

The Same Thing but Totally Different: Marta and Reni Performing Artificial Popfolk Star Personage

Fig. 1—*Zvezdi* ("Stars") *2004-2005* by Adelina Popnedelva, pictures are media release by PR exhibition "The Temptation of Chalga," Sofia City Art Gallery, May 1-31, 2009

There is, there is money	*Ima ima pari*
There are also big shots	*Ima i tuzari*
There are champions	*Ima shampioni*
Who spend millions	*Harchat milioni*
…..	
My *shef* (boss) is such a stud	*Shefŭt mi e egati picha*
My *shef*, everybody him loves	*Shefŭt mi vseki go obicha*
The *shef* pays salaries with fun	*Shefŭt s kef zaplati plashta*
No other firm like ours	*Niama druga firma kato nash'ta*
Nencho's firm is number one	*Nash'ta firma e nomer edno*
It carries profit and isn't under leasing	*Oborotna i ne e na lizing*
The tax authorities dig us	*Danŭchnite kefiat ni se zdravo*
And from Social Security we often have "bravo!"	
	A ot NOI redovno imame "Bravo!"

Perfect boys are the colleagues	*Tochni momcheta sa kolegite*
No need to tell you about the women colleagues	*Da ne vi razpraviam za kolezhkite*
Our eyes are closer	*Ochite ni sa po-blizki*
And they are prettier than all other chicks	*I po-krasivi ot vsichki miski*
……	
This year I will make	*Taz' godina shte napravia az*
Hundred, two hundred, three hundred, million	*Sto, dvesta, trista, miliona*
Then, darling, I will go after you	*Posle, mila, she te gonia az*
Hundred, two hundred, three hundred, to Barcelona	*Sto, dvesta, trista, v Bartselona*

"The Best Firm" (*Nai-dobrata firma*)—Toni Storaro ft. Dzhamaikata, 2012[15]

On the road with Marta

I scheduled with Marta, a veteran popfolk star-singer, to observe her gig in the southeastern town of Sliven.[16] She came to pick me up in her small private car with which she traveled to performance events all over the country. As in our previous travels, she arrived with her longtime assistant, whose role was to share the driving, carry suitcases full of clothes and makeup, coordinate with the organizers onsite, and operate as Marta's electronic band. Popfolk singers rarely perform with live music. They either lip-sync (called in Bulgarian *playback*) or sing over recorded instrumental tracks (called in Bulgarian *sinback*). There are singers who travel to gigs with their song tracks on CDs or USBs. Others carry mixer consoles with their entire repertoire, which allows singers to decide on the spot which songs to sing.

My travel with Marta to Sliven took place on October 26, St. Dimitŭr's Day (*Dimitrovden*). Despite the religious resonance of this day, Bulgarians mostly celebrate it in relation to mundane life occasions. People, whose given names are either Dimitŭr or derivatives of that name celebrate their name day. Bulgarians also

[15] "TONI STORARO feat. Djamaikata - Nai-dobrata firma," accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40XvMY_pEis.

[16] The identifying information of the event (except the occasion of St. Dimitŭr's Day) is changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

mark this date as the seasonal turning point from Fall to Winter. St. Dimitŭr's Day is also a day of celebration for all Bulgarians who work in the construction sphere. In 1996 the Bulgarian government designated this day as celebration of tradition. *Dimitrovden* is also celebrated locally as the "City Holiday" (*Praznik na Grada*) in three Bulgarian cities: Sliven, Vidin, and Aitos. The Bulgarian calendar has numerous similar festive days that simultaneously relate to Orthodox Christian saints, agricultural seasons, folkloric practices, professions and locales, as well as personal names. Some saints' days involve big festivities with traditional food and rituals; one of them—St. Georgi's Day of the Victorious (*Gergiovden*, May 6th)—is also a national holiday honoring the Bulgarian Army whose patron saint is St. Georgi. Most saints' days, though, are regular workdays in which people celebrate the name day of a person by congratulating him/ her. S/he, in turn, is expected to treat (*da pocherpiat*) family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, etc. with food and drinks (quantity, quality, and variety depending on the means of the person).

For popfolk singers, the fall and spring holidays are generally times of open-air public gigs. The month of May also brings gigs in high school graduation parties (usually indoors). A few important saints' days in December and early January as well as Christmas and New Year's are times for big indoor gigs. This is the time also to release new folkloric songs and ballads in the style of socialist pop music called *Estrada*.[17] Summer brings gigs in Black Sea resorts. This is also the time for new hits for dance parties. Election seasons are busy times as well. Political candidates know that there is nothing like a free show of a popfolk singer to attract a crowd to their rallies. Throughout the year singers are invited to perform in weddings, engagements, birthdays, baptismal celebrations and other private parties. Additionally, they perform

[17] *Estrada* had different pop music discursive formulations in different socialist states. Bulgarian *Estrada* was created according to the Soviet model (e.g. MacFadyen 2001).

as guest artists in *zavedenia*—the general name of any establishment for social drinking and eating: tavern (*krŭchma*), restaurant, casino, hotel, bar, disco club, café etc.

As we did a few times before, Marta picked me up at a meeting point that was on her way out of Sofia. This time we agreed on the large bus station on *Tsarigradsko shose*—the boulevard leading to the highway that connects Sofia with southeastern Bulgaria and, symbolically, with Istanbul—Bulgarians' political and cultural point of orientation during five centuries of Ottoman imperial rule. The old Bulgarian name of Istanbul, *Tsarigrad*, literally means "The city of the King" (i.e. the sultan). Bulgarians oftentimes portray the creation Bulgarian nation-state in 1878 as a turn of orientation from the backward Orient to the modern West. Mishkova (2006) complicates this picture arguing that Ottoman Istanbul was one of the major channels of circulating ideas and concepts of European modernity with which Bulgarian intellectuals crafted the discourse of national modernity.

Normally the trip from Sofia to Sliven by car takes almost four hours. It took us barely three hours since Marta drove much above the speed limit and passed slower cars. After travelling with other singers I learned that this sort of driving was common in the popfolk business. Singers drive thousands of miles weekly. "Our job is a nomadic job" (*nashata rabota e chergarska rabota*), said to me Marta once with laughter. Singers can travel one day to a gig in a mountainous ski resort at the Pirin Mountains (southwestern Bulgaria), from there to a gig at a village in Dobrudzha (northeastern Bulgaria), then sleep somewhere on the road and, on the next day fly to Brussels for a gig in an expatriate disco club.

The word *chergar* Marta used for "nomad" comes from the word "rug" (*cherga*). *Cherga* is the metonym of the fate of Bulgarians: poor Balkan people who

are ready to pick up their rug and go wherever they can find an opportunity to earn some money. Calling a person *chergar* articulates the economic and cultural inferiority with which people in Eastern Europe, at large, and Bulgaria, in particular, see themselves reflected from Western eyes (Neuberger 2006). This colloquialism keys speech to two socio-cultural identities. The first is of guest-worker—the lowest social strata of illegal or seasonal émigrés from poor countries in the margins of Western Europe, who earn access to the West by taking agricultural, construction, and cleaning jobs. The second is the image of Gypsy nomads—the ultimate signifier of Balkan recursivity to modern Europe and the only identity below guest-worker. The ethnic name of "Roma" is currently more politically correct than "Gypsy." In chapter 4 I expand on how I shift between the two names. For now, let me state that "Gypsy" relates to the role of otherness this ethnic group plays within the Balkanist discourse. "Roma" relates to actual people who identify with this ethnicity. When alluding themselves to Bulgarian guest-workers and Gypsy nomads, popfolk singers often admit with embarrassment that both expatriate communities have been a profitable market for gigs.

The word chalga keys this sort of low class labor travel to the Ottoman Orient. During the 19th century, *chalgadzhiia* was the professional name of hired band musicians, who used to travel throughout the Ottoman Balkans in search of gigs in urban *zavedeniia* (Buchanan 2006). After the transition to Balkan nation-states, the profession of *chalgadzhiia* became synonymous with traveling Romani musicians who performed in public and private events in the margins of the modern society (Buchanan 2006; Silverman 2012). The colloquial professional name of popfolk singers—*folkadzhiia* (for males) and *folkadzhiika* (for females)—alludes to

chalgadzhia by adding the Ottoman-Arabic suffix of *ia* to the colloquialism of popfolk—*folk*.

Upon reflecting on the economy of gigs, Marta acknowledged that the main problem of making commercial music is that the Bulgarian music market is small, poor, and thrives on low professional standards.[18] For her and most other popfolk singers Greece represents the most immediate modern pop music market. This immediacy means also that the Greek music genre of *laiko* is one of the most popular sources of covers. Marta shared with me her impression that "in Greece, when you go to bouzouki taverns (called also *Magazi e.l.*) you see, the stage is huge, every evening there is a performance…everybody plays with notes, there is no such coincidental performance with improvisation, there are light effects, moving stages, (female) singers get out from down somewhere, in kind of shells, above the piano, they sing, switch between different decors, all of that is extraordinarily expensive, for which here it's impossible to pay, the standard is totally different. Over there one bouzouki (tavern), 1000 people, 50 Euro per person, is full every evening for this performer, on every table nearby the stage there is a bottle of whiskey that costs $200 and the consumption is compulsory. Make a calculation about what measures we are talking there and what we are talking about here. Simply everything is ehh, in such a way, the market, the market makes this opportunity to…and they [the singers] are every evening there. They don't travel like us. Here it is another type business, unfortunately so, nomadic work, today here, tomorrow there."

[18] Bulgaria (together with Romania) stands at the bottom of the European Union's list of income per capita. According to the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute, in December 2008 and 2009 the average individual monthly salary in the country was 366.53 leva, around $220. Information from "ПАРИЧЕН ДОХОД НА ДОМАКИНСТВАТА ПО ИЗТОЧНИЦИ НА ДОХОДИ ЗА ДЕКЕМВРИ 2008 И 2009 ГОДИНА." Република България, Национален Статистически Институт, last modified February 15, 2010, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/3228/%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%B5%D1%87%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8 (http://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/3228/%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%B5%D1%87%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8.

Marta concludes that, in order to be profitable, Bulgarian popfolk singers need to create the impression of a pop star show at minimal cost and with basic facilities. The constraints of this condition are that singers cannot hold live commercial concerts. The only concerts in which they take part are annual concerts arranged by their contracting record labels. Otherwise, popfolk singers come in regular, direct contact with their audience only in gigs (*uchastiia*). The form of the gig means that popfolk singers are expected to participate for 40-60 minutes on the program of *zavedeniia*, public and private events such as birthdays, name days, high school graduation parties, holiday celebrations, and weddings. Minimizing cost requires gigs that rely on an infrastructure exterior to the locus of performance. This demand is countered with a conflicting demand: the audience expects singers to perform live exactly as they appear and sound in their video clips on TV.

Bulgaria is a fairly small country, more or less the size of Ohio (Buchanan 2006:6). However traveling around is not an easy task at all. During my fieldwork there were only two half built highways (no more than 200 miles each), whose construction began and stopped still in the socialist era. In everyday speech, the highway situation is a metonym of government corruption and disfunctionality. For this reason, Boiko Borisov, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria (2009-2013) defined the completion of the partially existing highways and building a new trans-Balkan highway system as a top priority of his tenure. As a shrewd politician, Borisov never denied that in addition to economic advantages, building highways is a sign of power in Bulgaria. That is, Borisov showed himself as so mighty that he could even overcome the well-established culture of corruption.

Most intercity roads in Bulgaria have only two lanes passing through villages and small towns. Additionally, the country's topography is mountainous, and so

singers often drive through curvy roads that are oftentimes pierced by holes as a result of heavy snow, low asphalt quality, and lack of maintenance. The image of SUVs and other fast Western cars driving on roads paved for socialist cars like Lada, Moskvich, Trabant, and Vartburg is a popular metonym of how superficial Bulgaria's adaptation to Western capitalism is. With this image people stress the failure of the state to support the developing Western consumer culture with Western infrastructure. The miscorrelation between the quality of cars and the quality of roads has made traveling a real hazard. The bigger and faster a car is, the greater the chance that its driver is part of the post-socialist money elite, which means that in a case of an accident the driver would survive both the accident and the law enforcement authorities that are notorious for their corruption.

Marta and other singers shared with me horror stories about near-death driving experiences especially when driving through heavy snow. Two famous singers—Rumyana (d. 1999) and Reyhan (d. 2005)—died in car accidents on the road to gigs. The singer Johnny was gravely injured in the early 2000s forcing him to quit altogether his performance career. Traveling with popfolk singers to gigs, I quickly developed my own collection of horror stories. In one case I visited a former *shef* of a chalga band. As suggested in the opening epigraph, this term, *shef*, is salient to this chapter. It means the boss or leader of any social event, from focused interaction to teams and groups. We spent the evening in a local tavern in the company of his friend from out of town drinking a fairly large amount of *rakiia* (Bulgarian fruit brandy). I had a ticket for the last night train to Sofia and, so, close to the hour I asked to leave for the train station. My host insisted that I stay a bit more. I knew that one should not refuse a *shef* and the meeting was important to me, so I agreed to delay my departure. When I saw that I was about to miss my train I insisted that I should go. My host gave

his car keys to the person at the table who was the least drunk. He asked that friend to drive him, first, home and me, afterward, to the station. Only after we left the home of my host, the driver realized that no one in the car knew how to reach the train station. We rushed back to the *shef*'s apartment, pulled him back to the car and let him in a drunken drowsiness to guide our way. We drove through the streets in high speed to catch my train at the moment it entered the station.

My worst experience was on the way back to Sofia from a week of video clip shooting at the Black Sea in the car of a record label *shef*. The road from the Black Sea to Sofia usually takes about 5.5 hours. We drove the distance in less than a three hours. At some point the speedometer showed that we drove at 125 m/h. *Tarikat* (reckless) driving is commonly perceived in Bulgaria as a male trait. Popfolk female singers cross this gender code and perform driving aggressiveness as part of their professional skill set. Marta drove always much above speed limit and passed cars even in mountainous two-way one-lane roads. Oftentimes she remained on the left side of the road pulling back to the right only not to crush in cars that were coming from the opposite direction. She taught her assistant how to recognize police traps from afar, however she did not deny using her celebrity charm to avoid fines when police cars pulled her over.

Contrary to the low image of "rug" traveler, *chergar*, traveling indexes power and carries the capital of social mobility. European travelers in the Balkans were the first who transmitted ideas of modernity among local peasants. During the 19th century and throughout the first part of the 20th century (until the communist "revolution" of 1945), a thin crust of Ottoman-Bulgarian and then Bulgarian national elite began circulating different images of the modern Occident. The major agents of circulation were young Bulgarian students who received education in France,

Germany, Britain, Russia, and Western-oriented colleges in Istanbul (Mishkova 2006). Additionally, local Bulgarian literati followed modern European trends that developed first in Serbia and Greece (which Bulgarians perceived as their more "modern" Balkan neighbors).

The socialist regime maintained the link between physical mobility and the mediation of modernity by controlling the movement of people and ideas as well as channels of circulation between Bulgaria and the rest of the world. The more people fit with the official ideals of socialist modernity the more they were allowed to move within Bulgaria (from villages to towns, from town to big cities, and from everywhere to Sofia, to the Eastern bloc countries and, occasionally, to the West. Buchanan (2006) writes that the privilege of traveling was part of the social capital of professional folklore musicians during socialism. Musicians from villages and small towns were allowed to relocate once admitted to one of the state ensembles. Ensemble musicians frequently represented Bulgaria at international festivals.

The hybrid music sound that earned the name chalga emerged in late 1970s as an alternative channel of mobility, circulation and mediation, part of the informal economy that, according to Verdery (1996), provided goods that the state failed or was not interested to supply. Truck drivers, who crossed the land border, smuggled LPs and cassettes of Yugoslavian *novokomponovana narodna muzika* (newly composed folk music), Greek *laiko*, and Turkish *arabesk*. People in villages, towns, and cities close to the border listed to the radio stations and watched television channels of neighboring Balkan countries. The regime restricted this music from being performed in public except in liminal spaces, such as neighborhood taverns, vacation resorts and provincial fairs. Gradually, Romani band *chalgadzhii* like Ivo Papazov-Iriama, and later pioneering chalga singer-stars like *Hisarskiiat pop* (the

Priest from Hisar), Rado Shisharkata, Tosho Todorov and others created a new channel of generic mobility, which undermined the socialist regime of musical circulation. The first chalga sounds mixed Balkan and Western pop, local ethnic traditions and the socialist genres of folklore and *Estrada*. Ivo Papazov endeavored to make free musical movement a trademark of local originality, which he introduced to the World Music audience after 1989 as Balkan Jazz—an allusion to the possibility of pursuing the US path of modernity circulation in the aftermath of the Cold War. The presence of multiple channels of circulation became the trademark of popfolk singer-stars, whose repertoire often consists of covers of Balkan, Middle Eastern, Indian, Western European and even Latin American hits.

Marta narrates the biography of her career in terms of movement, being constantly on the road between spaces and musical genres. She began pursuing music in the socialist era, when in order to be considered a professional musician (of classical, folklore, and pop music), one had to be part of the state's cultural apparatus (music school, conservatory, musical guilds, professional ensembles etc.). In contrast to this model, she developed her engagement with music in the traditional way of learning through practical experience. Marta says that she was drawn to art from an early age, especially to drawing. She also loved singing very much. But this activity was more connected to her life routine. Spending substantial part of her childhood in her grandmothers' village, Marta learned the folklore music that people in her village used to sing. Performing music on stage happened to Marta coincidently during high school. Representatives of local amateur folklore ensembles used to attend occasionally high school artistic activities to scout out talented singers and dancers. Friends who knew about Marta's musical talent pushed her to perform for such scouts. However she did not impress them very much the first time.

They told her to try her luck next time they come. This rejection boosted Marta with motivation.

"During my entire free time I stood by [folklore] ensembles and singers and just absorbed what they sang, what they taught, everything they did. In the following year," Marta says with laughter, "they took me without problem, without a test." The ensemble consisted of 4-5 instrumental musicians and 2-3 female singers, among them Marta. They performed a folklore repertoire during holiday celebrations in Marta's hometown. Performances were usually short, around 20 minutes. The word she uses for these performances is *haltura*, meaning work with fairly low professional standards. The example with which Marta illustrates the *halturistic* character of her first performances with the ensemble is that they performed only live, without technical sound equipment.

Marta shifted from amateur to professional performance when she was accepted to sing in a tavern (*zavedenie*) in her hometown. She performed live with a band the folklore songs that she had learned in the village. Meanwhile she also began travelling to international folklore festivals in other East European socialist countries, such as Yugoslavia and Poland. Marta traveled abroad for the first time in 1988, a year before the fall of the socialist regime. The fall of the socialist regime in 1989 opened new work opportunities for her. In 1990 and 1991 she travelled to Yugoslavia to sing in Serbian *kafana* (taverns) [19]; "you know," she explains, "money here (in Bulgaria *e.l.*) and there (Yugoslavia *e.l.*) was incomparable. That was the simple reason for going abroad, just as it is nowadays." Through contacts in Yugoslavia, Marta and the band with which she performed in Serbia was invited to work in a *kafana* owned by Bosnian immigrants in Istanbul.

[19] *Kafana* is an establishment for social drinking with musical program, typical to Serbia, Macedonia, and Bosnia Herzegovina (e.g. Hofman 2010).

Marta says that when she began traveling to Yugoslavia she did not think that there was any need to widen her repertoire beyond Bulgarian folklore. That was the music on which she was raised, and therefore she saw in this music her artistic expression. The musicians with whom she performed advised her to listen to other kinds of music if she wanted to pursue the career of a singer. So she had to develop the capability of traveling between genres in order to appeal to her diverse audience. Marta followed this advice willingly. She says that she was especially impressed by Serbian and Greek music. Once she began understanding the languages in which the lyrics were sung, she found them poetically beautiful. Marta returned from Yugoslavia and Greece with many albums of local singers and gradually added them to her own repertoire. She emphasizes that her connection with Serbian and Greek music is not merely instrumental or responsive to market needs. The music genres to which she was introduced in her performances abroad changed her professional identity. She developed her own style and own voice by adopting from them motives that fit her character.

After returning to Bulgaria, Marta found a job in a *zavedenie* out of her hometown. She was the singer in a form called "repertoire show" that ran every evening. This "repertoire show" included a magician, a singer, a dancing group, and other attractions. She used to sing about four songs as transitions between other artistic numbers. In her performance Marta included Bulgarian folklore songs together with songs that she had learned in Greece, Serbia, and Turkey. The benefit of participating in the "repertoire show" was that Marta could live and work in the same place without being required to travel. After working for six months in that *zavedenie*, Marta decided to quit her singing job. She wanted to take some time to think about whether she wanted to continue performing music. Her career break was very short. Soon after resigning from the *zavedenie* she was invited to begin working in a newly opened *zavedenie* in Sofia. Marta

says that moving to Sofia was a scary decision for her. Sofia was then a very unsafe place for a young woman from the provinces. She recalls that "these were exactly the years (1994-1995, *e.l.*) of the gangster-thugs (*mutrenskite*), lots of money, mafia groups began to rise." The person who invited Marta convinced her to arrive only for the opening night of the *zavedenie*. However, this night extended into days and weeks. Marta admits that the clientele in that *zavedenie* consisted of the new and infamous post-socialist *shef*s: mafia goons, thugs, businessmen, and politicians. Singing in front of the most powerful people in Bulgaria gave Marta an indication that, career-wise, she was doing pretty well. She managed to integrate in the big city and make a good living from her musical occupation. Just as in her previous working places, Marta performed together with a live band. The musical repertoire at the *zavedenie* was very diverse; "we sang everything, folklore, *Kristal* was then very popular with Toni Dacheva,[20] Serbian music, Greek music, folklore, everything that comes to mind."

Formal education of popfolk music does not exist, and so Marta and all other popfolk singers, with whom I communicated, consider the *zavedenie* their formative experience of becoming professional performers. The role of the *zavedenie* as a substitute to formal training invokes also the derogatory voice of chalga. The socialist regime institutionalized the doctrine that modern music is learned in a formal way, practice grounded in theory and literacy.[21] Singers could become performers of socialist folklore and *Estrada* only if they studied these genres in state music schools and were accepted to work in one of the state music organizations (e.g. Buchanan 2006). Popfolk, on the other hand, relies neither on theory nor on literacy. Singers learn it only through on-site

[20] *Kristal* band with Toni Dancheva are perceived in Bulgaria as the founders of popfolk music as a commercial culture industry. The band emerged as cultural icons whose career was based on commissioned gigs, concerts, and the release of homemade audiocassettes produced by the band's leader Krasimir Hristov (e.g. Dimov 2001).

[21] Stokes (1992) identifies a similar pattern in Turkish folklore music. Formal training with notes indexes high quality of modern European art.

practice, in the traditional manner of rural and low class urban artisans (*zanaiatchiia*). This is the case even for the many singers in the genre, particularly females, who are actually graduates of folklore music schools. There are also rare cases of popfolk singers who received *Estrada* training (Esil Diuran, for example). However, Marta told me that only one of her colleagues entered the genre directly from music school without going through the initiation period of singing in *zavedeniia* (the plural of *zavedenie*). I heard rumors that this particular singer skipped the *zavedenie* stage on the way to becoming a star thanks to close connections between her family and the *shef* of the record label that contracted her.

Marta says that the most important lesson she learned at the *zavedenie* was that singers do a service job that is not very different from waiting on tables. This job requires maximum flexibility, adaptability, and caution not to superimpose one's presence. At the *zavedenie* singers come in contact with many sorts of people who have different kinds of musical taste, from folklore to rock. To satisfy so many tastes, Marta says, she had to learn how to orient her show according to the immediate feedback (in Bulgarian, *obratna vrŭzka*) she received from her audience. In Marta's view, this diversity of expectations is a unique Bulgarian phenomenon that does not exist in neighboring Balkan countries.

Her perception that Bulgarians have an assorted musical taste reiterates the language ideology equation of purification with rational modernization (Bauman and Briggs 2003). Hybridity stands as a counter vector to modernity according to this ideological equation. The more hybrid people see a cultural form the less rational and modern they judge it; insufficient purity in cultural expression indicates primitive social forms and stigmatizes performers (Seizer 2005). Based on her work experience abroad, Marta claims that Serbians, for example, listen almost only to Serbian music, and are not interested so much in genres beyond their local music. As a result, the Serbian equivalents

of popfolk—*turbofolk* and *novokopnovana narodna muzika*—has a recognizable sound because they maintain very close ties with Serbian folklore genres. Slavi Trifonov tends to express an opposite approach to popfolk. He claims that this music is so mixed that it has no (modern) character, no (modern) identity.[22] Similar circumstances prevail, according to Marta, in Greece. The local taste in Bulgaria, on the other hand, is "diluted," (in Bulgarian, *razvodnen*) "10% our music (folklore), 10% Greek, 10% Serbian, 10% Turkish, 10% Ishtar, 10% MTV, and 10% rap." Her job, then, is to satisfy all these elements.

Marta did not mention it, but I assumed that she avoided saying that the rest 30% of singers' repertoire is based on *kiuchek*—oriental belly dance style commonly perceived as the ethnic (i.e. Gypsy) register of chalga (more in detail in the next chapters). She referred to *kiuchek* when explaining that, in terms of repertoire, she never knows beforehand what she will sing. Marta has a tentative song program with which she goes to gigs. She makes changes on the spot both according to the information about the event she collects upon arrival and according to the reactions of the audience she senses while singing. Marta says that the local taste is so "diluted" that she always needs to figure out as quickly as possible in what kind of performance her audience is interested. "In one performance people can tell you that they want *kiuchetsi* (plural of *kiuchek e.l.*). If this is the need, *kiuchetsi* we'll sing," She concludes with laughter.

The time I traveled with Marta to gigs—the 2007 local elections—revealed to me that, above all, she had to orient her performance to the satisfaction of the *shef* of each gig event. Marta was invited to sing in many election campaigns of candidates from different parties. This practice is common in election campaigns in Bulgaria. I was told that since people were not so interested in politics (or are very cynical about it), there's nothing like

[22] Seizer (2005) writes that the basic derogatory approach to Tamil Special Drama is that it is "too mixed," i.e. it does not fit with Tamil language ideology of modernity.

a show of popfolk star free of charge to draw a large crowd to election rallies. When we arrived to the designated location, Marta would inquire about the identity of the party and the name of the candidate. In front of the audience, she endorsed the candidate enthusiastically. For instance, if the candidate represented the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP, the former Communist party), Marta concluded her show with the song *Edna bŭlgarska roza* ("A Bulgarian Rose"), which is commonly identified with socialist nostalgia."[23]

On the way to the gig in Sliven Marta informed me that a local construction firm had ordered her performance. She had no further information, except that it was supposed to be a big event. Usually she gets basic information about her gigs from the impresario of her contracting record label. She gathers more specific details once she arrives to the event. Later I learned that the commissioners of the gig were Sliven's Chamber of Commerce. Together with the municipality and the *shef*s of local big and small construction firms, the Chamber of Commerce produced a festive lunch on St. Dimitŭr's Day to honor construction employees, according to the tradition. The poster advertising the event read, "…a constellation of stars from the record label ____, among them Marta and Yulia (a pseudonym of another popfolk star) will take care of the good mood of the party…."

We arrived around noon to a large open industrial compound. Marta had already fixed her makeup and glued artificial eyelashes on the road, while her assistant was driving. The only thing left was to put on her performance gown. Once

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[23] "A Bulgarian Rose" is a patriotic song in the style of socialist pop (*Estrada*) performed by Sasha Pasheva ("Pasha Hristova - Edna Bulgarska Roza," accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbsVHU0Ig1Y). The song was composed especially for *Zlaten Orfei* 1970 ("the Golden Orpheus")—the annual *Estrada* music festival—and won first prize. This song has a post-socialist remix version performed by the popfolk singer Zara ("Zara-Edna bulgarska roza [remix]," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCTxLCogN5Y).

we arrived she disappeared quickly behind an improvised stage. Meanwhile her assistant took care of hooking up the mixer to the amplifying system of the event.

I went around and observed the performance site. The celebration was already under way. More than 1500 workers were invited to the event. I saw mostly men and a minority of women sitting by long rows of tables loaded with traditional treats for social occasions: grilled meat, sausages, cheese, salads, beer, and *rakiia*. I recognized the *shefs* as they all sat in a special section on an improvised stage covered with green carpet and ornamented with red and white balloons. The workers set on bar benches and simple metal chairs. The *shef*s sat on wedding hall-style chairs ornamented with white covers by round tables covered with white tablecloths and ornamented with red fabric napkins and flower arrangements. Waiters dressed with formal clothes served the *shef*s from a special buffet stand. The *shef*s dined from china plates with metal silverware and drank from glasses. Other waiters, less formally dressed, delivered shared plates of food for the workers' tables. The workers loaded the food on their individual plastic plates, dined with disposable plastic silverware plates and drank from plastic cups. The *shef*s were dressed in suites while the workers wore casual clothing (anything from inexpensive clothes in the latest fashion to worn out and ragged clothes).

It was a very hot fall day. What Bulgarians call "Gypsy Summer" (*Tiigansko Liato*), the equivalent of Indian Fall. Only the tables were protected from the sun. Yulia, a young popfolk rising star, was already singing. She wore tight black pants, black tang top, and a short sleeveless fur coat. At some point she took off her coat and remained only with the tang top. Yulia walked between the tables while singing over *sinback* (the recorded instrumental track). From time to time she stopped by people and danced *kiuchek* with them. She raised her hands up and moved her thighs. At

some point she took off her fur coat and exposed her décolleté and the bottom part of her belly. Yulia let the people kiss her and take pictures hugging her. One person went down on his knees in front of her to express his admiration. She sang her own repertoire: an mix of her popfolk hits and a few folklore songs. The audience reacted to Yulia's singing with both *kiuchek* and folklore circle dances (*horo*). Yulia sang with a wireless microphone, which from time to time went out the reception zone of the sound system. When her voice disappeared one could hear her recorded voice in the sound system. This thing immediately caught my attention. It disturbed me. I experienced it as a failure and felt disregard to what I experienced as Yulia's low professional quality. She did not seem to be disturbed by the sound problem, neither was the audience, especially those who could get so close to this media star, take her pictures with cell phones, touch her, and invite her to a *kiuchek* dance.

At some point Marta showed up from behind the scene and went to arrange the order of songs with her assistant who stood by the sound system. Now she was ready to meet her audience as a gleaming popfolk star. She wore a long bright turquoise satin dress and silver high-heeled shoes. The dress was striking in combination with her long (dyed) blond hair. The dress had deep décolleté that emphasized her silicon-enhanced breasts. For over an hour Marta sang while walking between the tables, greeting people, giving autographs, and taking notes with greeting requests, letting them hug her and take pictures, dancing with them momentarily, exchanging kisses, signing autographs, receiving flowers. A few men tried to initiate a more aggressive physical contact; a few others followed her trying to catch her attention. Gently but assertively she rejected these men. Unlike Yulia, Marta was a bit more reserved in her physical contacts. She was older and more established star than Yulia and could demand more respect. Marta sang her trademark popfolk hits and a

few folklore songs. People stood up and danced *kiuchek* to her popfolk hits and circle folklore dances to her folklore songs, but with greater excitement than the way they danced to the previous singer. Marta did not dance *kiuchek* at all, neither with the audience nor alone. At one point she also crossed the invisible line between the workers' and the *shef*s' section. She approached the tables, greeted the guests with eye contact and smile, and stopped for a minute or so by those whom she recognized as the *shef*s giving them special attention as if she was singing personally to them.

I learned later that multiple functions make people the *shef*s of gigs. Above all, these are people who order and pay for the gig. Hence singers need to elevate them with aura of pop stardom. Additionally, singers are tuned to recognize and provide special attention to the guests whom the event *shef* designated as VIPs or who are known themselves as *shef*s. This skill is important because in order to pursue a longstanding star career a singer needs to build a wide network of connections within the money elite. I heard from many different sources that there are female singers who boost their demand by being available for sexual service to *shef*s after or outside gigs. Singers enter the market by signing a contract of dependency on the *shef* of one of the record labels. Since the market demand is for young singers, for new faces, and singers need to pay by themselves for the production of songs and video clips, veteran singers are expected to secure their star status by marrying a rich man and giving birth to his child (in case of separation he may provide financial support to mother and child). In return the husband becomes the sponsor of the singer's star career freeing her from dependency on the record label *shef* and the exhausting job of frequent travel to gigs.

I walked all over the compound during Marta's number observing the performance, documenting it with my video and stills cameras, and trying not to disturb the show. I walked freely in the workers' section but did not dare enter the

*shef*s' section. I sensed intuitively that it was inappropriate. Once our ways crossed. Marta made a brief eye contact. She rolled her eyes and blew her cheeks. I understood it as frustration with the difficult conditions. I smiled back to show my solidarity. I was flattered that she used me to quit her stage persona for a moment and relate to me with her off-stage personality. The entire interaction took a second or so. Then she quickly turned back to her star persona.

The gig went well and the people looked pleased. As her number ended Marta ordered us to enter the car and be ready to leave the place for the next gig—endorsing a candidate for the mayor of a small village. There was still time, so we stopped on the way at a gas station. Marta entered the restroom followed by her assistant. She carried her clothes and the assistant carried the makeup box. Within a few minutes Marta changed back from a popfolk star to an ordinary urban woman.

Artificial popfolk star and artificial modernity

The ethnographic narrative about Marta frames the scope of this chapter in which I analyze how, by performing artificial star personage, popfolk singers intertextualize in the democratic present the role of *Estrada* singers—the pop music genre which the socialist regime designed in order to popularize its mediation of European modernity. Two premises tie artificial star personae with modernity mediation. The first is that modernity is exclusively a Western European cultural property, which cannot grow naturally in marginal European countries like Bulgaria. The second is that, to modernize, Bulgarians need to follow cultural forms and practices of Occidentalism imported and implemented by the local representatives of external modern powers. In this sense, *Estrada* stars were deliberatively created to popularize Soviet modernity brokered by the Bulgarian Communist Party. Directing my focus particularly to the poetics of artificial individuality I show how popfolk star-

singers have inherited from socialist *Estrada* singers not only the role of modernity popularizers but also its underlying politics of inequality between the two discursive domains of the Balkans and Europe and the consequent protectionist culture of modernity mediation. Poetic devices of artificiality, like lip-syncing (on which I will expand later), allow singers to remediate aura of modern stardom, as seen on TV, in face-to-face performance sites, i.e. in gigs (in Bulgarian, *uchastie*, from the verb *uchastvam* "to take part," "to participate"). This aura comes from the fact that singers' star personage indexes dependency on a *shef*—a patron boss who has means to replicate artificially the appearance of modern reality that presumably exists naturally in another European locus (but not in Bulgaria).

The two premises composing the semiotics of artificial pop star and modernity mediation are prior to socialism. They are part of the Balkanist metadiscourse that formulates the image of the Balkans both in Europe and in Bulgarian nation-building—the Balkans is Europe's incomplete Self, the prime locus of pre-modern European nostalgia and fears, Europe's cradle of traditions and barbarism (or more, idiomatically, backwardness). As Diana Mishkova (2006) argues, Balkanism frames also the larger discourse of Bulgarian modernization. Since the 19th century, Bulgarian nation builders (she mainly deals with intellectuals) have advanced modernization by following in the footsteps of "more modern" (but still marginally European) neighbor societies, above all Greece and Serbia. These routes of modernization, however, have always led to modern empires that turned the Balkans into a contested field of influence.

Bulgaria was created during the late 19th and early 20th century as part of the competition for power in the Balkans between Russia, the Ottoman Empire, France, Great Britain and Germany. The US and the USSR decided the Bulgaria would be

part of the Soviet block after WWII. After 1989, Bulgaria shifted to the Western block by joining NATO, taking loans from the IMF and joining the EU. The way from the Balkans to Europe in evolutionary terms represents the direction to modernity while the way from Europe to the Balkans shows the devolution from modernity to tradition, and worse to backwardness and barbarism (Neuberger 2006).

Both the evolutionary and devolutionary paths encapsulate a common local historical view that Bulgaria was created and has emerged as a field of experimentation with different economic models of capitalism (for Bulgarians, the form of modern economy). The history of this Balkan nation-state is the history of competing local power-holders handling their debt to global creditors. During socialism there was one creditor, the USSR, and one explicit line of credit—being a field of experimentation with socialist modernization. Bulgarians identify the 1989 regime change with the collapse of this line followed by constant attempts to construct a new relationship of exchange—experimenting with forms of capitalism in return for credit.

I connect this historical view with popfolk by arguing that poetic devices of artificiality key local communication to the experience of dependence on external capital. Such devices are prevalent in local speech beyond the pop music context allowing Bulgarians to call attention to what they see as inherent intertextaul gaps (Briggs and Bauman 1992) between being Bulgarian and being European. Be that music, be that literature, be that film, be that everyday speech, Bulgarians identify representations of Bulgaria as modern as long as they are transparent with images from societies that metonymically stand in Bulgaria for Europe (which in Bulgaria stands metonymically for modernity and the global world). At the same time, people judge representations of Bulgaria as authentic as long as their transparency with

equivalent representations of Europe is an admitted mimicry (Bhabha 1994). Bulgarians judge economic power according to the material ability to perform cultural forms that replicate closely "original" modern European societies. Being able to replicate an appearance of European pop stars means that a singer is sponsored by an affluent *shef* who is linked in a chain of patronage that goes outside Bulgaria.

Keying speech to artificiality leaves a noticeable gap between "the original thing" that presumably comes from Europe (wherever its location may be) and its local Bulgarian replica. Tracing sources of imitation is a way to track the point of departure and route of modernity on the move to Bulgaria. Thus, for instance, the jazz and pop singer Vasil Petrov has earned his acclaim after 1989 as the Bulgarian Frank Sinatra, the Romani singer Dzhago is proudly presented as the Gypsy Pavarotti, the socialist rock group *Shturtsite* ("the Crickets") are revered as the Bulgarians Beatles and the popfolk singer Toni Storaro has established his status as the Bulgarian Vassilis Karras (a Greek *laiko* mega-star). "The same thing but totally different" (*sŭshtoto no sŭvsem razlichno*) is the idiomatic self-ironic phrase with which Bulgarians authenticate these pop music stars and other cultural replicas.

Scholars of Bulgarian music have analyzed the making and breaking of the socialist path to musical modernization by usually drawing links between folklore and chalga. Dimov (2001), for instance, defends the legitimacy of chalga music explaining that it has inherited the cultural function of folklore during socialism. He stresses that folklore was designed to be a meeting place between Bulgarian vernacular traditions and modern national life. Buchanan (2006) writes that the socialist authorities engineered folklore to represent a dialectical flow of tradition from an authentic local source or spring (in Bulgarian *izvor*) to modernity. Dimov argues that chalga (or as he prefers to call it, ethnopop), on the other hand, has

emerged from and mediates the local position of Bulgarian culture within a worldwide network of capitalist cultural circulation, which hybridizes global pop with ethnic Balkan music traditions.

The opening ethnographic narrative as well as the one that will close this chapter point to another link with socialist musical culture. Popfolk singers perform in gigs the reconstitution of modernity in post-1989 Bulgaria by abandoning the improvisational character of chalga in favor of artificial star persona as developed in *Estrada*. Both aesthetically and economically the process of decontextualizing *Estrada*'s poetics of artificiality and recontextualizing it in chalga gave birth to popfolk. Linking chalga with *Estrada* addresses an important point, which Dimov leaves outside his folklore-chalga intertextaul line. Being an adherent of the postmodern vision of World Music, he does not pay attention how the post-1989 transformation of the political economy of modernity circulation to Bulgaria (from dependency on the USSR to dependency on the EU and the US) circumscribes his recontextualization of one invented tradition—folklore—in another—chalga (and its synonyms, popfolk and ethnopop). I do accept though Dimov's emphasis on global circulation rather than on teleological flow from tradition to modernity, since it depicts very well the life reality of singers, who testify that they would ideally like to perform folklore or pop music but had to turn to chalga in order to survive. This is one of the reasons I think popfolk is a safer generic term for singers to communicate with their audience. Popfolk resonates with the same vision of *Estrada*: replicating the same pop music culture like "real modern societies."

Socialist Estrada and post-1989 chalga and popfolk

Estrada was created in the 1960s in response to the local popularity of foreign pop. In accordance with the regime's loyalty to the USSR, cultural officials

engineered music that replicated aesthetically Soviet *Estrada*—an entertainment stage music that draws upon Russian pre-Soviet circus music (MacFadyen 2003), German *Schlager*, Italian *Canzone* and French *Chanson*. Just as in Soviet *Estrada*, singers were supposed to perform an image of modern personality (*lichnost*), that is, pop stars. MacFadyen (2001) writes that the aura of pop star personality in Soviet Estrada came from the perception of gap between singers' stage persona and their "authentic" artistic self. Especially during the stagnant Brezhnev era, this gap allowed Russians to imagine some individual agency under tight state control. While I have not researched Bulgarian Estrada yet, I suspect that in Bulgaria the aura of *lichnost* was located in another perception of gap, that is, the gap between singers' performance of stardom and ordinary people's experience of individual limitations and dissatisfaction as a result of top-down imposed communality.

Estrada stars were state-employees in the most profound sense. They stood in the showcase of Bulgarian socialism performing the claimed success of the regime to generate modern pop culture. Unlike folklore musicians who could claim vernacular musical roots, the entire career of Estrada singers depended on the state. Singers received training at state music conservatories and academies, recorded songs at the state-owned record label *Balkanton*, appeared on state electronic and printed media and gave concerts and gigs organized by the governmental impresario agency. While local literati did not consider *Estrada* a "revolutionary" musical form in socialist realist terms (like folklore, e.g. Buchanan 2006)—it aimed at entertaining not at educating—they recognized the ability of Estrada to promote a "refined" popular taste.

People usually name Lili Ivanova, Emil Dimitrov, Vasil Naidenov, Kichka Bodurova, Orlin Goranov, Kristina Dimitrova, Toni Dimitrova, Bogdana

Karadocheva, Silviia Katsarova, Lea Ivanova and Duet Riton among the classical stars of this genre. Very few *Estrada* singers still perform and release new songs to these days. There is a small but fairly steady market demand for concerts and gigs by top Estrada stars. There is also the exceptional case of *Estrada* singer Veselin Marinov who became a star after 1989, allegedly by creating close ties within the local business and political circles. However, overall, *Estrada* is not a living genre, but a cultural relic with which Bulgarians usually both express nostalgia for the socialist past and reservations about the democratic present.

The fact that *Estrada* singers oftentimes lip-synced rather than sang live does not prevent Bulgarians from expressing high esteem for singers' vocal qualities. This fact might be surprising, since, just as Partan (2007) writes in regard to Soviet *Estrada*, voice is the most prominent characteristic with which Bulgarians recognize singers' stardom. I was told that singers had very heavy performance schedule and so they used to preserve their voice by switching to lip-syncing in less important jobs, like gigs in seaside restaurants. Another reason for lip-syncing was that in festive concerts singers needed to perform perfect voice that would sound more modern thereby creating a sense of heightened formality. Attending myself *Estrada* concerts during my fieldwork, I witnessed that many singers lip-synced when they appeared as guest performers in non-musical occasions or in the concerts of other singers. In their own concerts, singers would sing over their *sinback* (recorded tracks). Only once I attended an *Estrada* concert that was performed with live band. This fact prompts me to argue there is also an implicit positive aspect in devices of artificiality like lip-syncing. As I wrote earlier, *Estrada* was created as a socialist realist form; its designers aimed at changing "life as it is" (the "backward" Balkans) by propagating

an artificial archetype of "life as it ought to be."[24] In other words, *Estrada* mediated a futurist communist reality by bringing it artificially to the present and advertising it to the masses thus creating an entertainment affect. Lip-syncing was one of the poetic devices, which mediated this sort of reality. Singers did not fabricate their live voice but performed the gap that still existed with Bulgaria's promised future.

Chalga echoed the collapse of this promise. Once Bulgaria lost its Soviet creditor, "life as it is" took over "life as ought to be." For ordinary Bulgarians, this break of division between vernacular and official (i.e. mediated) levels of social life signals that the nation lost its ability to emulate modern European reality. With no state control and external conditions for credit, Bulgarians had no model of modernity to catch up with and, hence, they were left to regress back in the backward Balkans. Historically, this music emerged in the early 1980s signaling the end of state monopoly over local popular culture production. As I wrote earlier, chalga invokes associations of the post-socialist music sounds with modernity crisis. Bulgarians are suspicious of an eclectic music style that has emerged from the consumer market rather than from the cultural elite (which, at large, still maintains socialist realist aesthetics). This suspicion connotes with a common local notion that the masses cannot generate spontaneously culture that is at the same time popular and modern; only the state can direct it from above.

The repertoire of songs depicting the post-socialist transition as modernity crisis is vast.[25] One of them, Tiger Tiger" (*Tigre tigre*), I do want to present now, since it connects crisis with the shift of *shef* position from the paternalist state to

[24] For the "is" vs. "ought" formula of socialist realism see Taylor 1998. Slavoj Zizek (2009: 174-175) analyzes the archetype, i.e. "the typical," as a symptom of hegemony. For a theoretical analysis of socialist realism, see Mozheiko 2009.

[25] For a comprehensive discursive analysis of chalga song lyrics, see Dimov 2001.

paternalist Mafiosi and thugs. The song, performed by Rado "the Pinetree Cone" (*Shisharkata*) and "The priest" is a cover of the Romani traditional song "Fikre, Fikre;" it is a top "classical" chalga hit. One of the comments to the song's clip on YouTube[26] claims that "Tiger Tiger" is the anthem of Bulgarian Mafiosi in the 1990s:

(A secretary voice) Hello, boss, someone is looking for you on the mobile phone	*Alo, shefe, tŭrsiat te po mobifona*
(A 1st male voice) Hello, who's there?	*Alo, koe be?*
(A 2nd male voice) Hey, bro, stop with these pyramids (money schemes *e.l.*), pharons	*Abre, brato, stiga ctia piramidi, faroni bre.*
Give money to do business	*Dai pari da pravim bisnes*
(1st male voice)	*Ya pa toa….*
Oh Tiger Tiger, do you have money?	*O, Tigre Tigre, imash li pari?*
Do you have money? Pretty women	*Imash li pari? Hubavi zheni*
Oh Tiger Tiger, don't you have money?	*O, Tigre Tigre, niamash li pari?*
Don't you have money? Old Nannies	*Niamash li pari? Stari babichki*
Refrain: Ahh, hopala, hey wrestlers[27] give me money	*Ahh, hopala, haide bortsi daite mi pari*
Give me money, stupid women	*Daite mi pari, glupavi zheni*
Ahh, hopala, hey wrestlers give me money	*Ahh, hopala, haide bortsi daite mi pari*
Give me money, songs to dawn	*Daite mi pari, pesni do zori*
Oh Tiger Tiger, do you have money?	O, *Tigre Tigre, imash li pari?*
Do you have money? Western cars	*Imash li pari? Zapadni koli*
Oh Tiger Tiger, don't you have money?	*O, Tigre Tigre, niamash li pari?*
Don't you have money? Old Zhiguli[28]	*Niamash li pari? Stari Zhiguli*

[26] "popa i rado - tigre, tigre," accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2Ls6HPT0-g.

[27] "Wrestlers" (*bortsi*) is a reference to the former sports elite of socialist Bulgaria. After 1989, particularly wrestlers and weight lifters became symbols of the new illicit money elite by working as strongmen for Mafiosi-thugs [e.g. Ivanova 2002], who oftentimes owned insurance, security, and money exchange and lending firms. In chapter 1, I will discuss the role of Mafiosi's and wrestlers' music clubs in the popfolk business model.

[28] Zhiguli was a model of the Soviet Russian car brand "Lada" produced between 1970-1985. The video clip juxtaposes Zhiguli with what one of the comments on youtube identifies as a 1991 model of BMW E30.

Refrain: Ahh, hopala, hey wrestlers give me money	
	Ahh, hopala, haide bortsi daite mi pari
Give me money, Western cars	*Daite mi pari, zapadni koli*
Ahh, hopala, hey wrestlers give me money	*Ahh, hopala, haide bortsi daite mi pari*
Give me money, songs to dawn	*Daite mi pari, pesni do zori*
Oh Tiger Tiger, do you have money?	*O, Tigre Tigre, imash li pari?*
Do you have money? You have no worries	*Imash li pari? Niamash kahŭri*
Oh Tiger Tiger, don't you have money?	*O, Tigre Tigre, niamash li pari?*
Don't you have money? Your hair is white	*Niamash li pari? Beli ti kosi*
Refrain: Ahh, hopala, hey wrestlers give me money	
	Ahh, hopala, haide bortsi daite mi pari
Give me money, you have no worries	*Daite mi pari, niamash kahŭri*
Ahh, hopala, hey wrestlers give me money	*Ahh, hopala, haide bortsi daite mi pari*
Give me money, songs to dawn	*Daite mi pari, pesni do zori*

The thirst in Bulgaria for grassroots popular music was so big in the late 1980s and early 1990s that the new music industry to which people refer as chalga provided unparalleled money profit opportunities to Bulgaria's first business entrepreneurs. And since only the former socialist elite and black market operators had available capital to begin private businesses, most big post-socialist entrepreneurships operated as schemes of stealing and laundering illicit money (i.e. money stolen from the state or money accumulated from black market trade). For instance, Georgi Stoev, a Bulgarian mobster who crossed the lines and became an anti-crime journalist, published (until his assassination in 2008) a series of books about the local organized crime pointing out the close ties of the leading producers of the genre (above all, Slavi Trifonov) with mafia-run firms. The journalist Georgi Stoianov (2008) adds information particularly about the 500,000 German Marks, which the Mafiosi brothers Vasil (assassinated in 1995) and Georgi (assassinated in 2005) Ilievi donated

to the Viktor and Nencho Kŭsŭmovi, the two founding brothers of "Ara Audio-Video," the second largest chalga record label.

The Finish ethnomusicologist Vesa Kurkela (1997) provides a fascinating account of how Mafia-run insurance companies, rather than the police and legal systems, eradicated the market of pirated chalga music recordings thereby enforcing copyright observation norms in Bulgaria during the early 1990s. The manner of eradication was brutal and simple. The production of chalga hits began with low-tech recording of live performances on audio demo cassettes. Gradually the production technique was upgraded to recording in studio and to the format of commercial cassettes and CDs. Street booths (*sergii*) were the most common sites of distribution. A fact that Kurkela does not mention was that street booths functioned as more than vending points, but also as the first enterprises of popfolk record labels. The most famous example is Mitko Dimitrov, who was a factory engineer during the socialist era. After 1989 he quit his job and opened a music cassettes booth in the open market of his hometown, Dimitrovgrad. Within less than a decade the booth developed into *Payner Music* the biggest popfolk record label, which owns also a music TV station (*Planeta Televiziua*) and a nationwide chain of music discotheques (*Planeta Payner Club*). Informants praised to me Dimitrov's great business skills, but in the same breath shared with me rumors that his music business was a channel for laundering "privatized" former state money. Kurkela writes that, to protect their commercial products, producers used to register them with one of the mafia-run insurance companies, which sent the company's strongmen—the legendary *bortsi* (wrestlers) from the song "Tiger Tiger"—to patrol the streets in search of pirate recordings. Vendors who were caught selling such products were beaten with no mercy and the recordings were confiscated. Within a very short time, pirate commercial chalga

recordings disappeared altogether. Meanwhile the market of pirate foreign pop music still prospered to such an extent that Bulgaria was for a while the biggest global exporter of pirate music CDs. A popfolk music producer once illustrated to me his success as the owner of a pirate foreign pop CD factory with a story that Bill Clinton, on his first presidential visit to Bulgaria, asked his hosts to make special effort to close this factory down.

Lip-syncing is not a component of the early chalga wave, first of all because Bulgarians mostly received chalga aurally (through audiocassettes), only later visually (live performance and video clips). Also, the mediated soundscape of chalga replicated spontaneous live performance rather than polished studio recording. Since the state controlled the entire local broadcasted media, pioneering chalga musicians could record their gigs only on homemade audiocassettes that were sold by street vendors. The first chalga star-singer was a mysterious persona called "The Priest from Hisar" (*Hisarskiiat pop*) whom people recognized solely by his recorded voice accompanied by a simple synthesizer.[29] Interestingly, the addition of face and real name (Dimitŭr Andonov) to this persona weakened rather than invigorated his star status.

Wedding bands, most famously Papazov-Ibriiama's "*Orkestŭr Trakiia*," used to record cassettes in village weddings that could attract tens of thousands of people. Such weddings were de-facto the first popular music concerts that were not organized

[29] A few of Andonov's emblematic hits are:
"Give Your Heart" (*Dai si sarceto*), accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpdW8DClIm8.
"A Cigarette" (*Edna cigara*), accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsZf8duDBMo&feature=related.
"It Hurts Me" (*Tejko mi e*), accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xLKWyVpg4U&feature=related.
"Nine Mountains" (*Devet planini*), accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZyU7Fb8vUs&feature=related.
"I Love You" (*Obicham te*), accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwSk8oeN7xA&feature=related.

by the state. While this sort of chalga—wedding bands—is more instrumental than vocal, the sound of liveliness came from the emphasis of wedding bands on improvisation and fusion of acoustic and electrical instruments. Finally, Toni Dacheva the most famous singer of post-1989 chalga did not earn her stardom on her own. She was hired to add the vocal component to "*Kristal band*," a musical entrepreneurial project of Krasimir Hristov, a Turkish-Bulgarian musician from the southeastern town of Yambol. The band acquired fame with their cover of the Serbian hit "The Stones are Falling Down" (*Kamŭnite padat*), sang by Andon Sŭbev.[30] The singer Toni Dacheva, who joined the band in 1987 until quitting to pursue an independent career in 1998, shaped the model of popfolk singer-star, which defines the genre at present.[31] Performing without a band required Toni Dacheva to shift to singing with *sinback* or "full playback" (i.e. lip-sync).

The development of commercial musical industry and media in Bulgaria (since the early 2000s) led to the emergence of *popfolk* as a generic term and the marginalization of the register of *chalga*. Bulgarians usually use the Romani dance music of *kiuchek* as a referential index of *chalga*. *Popfolk* (or in its diminutive *folk*), on the other hand, signifies an industrial form produced in the cartel of a few record labels and performed by contractor star-singers. Aesthetically, popfolk does not consist of live instrumental music but of the performance of lip-syncing or at least *sinbacking* singers. In this sense, gigs or concerts do not define the locations of liveliness anymore, rather the studio recording and the video clip set do.

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[30] "Камъните Падат - Андон Събев. Супер Качество," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKZay5X5TRs.

[31] Among Toni Dacheva and "Kristal" band's greatest hits are:
"Chocolates Candies" (*Shokoladi bonboni*) (together with the socialist *Estrada* star Mustafa Chaushev), accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjDlqj39fAs.
"Three Kilos of Bananas" (*Tri kila banani*), accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr_C_rCcsbQ.
"Poor and Rich" (*Bedni i bogati*), accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsTvf6UySeg.

This aesthetics of emphasized artificiality point to the return of the political economy of *Estrada* modified to private economy. This time singers can seek stardom by entering the production line of those record labels owned by *shef*s (and allegedly sponsored by bigger mafia *shef*s, who are themselves sponsored by foreign *shef*s). The cartel of labels monopolizes the performance and media market in a way that provides their singers with a protected business environment. If the *shef* wills it, a contractor singer will become a star; she will record songs, shoot video clips, be invited to gigs and receive media exposure. The gender hierarchy of this dependency is fairly explicit. Singers are predominantly women while all *shef*s are men. Women singers can gain some individual agency over their star career by securing for themselves a private *shef*, i.e. rich man who, in return for marriage and child, would release them from the need to link performance of stardom with market revenue.

The return of the *Estrada* structure of patriarchal dependency adapted to capitalist economy might sound grim to readers who seek the "authentic" voice of an individual artist. MacFadyen (2002) writes that this expectation has preserved the relevance of prominent Soviet Estrada stars even after the disintegration of the USSR. Partan (2007) summarizes this expectation of artistry behind stage artificiality when lamenting that post-Soviet Russian pop music (called *popsa*, the equivalent of Bulgarian popfolk) "has gradually pushed aside the other genres that existed in Soviet Estrada, making them unprofitable or unmarketable. Today's pop stars can be roughly divided into two groups: old voices with new faces [Estrada stars *e.l*] and new faces with no voices [popsa stars *e.l*]" (ibid: 493). I often encountered similar distinctions made by older Bulgarians who reflected with nostalgia on socialist modernity. Younger Bulgarians, on the other hand, did not share this opinion. From them I usually heard that chalga was too crude and too simplistic. Popfolk, on the other hand,

was more modern; it replicated global pop music trends, similarly to the way Estrada was when it was a living genre.

The groove of artificiality

Keying Balkan musical elements to artificiality, I argue, is what infuses popfolk live shows with groove. I relate to this term—groove—as defines by Keil and Feld (2005). It is pleasure generated from experiencing worldview encoded in musical time feel. With indices of artificiality, singers turn music that otherwise connotes with chalga into Balkan music on the way to become Western pop. Popfolk artificiality is more ambivalent than the artificiality of *Estrada*, which was designed to mediate an unequivocal evolution. The question whether popfolk performers mediate evolution or devolution always remains open for debate. The role of singers is to convince that their performance indeed mediates evolution. The audience should be guaranteed that they observe a real star and not (what a TV commentator once called a famous popfolk singer) "a village prostitute." Singers do so by ornamenting their gigs with many indices of artificiality that indicate how, indeed, this singer is backed by a strong *shef*.

The phenomenological concept of *genba* in Japanese hip-hop (Condry 2006) is relevant to my ethnographic narration of the client patron relationship between popfolk stars and *shef*s. Condry writes that *genba* (literary, "place where actually something happens, appears, or is made," ibid: 89) originated in Samurai martial arts and later circulated to Japanese self-imagination. *Genba* formulates location or locale (Gupta and Ferguson 1997)—that is, social interactions in which people perform Japanese identity through rhetoric of Samurai-type combat. He suggests employing *genba* beyond concrete situations but more as a speech event in Japan that "can be applied broadly to sites that become a focus of people's energies and where

something is produced" (Condry 2006: 6). In the context of Japanese hip-hop, Condry maintains that *genba* keys this music to a dialectical combat of glocalization. Japanese performers, producers and consumers localize in their social reality idioms of African-American racial struggle imported to Japan via channels of global music commerce by keying those idioms to Samurai martial tradition.

Applying Condry's phenomenological approach to popfolk scenes of encounter, particularly gigs, I argue that lip-syncing and other features of star artificiality organize Bulgarians' attention to another experience of global-local interaction, which is not combative but transitive. All conversations about popfolk singers lip-syncing on stage almost always started by taking this practice as a sign of crisis. People complained to me that, after democracy came, nothing remained real in Bulgaria. Only longer conversations and closer observation revealed to me the other aspect of artificiality—its mimic transparency with Western pop. It took me some time to link the derogatory and affirmative lines with a motive of "catching up" (*navaksvane*) that underlies the groove of intertextual gap with modern Europe. Bulgarians take it as a matter of fact that being one of the last Balkan dominions to attain national independence from the Ottoman Empire means that modernity has arrived to Bulgaria at the end, after all other European nations (except Albania, maybe). Bulgarians see their tardiness as chronic; they perpetually fall behind the "natural" pace of modernity (i.e. modernity as reflected from any of the locations of Occident). Artificiality is a manner of accelerating modernization, or more idiomatically, compensating for Bulgarian tardiness.

The strong self-perception of falling behind the Occident is what makes the performance of popfolk star artificiality a risky business. Successful performances allow singers to appear as models of almost in step with contemporary pop music

trends in Europe. Failed performance runs the hazard of becoming subject of practical jokes. People derogate failed performance with idioms of Balkan backwardness, such as villager, Gypsy, simpleminded, and link them with classical literary satires of modernity failure. Singers explained to me that the audience derogates and mocks them while at the same time admiring them as pop stars for being so explicitly artificial on stage. Singers-informants were cognizant of their need to satisfy these contradicting expectations in a way that will enhance their demand for gigs. I learned that making artificiality seem original did not determine success or failure of performance. Convincing artificiality had to do with economic and political capabilities to produce visual and vocal appearance of contemporary Western pop stars. As I mentioned above, being able to take the risk of performing artificiality is the first step toward embarking on a professional popfolk music career. Lip-syncing in live shows is one of the main ways whereby singers call attention to the fact that they represent a *shef* with capital of circulating particular imagination of modern Europe to Bulgaria.

On the road between the Balkans and Europe

Diana Mishkova (2006) writes that, although Bulgarian national imagination can be defined as an unequivocal quest for Occidentalism, this quest has been turbulent because the Occident has never arrived to Bulgaria through one path and in a clear-cut form. Competing ideologies of European modernity have formulated what the Occident means, where it is located, which roads leads to it and where they pass. The mutual point of all these ideologies is a perception of the Balkan Peninsula as liminal to European modenrity, particularly the former Balkan dominions of the Ottoman Empire (the metonym of the Orient in European discourse of modernity). These lands are in Europe but their people are not real Europeans, i.e. not modern.

France, Germany and Britain have been standing as quintessential European loci, whose residents Balkan people should emulate in order to modernize. Russia is a more ambivalent location of European modernity. On one hand, Bulgarians recognize it as the national "liberator" from the Ottoman rule. On the other hand, historically Russia is not included within Occidental Europe but is considered more a Eurasian imperial power. Seeing themselves as the furthest eastern frontier of the Balkans ("the last hole on the caval" as the colloquial proverb goes),[32] in the twilight zone between liminality and complete otherness to Europe (the Muslim Middle East stands in Bulgaria as the metonym of complete otherness), Bulgarians have been seeing the road to and from Europe as going through other more modern Balkan countries, above all Greece and Serbia, but also Ottoman Istanbul and Romania—all of them the most immediate sources of popfolk cover hits.

Bulgarian literature, the popular media and everyday speech are saturated with phrases and narratives about Bulgarian personage living on a road between Europe and its liminal southeastern margins. The anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Carol Silverman told me that, when villagers in the Rhodope Mountains (southeast Bulgaria) go to Plovdiv (the second largest city in Bulgaria and the regional capital), they say "I am going to Europe" (*Otivam do Evropa*). An excerpt from Bulgarian newspaper dated 1995 reveals how being on the way to Europe enfolds strong local anxieties of liminality on the verge of complete otherness:

[32] This proverb is part of a practical joke from the socialist era, when Bulgarians used to add their professional titles on door nameplates, for example Eng. Dimitrov and Dr. Petkova. On one apartment appeared the name P.D.K Hristov. After many speculations one of the neighbors knocked on the door to ask Mr. Hristov for the meaning of his title. The answer was that the three letters were initials of *poslednata dupka v kavala* (the last hole in the kaval), meaning Mr. Hristov's ultimate marginality was the only professional expertise he could add to his name. The joke ironizes Bulgarians' apparent pretense of performing modernity (being engineer or doctor) vs. the reality of being the last stop before the Orient.

"Europe is a dream. You see yourself in France, you move on to Holland, by the well-lit roads you know you are in Belgium, a moment later you are in Germany, you hear Mozart and ask yourself, are you still in Germany or in Austria, when a grain of sand gets in your eye, you wake up and realize that you are in Slovakia, hey brother, there's a problem, says the customs agent, who blackmails you into giving him 100 marks, no problem, says the agent, as you approach Hungary you get sand in your other eye, your eyes start to water, hey brother, there's a problem-your clothes aren't the right size for the Hungarian customs officer, but that's no problem, brother-your shoes fit him just fine, above the sand like graveside crosses stand the spires of cathedrals, but even these marks of civilization gradually disappear, the sand has buried the border with Romania, but some uniformed scorpion explains that Romania-that's him, and that you have to take your shirt off in Romania, you wish you could fly, but you crawl across the desert towards Bulgaria" (Kulekov 1995: 11, quoted from Pilbrow 2005: 125). Important to mention, deserts do not exist in the physical Bulgarian landscape, but more than a couple of thousand miles further east.

The 19th century fictitious hero-villian Ganio Balkanski (Konstantinov [1895] 2010), a small-scale rose oil salesman, authored by Aleko Konstantinov (1863-1897) is the quintessential personification of Balkan liminality in Buglarian self-imagination. The travelogue of this "modern Bulgarian" (as Konstantinov calls him ironically, if not oxymoronically) throughout Europe and then back in Bulgaria is composed as short tragic-comic incidents. The better-known European section of Ganio Balkanski's travelogue is narrated from the viewpoint of Europeanized compatriots: Bulgarian students abroad. The leitmotif of those incidents is Bai Ganio (the colloquial diminutive of Ganio Balkanski) shaming them in front of local

Europeans (who represent the quintessential modern civilized gaze) by exhibiting stereotypical boorish Balkan behavior.

Roumen Daskalov (2001) argues that this clash between Bai Ganio's "savage" national pride and the shame of his educated compatriots echoes a local debate between Bulgarian elitist literati and populist nationalists; the first camp sees in Bai Ganio the inherent inferiority of Bulgarian society to European civilization while the latter identify in him either the new local bourgeoisie which misunderstands modernity or local frustrations with unfulfilled promises of Bulgarians' becoming an integral part of Europe. Mary Neuberger (2006) locates Bai Ganio's trade of rose oil within Western tendencies of appropriating cultural objects from its colonialized peripheries thereby turning them into commodities that index exotic traditions. Buchanan (2006) points to this dynamics of appropriation and commodification in regard to the post-socialist World Music scene. The State and Radio Female Vocal Choir earned international acclaim for performing its socialist engineered form of modernized folklore (*obrabotki*) under new label, *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares*.

Similarly to these examples, the profession of popfolk singer *(as Marta testifies)* requires constant life on the road from one gig to the next in Bulgaria or in *Western Europe and the US to perform for* Bulgarian *émigrés*. The difference is that singers shift the course of the travel. They do not turn local Bulgarian culture into commodities of exotica in the modern world but turn European culture into commodities of occidental modernity in Bulgaria. Singers are commissioned to generate a momentary dream that the road has been completed. As media celebrities, their role is to bring audio-visual images of the modern world, as shown on the

screen, to social events Bulgarians associate with real life Balkan locality (which is by definition recursive to modernity).

Bulgarians call this real life locality as *bitie*, mundane life of struggles for survival (similar to the Russian concept of *byt* that stands as an opposite realm to the sublime soul, e.g. Lemon 2000). The art of popfolk music singers is to perform a convincing illusion of arrival but to limit it with registers of *bitie* that remind the audience that arrival is only a dream, by no means an accurate reality. The reason is that both audience and singers see one main difference between Bulgarian and European *bitie.* My informants told me that European societies are modern by the fact that the state provides ordinary people with material means to choose how to live as individuals. In Bulgaria, on the other hand, a thin crust of money oligarchy that runs business organizations holds those means. During socialism the party oligarchy built its business conglomerate within the state. The post-socialist oligarchy privatized this conglomerate and adapted it to the private market economy. Both during the socialist state economy and afterward, I was told, to survive individually one needs to enter into client-partron relationship with a boss-owner of (at least) one organization in order to survive.

The intertextual lines of continuity between *Estrada* and popfolk disclose that the patron-client relationship between *shef*s and star-singers underlies the semiotic associations between artificial voice and artificial individual personality during socialism and afterwards. Bulgarians receive vocal artificiality as a prescription for "healing" Bai Ganio's spontaneous "abnormality." Both in his derogatory and affirmative interpretations, Bai Ganio reminds Bulgarians that Europe is the goal to be attained at the end of a modernization road rather than a state of being. And since this goal is not about to be achieved, Bulgarians can perform modern European personage

only in artificial manner. Associations between artificial voice and modern local personage are not unique to music. They appear in many realms of Bulgarian social life. The ethnographic narrative about lip-synching, to which I turn later, aims to highlight a question that Bulgarians frequently express with deep frustration: why in Bulgaria, to be normal always requires entering in protectionist relationship with an authoritarian *shef*.

Chalga *shef*s dominated the music scene during the 1980s through second half of the 1990s. They were charismatic musicians, similarly to Rumba music chefs in Zaire (White 2008). Those *shef*s had both artistic skills of leading male instrumental ensembles in live performance and business skills of competing in the market of gigs. The most famous representatives of this wave are Ivo Papazov-Ibriama who led *Orkestŭr Trakiia*, Krasimir Hristov—the leader of *Orkestŭr kristal* and Slavi Trifonov—the leader of *Ku-Ku Band.* Occasionally these bands hired female singers. Informants pointed to the mid-1990s as the time the *shef* leadership passed to the hands of record labels boss-owners, above all: Mitko Dimitrov from *Payner*, Viktor and Nencho Kŭsŭmovi from *Ara Audio-Video/Diapazon music* and Krum Krumov from *Sunny Music*. The mid-1990s is also roughly when people started talking about popfolk rather than chalga. The emergence of record label *shef* brought about the marginalization of instrumental male live ensembles. Female singers contracted with record labels became the trademark of the popfolk music scene. Earning a contract with a record label meant that singers could have access to audio and video infrastructure. The label also provided impresario services of gigs and the guarantee that singers would receive their honorarium. The label bosses created a monopoly of music media, and so only singers contracted in the respective labels could enter media

circulation (above all, *Planeta TV* for singers contracted in *Payner* and *Fen TV* for singers contracted in *Ara* or *Diapason*).

Slavi Trifonov is maybe the only chalga *shef* who developed a hybrid business model with popfolk. He continues performing with *Ku-Ku Band* both live and on his longstanding latenight TV show "Slavi's Show" (*Shouto na Slavi*). At the same time he is the owner-boss of a media label (*7/8 production*) that, in addition to this TV show, produces singers on the twilight generic zone between popfolk and Western pop.

Communal capitalism—the political economy of modernity brokership

The Bulgarian economic historian Roumen Avramov (2001, 2003, 2007) provides a *longue durée* perspective to the *shef*-singer relationship when analyzing the role artificiality and protectionism have played as local politicians, economists, intellectuals and artists have attempted in the last two-centuries to "heal" the nation from its perceived incompatibility with European capitalism. This healing project begins with "the national revival" movement in the 19th century, which "recalled" a "forgotten" medieval Bulgarian nation lost in time due to its "enslavement" by the Ottoman Empire. The project of healing arrives to its climax with the "liberation from the Turkish yoke"—the local rendition of Bulgaria's creation following the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78) and the Congress of Berlin (1878). Attempts to constitute this recalled nation in modern times have gone through four major political configurations: autonomous principality, independent monarchy, Soviet-style socialism, and EU-style liberal democracy.

Avramov points to one anxiety that has formulated all attempts to close the perceived gap between modern Europe and the traditional and/or backward post-Ottoman Balkans. Regardless of their ideological differences, Bulgarian nation-

builders have understood the problem of catching up (*navaksvane*) with modernity as one of trying to construct capitalism (or a modification of capitalism in the case of communism) in a post-Ottoman peasant society without capital. Avramov's starting point is that capitalism is more than an economic ideology; it is the organizing principle of modern social life. Regardless of its different political configurations (liberalism, monarchist etatism, communism, neo-liberalism etc.), capitalism organizes private and public life around individual agency, responsibility and risk taking—the presumed values of "genuine" (Western European) modernity. This approach to capitalism reveals the underlying anxiety of Balkan liminality. Bulgarians see themselves as incapable of modernizing independently and so they perpetually depend on creditors and lenders who would provide them with capital to perform individuality, artificially.

"Communal capitalism" stems from a scholarly perspective that was dominant during the Cold War era, which considered capitalism foreign to Eastern Europe, in general (e.g. Chirot 1991), and Bulgaria, in particular (e.g. Gerchenkorn 1962). Avramov adds a perception of artificiality to this paradigm by drawing upon the pre-WWII Bulgarian economist and historian Stoian Bochev who argued that "capitalism is unsympathetic to Bulgarians. If capitalism in the other countries, at least in its beginnings was considered as a source of social welfare and had the energetic public and state support, [in Bulgaria] it was considered as an artificial *addendum* to the economic structure of the country'" (Bochev 1931/1998: 102, original italics).

Avramov stresses that this nation did not earn its independence thanks to the agency, responsibility and risk taking of its individual members. Just like other contemporary peripheral nations, he maintains, Bulgaria was formed by 19th century

European powers as a playground for their economic experiments. He maintains that to study Bulgarian history, one should analyze how creditors infused it with capital demanding in return compliance with their terms of modernization. As a result, Bulgarians cannot imagine national modernity as a civic contract of free individual agents but only as a collective that executes en mass a top-down imposed program of modernization, in which Bulgarian society would finally become "truly European." "Communal capitalism," Avramov concludes, signifies a culture of conditionality. The organizing principle of Bulgarian personal and public life entails shifting between cooperation with and sabotage of whatever model of modernity an exterior power imposes as a prerequisite for relieving Bulgarians' chronic shortage of capital. Creed (1997) calls this organizing principle "conflicting complementarities." Cooperation complimented with sabotage is how Bulgarians domesticate changing modernization projects in their local social life. They act in this manner to for compensate their inferior position vis-à-vis their "modernizers."

On the socio-political level, Avramov maintains that the culture of conditionality has formed Bulgarian mentality oriented to paternalism, etatism and conformism. This orientation comes from the fact that an "[E]ntire social strata is missing. The middle class and liberal professions are extremely weak—the state is systematically stronger than the citizen. Thus the national bourgeoisie (as well as 'intellectuals') developed a close, opportunistic dependence on the state" (Avramov 2003:6). He concludes that cooperatives define public life and "pseudo-individualism" defines life in private. "Bulgarians are individualist when it comes out to appropriate gains or collective wealth, but they are fierce collectivists when the issue is distribution of losses" (Avramov 2003: 6). By no means does he see cooperatives as a local form of capitalism beyond mechanisms of imitation. Bochev

provides the rationale for this perception when writing that "[W]e want to skip ... the capitalistic stage of economic development, to obtain the fruits of the bourgeois and capitalist regime, but without the capitalism itself, without the capitalistic organization of enterprises…While everywhere else cooperatives are considered as capitalism's correctives [in Bulgaria] they are seen as antipodes, as ways out, as deniers of the capitalistic stage of economic development" (Bochev 1928: 253, quoted from Avramov 2003:5).

Comaroff and Comaroff's (2001) argument regarding different ethnographic context—South Africa—helps me locate Bochev's and Avramov's equations of capitalism with autonomous individualism in the colonialist and domineering self-formation and self-imagination of European societies. While such equations exhibit personality among the achievements of modern European societies in contrast with the presumably collectivist character of presumably traditional societies, "neither in Europe, nor in any place to which [personality as individual autonomy *e.l.*] has been exported, does it exist as an unmediated social reality" (ibid: 267). Hence, I do not take artificial personality as the negative counterpart of natural one but as a form of being-in-the world which encapsulates an experience of trying to implement imported concepts, narratives, images and, at large, ideologies of what European modern is and what Bulgarian modernity "ought to be" (if to use the socialist realist formula).

Overall, when Bulgarians equate capitalism with modernity they implicitly distinguish between *individuality* and *individualism.* People see *individualism* as the driving force of "real" modern (i.e. capitalist) societies whose identity depends on people's political and cultural persuasions. Social autonomy comes from individual interpretations of what it means to be an autonomous person. Such interpretations circulate to Eastern European countries, like Bulgaria, as authoritative models that

teach people how to be modern individuals. Here I recall again the duality of transparency and gap in performances of replica as expressed in the proverb "the same thing but totally different." I add another idiom to it with which Bulgarians communicate what they experience as second hand European modernity with a metaphor of filtered coffee. Modern forms that originate in the Occident arrive to Bulgaria as *vtora tsedka* (second strainer)—a metaphoric allusion to the infamous practice of local cafes (especially during socialism) to save on coffee by reusing the grains.

This metaphor reveals a local perspective on artificiality as a manner of relating to modernity not as a state of being but as a goal of becoming, which cannot be achieved in a "natural" way without cyborg dependency (Haraway 1991). Lip-syncing, bleached hair, silicon implants, cover songs etc. are communication devices that prompt popfolk singers and their audience to accept as a matter of fact that national modernity is not natural to their society but artificially transplanted. Both in the musical context and beyond it, Bulgarians perform with indices of artificiality the success (or failure) of the transplanting operation of changing powers (and their paradigms of modernity: monarchism, communism, and liberal democracy). People maintain that they can modernize only if they rely on technological prostheses imported to Bulgaria from Europe by patrons whose financial and technological means endow them with the power to be *shef*s. Meaning, they can impose their will on the society by behaving simultaneously as benefactors and oppressors;[33] they can provide for people's needs but condition provision with compliance.

Dyer (1979) argues that while Western stars perform images of ideal individuality their power of performance depends on commercial entertainment

[33] This is how Buchanan (2006: 177) characterizes the relationship between Bulgarian professional folklore musicians and state cultural authorities during socialism.

industry that produces stars. Bulgarians tend to see a different sort of dependency in local stars. I was told many times that the local entertainment industry is too weak and poor to produce star-singers who could match the Western "originals." And so, to perform stardom, Bulgarian singers need to rely on *shef*s, who provide them with the means to produce symbols of stardom. The closing part of this chapter centers specifically on the performance of popfolk star-*shef* dependency with lip-synced replication of live singing voice**.**

Voice and Agency

Ervin Goffman (1981) writes that speech is not an act done by an individual person, a speaker, rather it is a social event in which there are three participant-roles: principal, author and animator. "Principal" is the one in whose name words are uttered and who is accountable for their consequence. Author is the one who composes the content of an utterance. Animator is the person who actually performs an utterance. Paying attention to convergences and divergences among the three participant roles, according to Goffman, can teach us about the social dynamics of every speech event; specifically, people's abilities to compose speech, to take responsibility for it and to perform it to indicate their social position (or, in Goffman's terminology, the footing).

Keane (1997) uses this triad participant role model to criticize the association of voice with modern individual rationality. Western mind, he argues, does not recognize the ability of other, more collective sorts of agencies to be communicated, performed and negotiated. Studying rituals of negotiation among Indonesian Ankalangs, he explains that voice means the competence as well as responsibility of negotiators to animate formulaic speech, which stands as a symbolic alternative to fight and always carries the risk of turning into actual fight. Agency is performed on

two levels. First, it is embedded in the ritual itself whose "performance structure groups together the persons in whose name the event takes place along with others who benefit from it, who direct it, or whose intentionality it mediates" (ibid: 140-141). Second, people perform agency in their "capacity to motivate, respond to, and resolve authoritative, recognizable actions and events" (ibid) that come up in regard to the ritual. Importantly, Keane stresses that, contrary to the common Western view of voice and agency, Anakalang people do not relate these faculties of animating voice to any human individualistic subjectivity, but attribute them performatively to supernatural subjects. In the case of Bulgaria, I argue that European creditors play the role of such transcendent actors whose agency popular singers animate when lip-syncing on stage.

As the poster announcing Marta's gig in Sliven indicates, it was important for the organizers to remind the audience the record label with which Marta is contracted. On the other hand, while the name of the label's *shef* is familiar to the public, people in Bulgaria would most probably not recognize his face. The reason is that he (as well as his colleague *shef*s) tends to avoid media exposure. Informants oftentimes took this tendency as a proof that popfolk record label *shef*s served the business interests of bigger more invisible chains of *shef*s that extends beyond Bulgaria.

Weidman (2006, 2003) develops a similar perception of communal agency (without the transcendent aspect though) performed in individual feminine voice: professional women singers of Indian classical music. The traditional line of the profession, Weidman writes, belonged to *Devadasis*, hereditary women singers and dancers from non-Brahmin classes, who were not regarded as modest women. Since the early 20th century, they have been classified as prostitutes to distinguish them from a new style of upper-class women singers, who performed a "clean," "modest"

and "educated" form of the same music thereby voicing modern middle-class Indian private and public spheres. Weidman stresses that poetics of natural voice index middle class values. My study shows that in Bulgaria the same values are signified by natural voice that is mechanically controlled. Marta was very proud of her vocal skills that spanned many different genres, from Bulgarian folklore to *Estrada* ballads. Nevertheless she was aware that singing over the studio recordings of her voice signaled her rise from a chalga tavern singer (*krŭchmarska pevitsa*) into a popfolk star.

Weidman, Keane as well as my study build upon Briggs and Bauman (1992), who, as I wrote earlier, argue that texts become part of discourse through a procedure of intertextual calibration; close or distant relations to other texts that stand for a defined genre (which Briggs and Bauman see as speech regimented by language ideology). According to Bauman and Briggs (ibid; 2003), intertextual gaps, homogeneity and hybridity reveal more about the ideology of distinction than about the utterances (musical and others) themselves. As I will show in the next section, a seemingly failed lip-synced duet prompts Bulgarians to classify *Estrada* as transparent with modern pop music while *chalga* and, to lesser extent, *popfolk*, as pop hybridity. Bulgarians identify purity and homogeneity in *Estrada* because it replicates sound and visual images that Bulgarians imagine as modern European pop. *Chalga*, on the other hand, is classified as hybrid, because it does not fit with any modern model but adapts vernacular culture to modern media. Popfolk, on the other hand, provides Bulgarians with a way to imagine a process in which they can gradually minimize the wide intertextual gap of hybrid chalga. Tendencies of popfolk singers to lip-sync resonate to Bulgarian audience with *Estrada*. This manner of voice artificiality indexes that the music performed on stage will replicate (i.e. be

homogenous with) whatever pop music voices are currently fashionable in Europe, just as *Estrada* voices were until 1989.

I am turning now to narrate how the performance of popfolk artificial star personage keys notions of "second strainer" modernity to a sense of stability and normality by examining two events in which popfolk singers performed star personality. My discussion revolves around what I judged as failed performance event in a festive concert titled "Bridge to the Balkans." The Serbian singer Miroslav Ilich did not keep the appearance of liveliness when lip-syncing the duet "Tempt and Run" (*Zavedi i Beži*) with the Bulgarian popfolk singer Reni. Comments I collected after the show revealed to me that Bulgarian viewers actually approved of Reni's performance because she uniquely had the means to produce her own artificial voice as a free agent, without dependency on local musical *shef*. I learned that thanks to this independence as well as her close ties with the Serbian music business allowed her to present herself beyond popfolk, being an almost European pop star.

"Tempt and Run"

My friend-informant Veselin Karchinski, his daughter Marina, her boyfriend Zhoro (all pseudonyms and the main protagonists of chapter 3) and myself went together to the music concert "Bridge to the Balkans." Miroslav Ilich and Shaban Shaulich, the two icons of 1970s Yugoslav *novokomponovana narodna muzika* (newly composed folk music, e.g. Rasmussen 2012) performed alongside the Bulgarian popfolk singer Reni. The concert took place at Hall no. 1 (*Zala* 1) of the National Palace of Culture (known in Bulgarian as NDK, *Natsionalen Dvorets na Kulturata*). This castle-like modernist monument located at the center of Sofia and surrounded by a big public park is Bulgaria's official national concert hall. Opened in 1981, its construction was the project of Liudmila Zhivkova, the daughter of the late

socialist leader, Todor Zhivkov and self-appointed patron of Bulgarian culture. To these days, NDK hosts the most important foreign and local concerts, festivals, congresses, and exhibitions in Bulgaria. Its prestige has remained so high after 1989 that the state's official protocol still maintains the requirement from the socialist era: at the end of every performance in Hall no. 1, the performers should receive a basket of flowers from the office of the president of the Republic of Bulgaria, regardless the genre of the performance.

Tickets to the concert were not cheap by Bulgarian standards, 20-60 leva ($15-40, the average monthly salary in 2008 was around $300). Nevertheless, I did not see any empty seat (3380 people is the maximal capacity). The visual outlook of the attendants suggested that they were ordinary Sofia people, by no means the post-socialist money elite, one of the stereotypical local audiences of Serbian music. People from this elite usually consume Serbian music in expensive "folk clubs" (taverns specializing in Bulgarian popfolk and its Balkan equivalents). On the way to NDK, I heard people talking with excitement about the two Serbian music icons. Former Yugoslav music has high prestige in Bulgaria. Lepa Brena, the Bosnian music diva from Ilich's and Shaulich's generation, holds the record of the most attended concert in Bulgarian history. More than 80,000 people packed the National Stadium in her historical concert in summer 1990, the first public performance of a foreign music star in post-1989 Bulgaria.[34]

Oftentimes informants stressed to me their fandom of Yugoslav music by recalling with pride their firsthand memories from that concert. People especially

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[34] LEPA BRENA - KONCERT, SOFIJA BUGARSKA, 1990, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_BxTVG025zQ, accessed October 25, 2014.

remembered the famous scene from this concert: Lepa Brena landed on the stadium with a helicopter that flew her all the way to the stadium field while her band was already playing on stage. While Serbian music stars are already regular performers in the local music scene, they are still regarded as greater stars than their Bulgarian colleagues. This perception is not limited only to music. As I wrote earlier, Mishkova (2006) argues that, historically, Serbia has been a prime channel of circulating the modern Occident in Bulgaria. Indeed, I saw how this channel works from both sides of the border. Yugoslav goods invoke in Bulgarians memories of contact with the West, which was closed to them during communism. Many of my Serbian acquaintances tend to relate to Sofia not as a city but as an urbanized village.

Reni was scheduled to sing second, after Miroslv Ilich but before Shaban Shaulich. I asked Vesco (the diminutive of Veselin) about the reason for this singing order. He said that it was intended to guarantee that people would not come late or leave early to skip her part. I told him that Reni was after all a prominent singer in the local popfolk scene. On the program she was presented as equal to Ilich and Shaulich. Vesco insisted that the audience did not take this façade of equality seriously. He said that Reni could present herself on the program however she wanted because she produced the concert and paid to the two Serbian stars' honorarium.

Vesco reminded me of rumors that Reni managed to fulfill the stereotypical goal of a popfolk female singer: to marry a rich man and bring him a child so that he would finance her entire career and release her from dependency on record labels. I told Vesco that I was familiar with the rumors about Reni. I knew the stories that Reni's husband allegedly had close connections with the post-Yugoslav shady business circles in Serbia. Building on these connections (and her husband's money) Reni released a few albums and often performed in Serbia. She also collaborated with

top Serbian popular singers from the Serbian music conglomerate *Grand Production*. Vesco said with conviction that Reni's financial backing was stronger than that of all other popfolk singers. He emphasized to me that she worked independently outside a popfolk record label and produced concerts in NDK; particularly the latter no other popfolk singer could even dream to do.

I have no idea whether the rumors that Reni's stardom depended on her husband's ties with the shady Serbian money elite have any truth in them. The fact that I have never met or communicated with Reni allows me to write about her concert at NDK in a way I could not do had I known her personally. From my other communications with popfolk singers, I know that they are highly sensitive to associations with the derogatory voice of chalga. Particularly moments of performance failures, as the one I am about to narrate momentarily, put singers at risk of losing their celebrity face. The Bulgarian popfolk scene is so small that it is so difficult to write ethnographically about singers without drawing gaps between the "real life" persons and their artificial stage personae. As I explained above, such an exposure of artificiality does not invoke an aura of an "authentic" artistic soul. On the contrary, the difference between the stage and everyday personae signifies for Bulgarians their gap with modern Europe. It implies that singers imitate western forms of pop stardom; however too much exposure shifts the attention from the stage ("life as it ought to be") to everyday reality ("life as it is").

Marina and Zhoro ran a bit late. Vesco and I waited for them in front of the building. I observed the stream of people who were coming inside. As I mentioned earlier, the audience was diverse though I saw mostly mid-age people who were young when *novokomponovana muzika* was illegal or semi-legal in socialist Bulgaria. Quite a few of them carried bouquets of flowers. Once our companions arrived we all

entered NDK and hurried in the corridors to take our seats. The concert had already begun. From within the concert hall we heard Miroslav Ilich singing with his powerful alto voice. All of us were very excited to see Mioslav Ilich and Shaban Shaulich live, especially Vesco who as a matter of fact considered Serbia the land of high quality Balkan pop music, better than what he called "our cheap Bulgarian imitation."

It was Vesco's first time at the concert of any Serbian mega-star. He still lived in his native village when Lepa Brena gave her legendary concert. I observed Miroslav Ilich onstage half a year earlier. It was again at Reni's concert at Hall 1 of NDK, which she produced to celebrate "20 Years Onstage, 10 Years of Reni's Hits." That was a big spectacle with dancers, pyrotechnics, and guest singers. Ilich sang there a couple of songs as a guest alongside with Neda Ukraden, another Yugoslav *novokomponovena* diva and the Serbian young performer, DJ Krmak. The Bulgarian guest singers were the socialist *Estrada* stars, Duet Riton and Orlin Goranov. The concert was documented and broadcasted later on bTV, the first nationwide private channel.

At that festive concert Reni and Miroslav Ilich sang together their (then) new duet "Tempt and Run" (Zavedi i beži[35]), which ran frequently on popfolk radio stations during 2008. I love this song. It has this powerful groove that earned the name "turbo" to Serbian pop and folk fusion. The melody does not have dramatic darkness typical of Turbo-folk songs. It tends more to popfolk's light cheerfulness combined with trumpets and trombones, the common characteristic of Serbian Romani music, which Goran Bregović, the Boban and Marko Marković Trumpet

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[35] "Reni & Miroslav Ilic - Zavedi i bezi - live in concert," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgTNHgNPEXI, accessed October 25, 2014.

Orchestra, DJ Shantel, Gogol Bordello, Emir Kusturica and the No Smoking Orchestra as well as Esma Redžepova turned in the 1990s into a World Music emblem of Balkan carnivalesque (Hofman 2014).

I was disappointed, though, at that concert when I saw that Ilich and Reni lip-synced the duet. The artificiality of their singing was not hidden; there was nothing extraordinary in it. All the popfolk shows I attended in Bulgaria were either lip-synced or performed with live voice over recorded tracks. As I mentioned earlier, the professional term in the Bulgarian music business for lip-sync is *playback* and for live singing over recorded tracks is *sinback* (probably a modification of sing-back). Popfolk singers are not the only ones who rely on *playback* or *sinback*; *Estrada* singers do as well, especially when they perform at NDK. The official explanation is that Hall 1 was designated to host the congresses of the Bulgarian Communist Party and therefore acoustic quality for music performance was not taken into consideration. Since I observed so many concerts at NDK I knew that while this hall indeed does not have the clearest acoustics, it is still good enough for music performance, particularly pop music.

I was happy to see that in "Bridge to the Balkans" Ilich performed live with no *playback* or *sinback*. He sang his trademark hits followed by a band consisting of a drum set, percussions, two accordions, two synthesizers, bass guitar, clarinet and flute. He was dressed with a black suit, white shirt, and black shoes. The audience was excited. People stood up and danced to the music; others clapped and sang out loud. I saw a few people dancing *kiuchek*. Others danced variations of Bulgarian folk dances which center on shoulders, hands and legs but skip the hips (which indexes *kuichek*). Vesco was on his feet dancing during the entire show. He lifted his hands up and twisted his hips in *kiuchek* moves.

I enjoyed the music performance very much, but did not feel desire to stand up and dance. I usually prefer to sit and listen, to let the music mesmerize my body and soul with groove. This is the reason I cannot really enjoy popfolk music performance, despite my love for the music. I was brought up on rock and classical music aesthetics and so I am not used to getting the groove of live performance when a computer plays synthetic music sounds instead of real players who produce them in real-time on stage.

As is common in Bulgaria, people from the audience approached the stage and handed flower bouquets to Miroslav Ilich. One man gave him a soccer ball as a present. The practice of people from the audience handing flower bouquets to singers is common especially to socialist *Estrada*, whose singers still hold occasional live concerts (sometimes with live music, sometimes with *playback* and *sinback*). Usually, bouquet keys the show to an artful concert.

Miroslav Ilich's number ended after forty-five minutes. The audience clapped and a new song began: Reni's and Ilich's duet "Tempt and Run."[36] I immediately paid attention that the instrumental music switched from live to recorded performance. Except the difference between recorded and live sound, the song starts with an instrumental introduction of brass band, which was not present on stage. After spending some time in Bulgaria I got used to this quick switching between live performance and lip-sync. My emotional reaction was to instantly switch off my expectations of pleasure and remain in my observation mode. The following events surprised me. I had never seen such a failure of performance in Bulgaria before.

[36] "Рени Концерт 16.10.08 Мирослав Илич," accessed October 25, 2014, http://vbox7.com/play:abafb0b1.

Reni came on stage during the instrumental introduction. She wore a long red ball gown with no sleeves and deep *décolleté*. Ilich greeted her entree with hand gestures. He took Reni by the hand and escorted her to the front of the stage. They greeted the audience. Ilich's singing part began, however he did not animate his recorded voice, but continued the greeting ceremony. Then, when Reni sang her line, he kneeled down, lifted his soccer ball, the one he received from a fan in the audience, waved to the audience and left the stage quickly. Reni turned to his direction and waved at him as if she was calling him back. He did not react and she returned quickly to lip-sync her part in his absence. Within a very long half a minute, Ilich ran back to the stage. He held his microphone, however he did not lip-sync his lines. He hugged Reni's shoulders, went down on his knees and followed her singing part with hand gestures. From time to time he lip-synced, most of the time he improvised with body gestures to his recorded voice that was heard from the sound system. The band onstage lip-synced the instrumental track of the duet during the entire duet.

This lack of synchronicity between the lips with the *playback* hit me with embarrassment. I really blushed. I felt that these two performers lost their face. I was waiting to see how the audience would react; whether people would protest against what I experienced as exposed fakeness of live performance. From time to time I looked at Vesco curious to see how he received this failure. He continued to dance to the song. I assumed, though, that he had paid attention to the breakdown of the live singing illusion. The duet ended. The audience clapped with excitement and cried "Ilich, Ilich, Ilich." Reni and Ilich greeted each other, this time with their live voices. Then Ilich left the stage and Reni's singing part continued.

I was disappointed with Reni. In my view she had destroyed the show. Why did she have to lip-sync the duet? I held her responsible because Ilich performed his

number live. Also, I was accustomed to observing Serbian singers singing in concerts with live music, while Bulgarian singers using *playback* and *sinback*. After the show I asked Vesco what he thought about that failed lip-syncing. He smiled and said that there was nothing special about it. He paid attention but didn't really care. The switching to lip-syncing only reaffirmed to him what he already thought, i.e. that Bulgarian singers were essentially inferior to the their Serbian colleagues. Vesco maintained that in Serbia people knew how to make a real musical show. In Bulgaria, all musical shows were low quality products, like all what we buy here in the stores. He concluded that a person who lived in Bulgaria needed to accept being in an inferior position to real European countries as a fact of life.

Some media reports on the "Bridge to the Balkans" mentioned the asynchronicity of voice and lips in this duet performance. They mostly blamed Miroslv Ilich rather than Reni. Reni was cited explaining that Ilich did not learn his lines for another duet and so she had to lip-sync this song in the last moment. Journalists applauded Reni who, when Ilich failed to follow even his recorded voice, kept lip-syncing her part and thus showed her professionalism.

Online commentators were more ambivalent. One person blamed Ilich for "destroying such a beautiful song." Another commentator mocked Reni by stating that Ilich refused to lip-sync. A third person derogated altogether this concert that, in his mind, had too much *chalga* and *kiuchek*. The incident of failure did not seem to impact Miroslav Ilich or Reni negatively. In a newspaper interview shortly after the concert, for instance, Reni boasted with her insistence on live performance and denounced the prevalence of lip-syncing among her popfolk singer colleagues.

Rolling the failure on Ilich, suggesting that he was so backward that he even cannot lip-sync properly only sing live, might carry an implicit ironic line of self-

celebration. Maybe for the first time in its history, EU-member Bulgaria was now substantially closer to Europe than Serbia, which during my fieldwork was still negotiating with the EU its terms of candidacy. "We are Part of Europe," stated posters at the front of the Bulgarian consulate in the Serbian city of *Niš* reminding the Serbians, who waited in long lines for visas, that the location of Europe had moved. It was now further east of Serbia and not anymore further west of Bulgaria. Serbians with whom I stood in line cursed the Bulgarian authorities with sarcasm blaming them that, since the country's accession to the EU, they have been doing everything possible to make any occasional need to go to Bulgaria feel like an immigration to Europe. I met a Bulgarian-speaking Serb on the bus back from *Niš* to Sofia. He dismissed completely the appearances Bulgaria was making to be considered a European country. It was a pathetic pretense for him. Unlike Bulgaria, we have always been independent, he said, both during the time of Yugoslavia and afterward. Bulgaria, he uttered, is a miserable village that once was the puppet of the Ottoman Empire, after that of the USSR and now of the EU. I met this person again when I came to pick up my new visa from the Bulgarian consulate in Niš. He told me with excitement about his vacation at the Bulgarian Black Sea. He even went to a concert of the Estrada diva Lili Ivanova. He wanted so much to see the popfolk megastar Azis who had a gig at a nearby folk club, but unfortunately it did not worked out.

Conclusion: Queer Europeanness

The way Reni, Vesco and myself denounced lip-syncing resonates with a basic Western equation of "authentic" individual voice with modern individual agency. In the context of music, a singer is expected to be the sole natural producer of the voice she or he performs, otherwise that performance is inauthentic. I see Adorno's critique of cultural industry (2001) as underlying the common wisdom in

the West that lip-syncing is one of "the maladies" of late capitalism, namely commercial culture industry and the loss of originality and authenticity to counterfeit and simulacra. A more emancipating approach relies on Walter Benjamin's theory of mechanically produced art (1969). People in the West identify lip-synced performance as a feature of consumption rather than of ritual-style elevation.

The Milli Vanilli scandal from the early 1990s is a famous example of both the detracting and tolerating approaches. Milli Vanilli was the name of the German duo, Fab Morvan and Rob Pilatus, which the German producer Frank Farian created in 1988. Their immediate commercial success was recognized with a Grammy award for the Best New Artists of that year. However, shortly after, the duo lost the award when their producer admitted to the press that Morvan and Pilatus never performed with their own voices. They did not only lip-sync on stage but were impostors of other musicians who were hired to sing in recordings. Analyzing this scandal, Auslander (1998, 1996) Milli Vanilli's consumer popularity grew despite their disgrace among music connoisseurs. He explains these conflicting receptions with the fact that televisual media shifted the ideology of liveliness in popular music from the authentic interaction between performers and their audience (characteristic to rock) to market consumption of pre-produced synthetic images, which, in his mind, is a prime characteristic of pop.

The two lip-syncing incidents in Barack Obama's presidential inauguration lend validity to Auslander's argument even beyond commercial pop. They show how our reception of musical liveliness is already habituated (or, in other words, remediated) in televisual performance. In 2009 cellist Yo-Yo Ma, violinist Yitzhak Perlman, pianist Gabriela Montero and clarinetist Anthony McGill pantomimed John

Williams' "Air and Simple Gifts;"[37] 4 years later, in 2013 Beyoncé lip-synced the American national anthem.[38] In both incidents, the performers explained that, due to the freezing temperature (2009) and lack of rehearsal time (2013), they could not produce high quality music sound that would create an experience of successful live performance that could be broadcasted globally. In both cases, the performers were required to save their artistic face by paying dues to the equation of "authentic" voice with individual agency. In the first case, the musicians highlighted their prestige as classical music artists; in the second case, Beyoncé reminded her vocal qualities in a press conference ten days later: she sang the national anthem in front of the media a cappella.[39]

Milli Vanilli, the presidential inauguration and the performance in NDK prompt me to ask, why do the performing artists, Vesco and most of the voices I brought in the chapter ideologically denounce lip-syncing in speech while tolerating it in practice?

Queer studies scholars (e.g. Kaminski and Taylor 2008; Newton 1979, Taylor and Rupp 2004) offer a unique perspective that helps me decentralize my habituated resistance to lip-syncing and see its value to Bulgarians. Building upon Fraser's (1990) feminist critics of the politics of exclusion hidden in the concept of the rational subject (i.e. the bourgeois man, the basis of Habermas' public sphere) and Haraway's (1991) attention to the politics of gender domination underlying body "naturalness,"

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[37] "Inauguration: Air + Simple Gifts By John Williams," accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBI6c4yBJAU.

[38] "Beyoncé Sings the National Anthem at the 2013 Obama Inauguration," The New York Times, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-DSFrGnQrk.

[39] "Beyonce sings national anthem at press conference, admits she lip-synced at inauguration," [FOX 411], January 31, 2013, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2013/01/31/beyonce-to-face-media-for-first-time-since-lip-sync-scandal/.

such scholars study how lip-syncing alongside clothes, wigs, dance, body posturing, perfumes and other features of artifice and kitsch allow camp performers to carnivalize, resist or at least highlight gender heteronormativity (another language ideology realm of European modernity). A short scene in Pedro Almodovar's film "All About my Mother"[40] (1999), called Al Agrado's monologue, deconstructs eloquently the metanarrative of naturalness and authenticity. Arroyo (2000: 260) describes the scene in the following way:

> "Agrado is transvestite who has left prostitution to become an assistant to a famous actress in Tennessee Williams' *Streetcar Named* Desire. One day the star cannot make it to the performance and Agrado takes the stage to announce the cancellation of the play and offers a monologue about the story of her life, how she made herself into what she now is. In other words, she presents herself as an alternative production: 'They call me Al Agrado because I have always tried to make everyone's life more pleasant,' she says, 'Aside from being pleasant I am very authentic.' She then runs through the full list of surgical operations she has undergone in order to be so authentic, and the corresponding financial costs, before ending with the key sentence. 'It cost me a lot to be authentic. But we must not be cheap in regard to the way we look. Because a woman is more authentic the more she resembles what she dreams herself to be."

Garlinger (2004) argues that the camp sincerity of Al Agrado establishes affective connection between the object and its spectator. "What makes Al Agrado's camp spectacle an intervention of sincerity is that by vindicating artificiality and authentic in terms of sentiments, Al Agrado raises the viewer's awareness of the affectionate investment the camp spectator has in the camp figure. The sincerity of her intervention begets sincerity on the audience: we don't laugh *at* Agrado, we laugh *with* her" (ibid: 103, italics in the original).

Agrado's monologue undermines most brilliantly Western definitions of natural vs. artificial personage. Naturalness signifies homogeneity in modern

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40 "Todo sobre mi madre - El monólogo de La Agrado," accessed October 25, 2014. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s11D4G7WyTc.

European imagination; it is coded as an attribute of bourgeois male rationality. Artificiality, on the other hand, stands for hybridity; it is coded in its deviation, typical to queer others like Al Agrado, whose performance of artificial feminine personage is supposed to be received (by the heteronormative audience) as kitsch. The sincerity with which Al Agrado describes her monetary investment in fitting visually with heterosexual gender codes turns her personal speech into a communal confession which reflects to the audience the artificiality of their own heteronormative performance. The only difference between Agrado and the heteronormative audience is that they invest much less money and effort in plasticizing their own personal outlook. In other words, Agrado was even more authentic, sincere and, hence, natural than her audience in performing gender artificiality. Such a performance requires of her much more will, capital and pain in order to be "normal." On the other hand, the audience laughed with her, not at her, because her monologue made clear that we are all queer participants in the same social engineering project of complying with modern heteronormativity.

I see Marta's successful performance in Sliven as well the "failed" lip-syncing of "Tempt and Run" both as a similar case of queer "normality." This artificiality revolved around gender (even though, of course, gender heteronormativity was performed onstage) as much as around individual agency and individual subjectivity—the two cultural traits of modern European capitalism, which, according to Roumen Avramov, exclude peripheral (or liminal) societies like Bulgaria (one of the most eminent symbols of Balkan, and, some may say also, Eastern European backwardness). Neither Agrado nor Reni or Marta hid the artificiality of their performance. There was nothing to hide. The audience in NDK probably knew that Reni was a lip-syncing pop singer in the same way the theater audience at the movie

supposedly knew that Agrado was a transsexual woman. What mattered more was the economic capital both women attained in order to look and sound "real-life" personae. Their initial marginality is not hidden. Agrado paid for her surgery with male prostitution; Marta and Reni earned it by playing the stereotypical role of a bimbo-starlet in a popfolk record label (which Bulgarians connote with post-socialist nouveau-rich prostitution). Economically, Agrado keys her prostitution to the Spanish sex consumer market; Reni keys her role to a communal organization ran by a paternal oppressor-benefactor *shef*. Both women grew out from their dependency: Agrado became an aspiring actress and Reni a self-employed trans-Balkan star. The shadow of the past still raises questions regarding how genuinely these two women managed to transform their economic capital into a cultural one—to be received by the audience as "real" (just as the lip-syncing musicians in Obama's two inauguration ceremonies). They gained applause when emphasizing rather than denying the artificiality of their performance. Agrado's transsexual hybridity did it by prompting her Western audience to reflect upon its own liminality to heteronormativity—how they put money and pain to look as "normal" men and women. Marta's and Reni's hybrid individuality did so by reminding their Bulgarian audience (in a non-ironic manner, though) that they are liminal to European modernity—they constantly need to comply communally with internal and external *shefs* in order to sound like "normal" Western (capitalist) individuals. If they wish to save face and avoid the shame of backwardness, they should keep performing their artificial role of live music audience, in the same way these two popfolk stars maintained their artificial role as a live music singers.

Chapter 2

"I Beg Your Pardon, My Children are Learning This:" Bulgarian intellectuals Legislating and/or Interpreting Chalga

A Mitsubishi jeep is coming up	*Ot dolu ide dzhip "Mitsubishi"*
with a fancy bumper, with dark windows	*S iaka bronia, s prozortsi skrishni*
It is passing everyone on the road	*Vsicki po pŭtia toi izprevaria.*
—But whose is it? Who is driving it?	*—No na kogo e? Koi li go kara?*
—Wolfy is driving it. He is honking and running everyone over!	
	—Vŭlcho go kara. Sviri i gazi!
— And who is inside the car?	*—A v kolata koia e tazi?*
—Vixy[41] is inside. And she wants so much	*—Liska e vŭtre. I mnogo iska*
to become Miss beauty pageant.	*Na Mis-Konkursa da stane miska.*
—Drive on, Wolfy, and make a bid	*—Davai, Vŭlcho, i naddavai*
golden coins are ringing—	*Zlatna para zvŭnka—*
Miss-beauty to become your Vixy,	*Mis da stane tvoita Liska,*
pretty and slim!	*Gizdana i tŭnka!*

The opening epigraph is quoted from a didactic exercise in a music textbook (Gaitandzhiev et al. 2005a, see figure 1, p. 136), whose objective is to prompt 3rd graders to experience Bulgarian folklore interactively, as part of a culture of everyday life (in Bulgarian *bitie,* see chapter 1) rather than as an authoritative national canon. An explicit political goal underlies this exercise. Its authors aim to cultivate a new national identity that emerges from a pluralistic and open-ended dialogue in place of the socialist one, which consisted of authoritative canon and doctrine. During the winter of 2008, this exercise became an object of a short-lived but consequential public scandal. Media broadcasters and a council of academics stirred the scandal by condemning what they presented as a typical abuse of democracy: a group of authors with "low professional standards" sold "corruptive" chalga to young children packaged as "authentic" folklore. The front page of the newspaper *Ekspres* announced with a big bold headline that "Little Girls Learn about Mobster chicks" (*Uchat*

[41] Vixy is my translation of the Bulgarian word *Liska*, which is the nickname of *Lisa* (Vixen). I am aware that such a word does not exist in English, however "Vixen" does not convey *Liska*'s affect of cuteness.

momichentseta za mutresi, February 12, 2008). The picture beneath the headline showed a couple of schoolboys sitting by the famous street statue in Sofia of Petko and Pencho Slaveikovi (two formative father and son intellectuals from the early national era, late 19th early 20th century) and reading from another musical textbook by the same authors and publisher. The report in the interior pages related to a similar example of chalga-under-the-cover-of-folklore song in the textbook "Music for 4th grade" (Gaitandzhiev et al. 2005b).

This sort of news story was scandalous but not extraordinary. Claiming that young children, *particularly girls* (I will explain the reason for this emphasis later) learn chalga dressed as folklore resonated well with widespread notions that social life in Bulgaria had deteriorated and even deformed "after democracy came" (*sled kato doide demokratsiyata* as the colloquialism for the political era after 1989 goes). When I raised this case in my field encounters, I usually received comments like "nowadays everything in Bulgaria is deception (*izmama*) and fraud (*dalavera*)." For Bulgarians with whom I spoke, the musical textbook case was one of many other circulating stories about salami and sausages containing sawdust, luxurious cars running on perforated roads, newly built Nuevo riche neighborhoods without basic street infrastructure, business sector controlled by Mafiosi, politicians who are nothing but crooks, and so on. Such stories in conversations and media reports are usually followed by nostalgic references to how well social life functioned during the socialist era. When discussing the school textbooks specifically, people stressed to me that during socialism the state enforced high cultural standards. People could not publish whatever they wanted; for every discipline there was only one authorized textbook, and, above all, intellectuals were real intellectuals.

In the aftermath of the scandal, the publisher (*Bulvest-2000*) heeded the critiques and cut out the exercise from new editions of "Music for 3rd graders" textbook. It also cleansed "too colloquial words" (*bitovismi* from *bitie*, everyday life) from other textbooks from the same music series. Additionally, *Bulvest-2000* terminated plans to publish future music textbook publications by the same authors. The head author of the musical textbook series, Gencho Gaitandzhiev, then an emeritus professor of musical pedagogy at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, paid a higher professional price. In addition to the termination of his textbooks project, his university courses, taught on an almost pro bono basis, were suspended indefinitely (with an official explanation of budget cuts). This forced retirement affected him personally; it broke his life spirit, which, shortly after, ended with his death.

The adapted animal tale in the music textbook and the scandal ensuing from the inclusion of the tale in the textbook are the ethnographic context of this chapter in which I discuss how Bulgarian intellectuals—a fairly small but highly influential elite of academics, media broadcasters, authors, artists and publicists—employ the chalga register to recontextualize in democracy the role of socialist intellectuals: the cultural legislators and safeguards of the regimes language ideology of modernity. Stemming from the metadiscursive gap of the Balkans with modern European this language ideology held modernity as a goal to be achieved through an evolutionary process (i.e. modernization). The state created and authorized an elite of musical and literary intellectuals whose role was to foster this evolution by modernizing Bulgarian folklore while protecting its "authenticity." As I will show in this chapter, Bulgarian intellectuals struggle how to adapt the language regime of socialist modernity to the new political regime that materially does not support the old language regime.

The theoretical question of this chapter builds upon Bauman and Briggs (2003), who ask how politics of authority and inequality are embedded in discourses of modernity, even in those whose participants attempt to dismantle the Foucauldian nexus of knowledge-power (and its subsequent distinctions of modern, traditional, national, ethnic, high and low cultures). I address this question by focusing on the ways Bulgarian intellectuals, who took part in the textbook scandal, linked their perceived duty of either banning or emancipating texts that connote with chalga to their position vis-à-vis their socialist role of cultural modernization. References I collected in regard to the textbook scandal show a debate between two camps. Most Bulgarian intellectuals with whom I spoke or followed over the media uphold their previous legislative role. By attacking chalga they present themselves as the only capable defenders of Bulgarian culture (in its socialist formulation) against "the masses," which, due to their presumed lack of modern morals and education, take democracy as license to create their own purifications and hybridities of modernity and tradition. These intellectuals emphasize the urgency of their defense when criticizing the state for withdrawing from its previous obligation to enforce modern culture leaving them alone in the battle. My ethnographer's perspective is located within the minority camp of revisionist intellectuals—most vocal among them is my late informant Gencho Gaitandzheiv—who judge the socialist ideology of evolution as totalitarianism. Especially the textbook authors made the effort to change the negative value of chalga in order to advocate a new model of intellectuals who *interpret* Bulgarian culture instead of *legislating* it to fit with hegemonic standards of European modernity.

The two italicized terms—legislators and interpreters—do not come from my ethnography but from Zygmunt Bauman (1987), whose model of new intellectuals

free of power is at the center of Bauman and Briggs' (2003) critique. He formulates interpreters as a postmodern adaptation of (rather than a break from) the longstanding model of modern intellectuals (*legislators*) who, since 16th century, have served political hegemonies by turning postulates of universal rationality into cultural canons. According to Zygmunt Bauman, postmodern intellectuals (*interpreters*) recognize the irrational political ramifications of rational universalism and so they turn universalism into open dialogue between multiple cultural traditions while limiting rationality to internal systems of truth relative to particular cultural traditions.

Bauman and Briggs identify the operation of unequal power in the basic premise of this dialogue: brokers of modernity (interpreters) provide pre-modern communities with a security the latter cannot produce for themselves in the modern world. Zygmunt Bauman argues that communities can protect themselves from risks as longs as they remain in their "traditional setting"—relatively confined territories and solid networks of solidarity relations fixed over "a protracted stretch of time" (1987: 39, quoted from Bauman and Briggs 2003: 306). He stresses that this sort of security gets destroyed in modern life together with the destruction of definite space, time and social boundaries. In contrast with the oblivious stability and continuation in traditional communities, he concludes, people in the modern world develop high reflexivity, a result of constant confrontations with unexpected risks. This reflexivity, then, should be utilized for the benefit of those who lack it.

"New social theories are often founded on very old notion," write Bauman and Briggs in response to this idea, "[E]ven as we become increasingly critical of all terms that stem from the root 'modern,' the category of the traditional still seems—even to critical and left leaning scientists—to be stable and transparent, to be excused from the need of deconstruction. This is, of course, the founding modern move—positing a

category of tradition, making it seem autonomous, and then creating new hybrids that contain tradition by virtue of being defined in opposition to it" (2003: 307). They stress that, indeed, there are theories, which draw not two distinct units of tradition and modernity but processes as well as coexistence of "detraditionalization" and "retraditionalization." "Nevertheless, a more nuanced opposition continues to inform notions of (post)modernity, and the logic of temporality continues to structure imagination of difference and social inequality" (ibid).

UN global initiatives of "protecting" and "safeguarding" "at-risk" traditional cultures under laws of intellectual property and creating mechanisms of enforcement exemplify how modern political authorities exercise their power by making tradition their object. "As in Herder's day, the supposedly unconscious or unreflexive nature of traditional knowledge justifies the creation of specialists and specialized regimes" (ibid: 308). Now as before, political power-holders authorize intellectual-experts to conduct scientific research, collect, classify, register, standardize, archive and thereby to save, safeguard and preserve fragile traditions that otherwise would have not been survived industrial modernization. Here again, Bauman and Briggs argue, intellectuals-interpreters work "as a most conspicuous attribute" of the modern marriage of knowledge-power, "namely, the intellectual as 'legislator,' authorized on the basis of claims to superior knowledge to make authoritative statements about 'the maintenance and perfection of social order' in the service of state power" (ibid: 308-309).

Building on Latour (1993), Bauman and Briggs argue that modern and postmodern intellectuals equally hold language as a third ontological realm (in addition to nature and society), which they subject to "rational" operations of purification and hybridization. Such operations take place through decontextualization

and recontextualization of texts. Authorized experts conduct "what counts as the legitimate way of extracting discourses from persons, communities, nations, contexts, genres etc. (all of these being social constructs)" (2003: 312) and then modifying those texts to represent the essential and primordial past, i.e. tradition. A-historical past appears in tradition in manner of canonical genres and urtexts vis-à-vis which intellectuals measure intertextual gaps (Briggs and Bauman 1992). They calibrate fit or lack of fit between actual (hybrid) texts and paradigmatic texts that represent the "pure" tradition. According to Bauman and Briggs, every intellectual work of purification and hybridization, even an emancipatory one, produces metadiscursive regimes that shape modernity, science and politics. It authorizes "particular practices of imagination, marginalize or eliminate others, and distribute control over this process in very unequal ways" (ibid: 312).

In the case of socialist Bulgaria, Buchanan (2006) shows that state-authorized folklore music experts—professional performers, authors, producers and scholars—stood at the forefront of the regime's enterprise of executing the dialectics of evolution from traditional to modern European *narod* (people, nation). In accordance with the emphasis of European folkloristics on authenticity (Bauman and Briggs 2003; Benedix 1997), these cultural state officials distilled texts and styles presumably expressing the "pure" *izvor* (source, water spring, essence) thereby codifying the canon of national Bulgarian tradition. The most important aspect of this task was the cleansing of this perceived essence from centuries of intermingling with the other groups of the pre-national multiethnic society. This act of cleansing is not foreign to the Balkans, in which since the early 19th century nation building has usually included processes of ethnic homogenization, sometimes through massacre (most recently the Yugoslav civil war), oftentimes through minority discrimination

and sometimes through treaties of population exchange (e.g. the Lausanne Treaty [192] that authorized a large-scale population transfer between Greece and the newly founded Turkish Republic). In the Bulgarian context, cultural purification is associated with the rhetoric of liberation from the "Turkish Yoke." The local common wisdom sees Bulgarian folklore songs and tunes as historical documents that "prove" the successive line of a viable Bulgarian nation before and throughout the Ottoman "occupation." By "reconstructing" this canon purified from its "foreign" influences, socialist intellectuals aimed at drawing the Ur-cartography of the Bulgarian nation.

Obrabotka (arrangement) was the hybridization counterpart of purification (extracting from the *izvor*). Buchanan points to the etymological roots of the term from the verb *obrabotvam* (to work, to cultivate, polish, fashion), which connotes with the cultivation of the land and "the processing, working, or polishing of physical materials such as metal, glass, and leather" (2006: 196). Interestingly, Buchanan adds, the word *obrabotka* turned during socialism to index the regime's emphasis of industrialization. In my mind, this emphasis expresses the evolutionary trope of socialist modernization: industry is an improvement of agriculture; it transforms peasant life into something better—proletariat. "In musical terms," Buchanan writes, "*obrabotka* is a cultivated, polished treatment of a village melody or a song…*obrabotki* (the plural of *obrabotka e.l.*) are understood as improvements on the lore which is their basis…As a generic category, *obrabotka* encompasses a range of arrangement genres and at least three other related concepts: *harmonizatsiya* (harmonization), *razrabotka* (elaboration, development), and *avtorska* or *kompozitorska muzika* (authored or composer's music)" (ibid: 196-197). The work of Bulgarian academic folklorists was to purify the textual canon of tradition. Simultaneously, the state trained and authorized Bulgarian composers to hybridize

this canon in modern life by arranging and composing folklore melodies (*narodni melodii*) "'in the *naroden* spirit,' 'in a *naroden* tone,' 'for the new (socialist) village,' or 'with contemporary themes.' Such newly composed forms were labeled 'authored' or 'composer's' music to distinguish them from those employing material extracted (i.e. purified, decontextualized *e.l.*) from villagers themselves" (ibid: 197).

In other words, the socialist state and its legislator intellectuals modernized Bulgarian tradition by defining and regimenting intertextual gaps between texts that represented the pure *izvor* and texts that represented hybrid *obrabotka*. Widening the gap with European poetics of harmonization and polyphony indexed evolution and improvement of Bulgarian folklore—the cultural showcase of socialist modernization; widening it by combining "authentic" instruments and texts with electrical pop or, even worse, oriental ones fell outside the socialist discourse of modernity. It signaled the anti-modern Other—*chalgiia* in the early socialist period and chalga, in the later one—both signifiers of Balkan recursivity (Irvine and Gal 2000).

Let me turn now to analyzing the verbal strategies intellectuals from both camps used when widening or minimizing intertextual gaps between popular music texts, on one hand, and others that index canonized Bulgarian folklore, on the other. Above all I will show how the people who took part in the textbook scandal dealt with the risk of violating the socialist canon of folklore and pop (as purified genres as well as their hybridities). As I pointed out in the previous chapter and the introduction, people run the risk of suffering grave sanctions if they lose modern face and get stained with indices of Balkan backwardness. The participants in the debate around the textbook invoked this risk both to establish their discursive authority (Briggs 1996) as well as to undermine the authority of their rivals. The legislating camp did so by speaking against "inauthentic" hybridization of Bulgarian modernity and tradition,

which cause dangerous loss of rational conduct. The interpreting camp countered by associating claims of authenticity with totalitarianism. The connection between intellectual discursive authority and risk is central to the performance of modernity. Both *legislators* and *interpreters* sought power by showing their ability to use rational reflexivity in the service of their "endangered" non-modern fellows. And in the case of the textbook, the debating camps designate these fellows as school children, especially girls.

The ethnographic discussion in the chapter takes the following course: after these introductory pages I present the animal tale exercise and the pedagogical considerations the textbook authors employed to cultivate what they saw as a pluralistic imagination. I then move on to a gender analysis of the socialist realist cultural ideology in which the state authorized intellectuals to employ their virile rationality to modernize the masses. Socialist intellectuals did so by formulating representations of "reality as ought to be" which aimed to prompt people to evolve from "reality as is" (in Bulgarian *bit* or *bitie*). This is the reason the textbook's detractors emphasized its danger to girls. I argue that the socialist discourse of evolution underlies Bulgarians' perception of chalga as a feminine counterforce of seduction away from modern Europe back to the Balkans. Subscribing to the socialist realism epistemology legislating intellectuals promote a distinction between two collective identities of "the people:" the *narod* and the *folk*. Bulgarians perceive the first as pure and thus possessing authentic identity; they consider the latter as quintessentially hybrid and hence corrupted and lacking in identity. I suggest that, for Bulgarians, the inability of the state after 1989 to regulate distinctions between rational and irrational hybridizations of modern music and folklore is what signals the collapse of the socialist cultural regime. In this sense, people expect rational

hybridizations to prompt evolution toward modern culture; they see irrational ones as texts that corrupt people with chalga.

The second part of the chapter will open with a narrative about Gencho Gaitandzhiev and his attempt to deconstruct with the animal tale the politics of totalitarian power, which he identified in the distinction between the *narod* and *folk* (and consequently between folklore and chalga). He did so by identifying monosemy (called in Bulgarian *kazionno*) as the language regime with which the previous regime cultivated a totalitarianism syndrome. He argued that Bulgarians were habituated to think in a crude positivist manner. They are convinced that modern rationality means that every signifier had only one and definite signified. Irony, in this sense, comes only from digressing from the "right" (serious) way of thinking. His suggested remedy for this syndrome was an antidote of irony that comes from polysemy; that is, encountering multiple, ambivalent or even contradicting indexical relations between signs and meanings. The opposition between these two ideological associations of irony and democracy will frame the following ethnographic narrative about an academic meeting as well as a couple of TV items about the textbook in which the opposing camps of legislators and interpreters clashed over the textbook. The gender inequality in the socialist discourse of evolutionary modernity becomes evident in regard to the risk male and female intellectuals can take in invoking digressive irony. Males in the two items hold discursive authority to minimize "wrong" intertextual gaps between popular and folklore texts to emphasize their role of protecting women and children from chalga. Women, on the other hand, avoid irony; they key their performance of modern face to moral judgment and worry.

The consequence of the scandal alludes to Bauman and Briggs' (2003) argument that power and knowledge underlie postmodern interpretation, just like

modern legislation. The debating camps shared the expectation from "real intellectuals" to safeguard the purity of tradition as well as to define its "correct" hybridizations in contemporary life. They disagreed over the meaning of "real intellectual". While I cannot say definitely why Gaintadzhiev and his allies lost the debate, I suggest that their pluralist agenda failed to earn support because they, like their rivals, established discursive authority on rhetoric of risk, but unlike their rivals, left the "traditional" masses to resolve this risk by themselves and avoided using their modern reflexivity to propose any sort of protection.

The didactic musical exercise

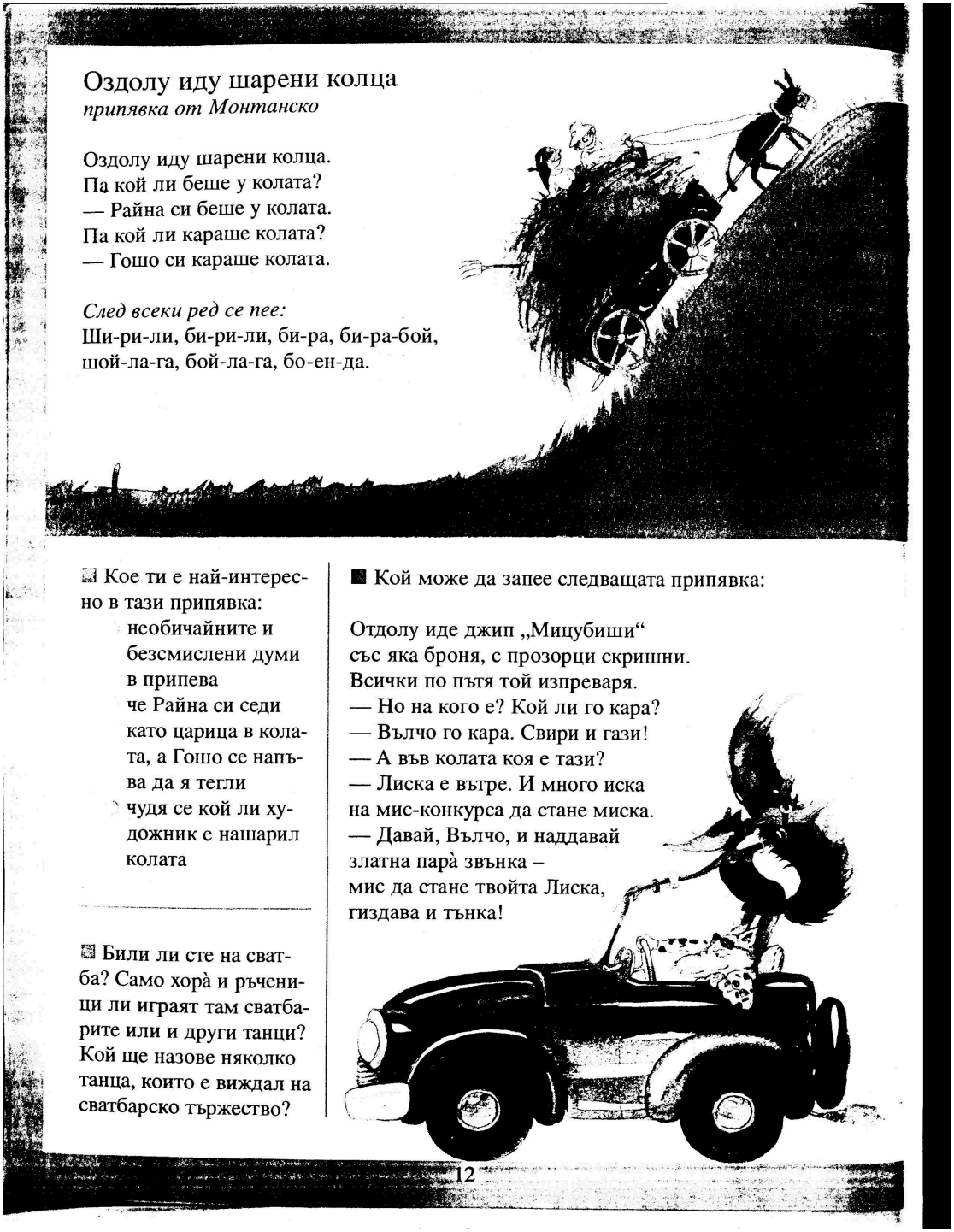
The lyrical text in the opening epigraph of this chapter was composed especially for this exercise. Gaitandzhiev and his co-authors, Maria Popova and Penka Mladenova, all of them veteran musical pedagogues (whose careers go back to the socialist era), invited the Bulgarian children author *Diado* (Grandpa) Punch (Pancho Panchev) to take an "authentic" folklore ditty from its "original" rural context and adapt it to the urban reality of contemporary Bulgarian children. Grandpa Punch chose to write his adaptation via the form of an animal tale. And these are two versions of the folkloric ditty to which his parody reacted:

1) Colorful Wheels are Coming Up (fig. 1)

A version from the Montana region (Northwestern Bulgaria)

Colorful wheels are coming up.
And who was in the carriage?
—Raina was in the carriage.
And who drove the carriage?
—Gosho drove the carriage.

After every line singing:
Shi-ri-li, bi-ri-li, bi-ra, bi-ra-boi,
Shoi-la-ga, boi-la-ga, bo-en-da.



Оздолу иду шарени колца

припявка от Монтанско

Оздолу иду шарени колца.
Па кой ли беше у колата?
— Райна си беше у колата.
Па кой ли караше колата?
— Гошо си караше колата.

След всеки ред се пее:
Ши-ри-ли, би-ри-ли, би-ра, би-ра-бой,
шой-ла-га, бой-ла-га, бо-ен-да.

Кое ти е най-интересно в тази припявка:
необичайните и безсмислени думи в припева
че Райна си седи като царица в колата, а Гошо се напъва да я тегли
чудя се кой ли художник е нашарил колата

Били ли сте на сватба? Само хора̀ и ръченици ли играят там сватбарите или и други танци? Кой ще назове няколко танца, които е виждал на сватбарско тържество?

Кой може да запее следващата припявка:

Отдолу иде джип „Мицубиши“
със яка броня, с прозорци скришни.
Всички по пътя той изпреваря.
— Но на кого е? Кой ли го кара?
— Вълчо го кара. Свири и гази!
— А във колата коя е тази?
— Лиска е вътре. И много иска
на мис-конкурса да стане миска.
— Давай, Вълчо, и наддавай
златна пара̀ звънка –
мис да стане твойта Лиска,
гиздава и тънка!

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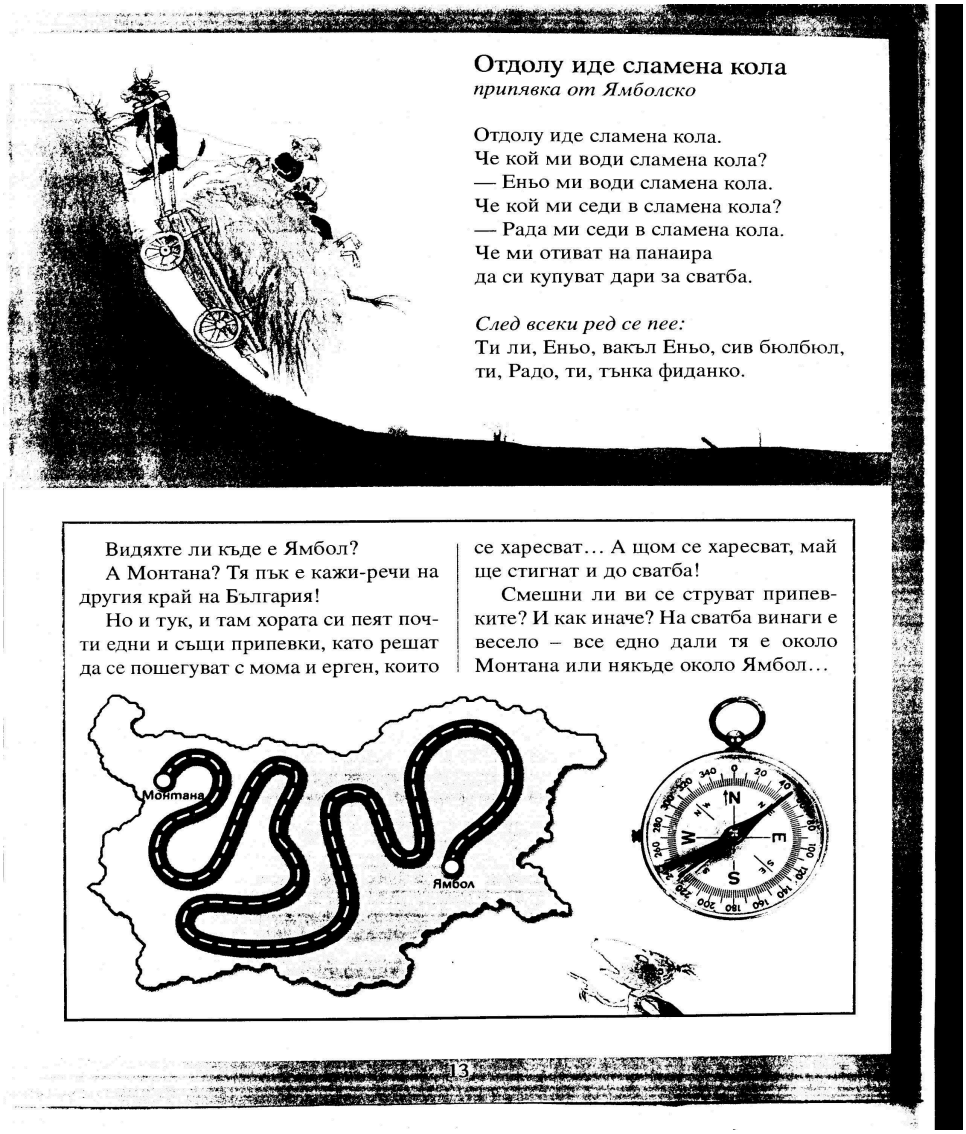
Fig. 1—at the top the ditty version from Montana. At the bottom the contemporary adaptation (“Music for 3rd grade” Gaitandzhiev et al. 2005a)

2) A Hay Carriage is Coming Up (fig. 2)
A version from the Yambol region (Southeastern Bulgaria)

A hay carriage is coming up.
And who is driving the hay carriage?
—Enio is driving the hay carriage.
And who is sitting in the hay carriage?
—Rada is sitting in the hay carriage.
And they are going to the fair
To buy gifts for the wedding

After every line singing:
You are, Enio, dark Enio, a grey bulbul,
you, Rada, you, a slim sampling

Fig. 2—at the top the ditty version from Yambol, at the bottom discussion questions, see translation next page (Gaitandzhiev et al., ibid)



As I mentioned earlier, the intention of the exercise is to prompt children's interactive learning of Bulgarian lyrical folklore. The political goal behind this pedagogic intention is to produce irony, which the authors consider an effect of possessing a democratic imagination. Irony intends to emerge from the polysemic interpretation and consequent laughter of the intertextual dialogue (Bakhtin 1981) between the contemporary and canonical texts (and discursively, between the imagination of modern and traditional Bulgaria). To achieve this goal, the textbook authors asked schoolchildren to reflect upon their heterogeneous social experience without subjecting it, as older Bulgarians have been automatically doing (in the authors' view) to the serious purist ideology of the nation-state (which the official folklore canon represents). The authors employed the contemporary animal tale and its juxtaposition to the two ditty versions to provide children with a model of how to invent, reinterpret, and recreate what older Bulgarians are habituated to receive as a closed codex of their national imagination.

The authors solicited interpretations of the parodic adaptation in three discussion boxes alongside the lyrical texts. The teachers were also instructed to invite students to sing the contemporary animal tale with the melody of the folklore ditty. In the first box under the ditty from Montana and beside the parody, the authors ask the students (see bottom figure 2): "what is most interesting for you in the ditty?" The authors suggest three optional answers: -"the unusual and senseless words in the refrain;" -"that Raina sits like a queen and Gosho sweats to pull her;" and –"I wonder, who is the artist who painted the carriage?" In a second box beside the ditty from Yambol they ask students: "Have you been to a wedding? Do the people at the wedding dance only Horo and Rŭchenitzi (two Bulgarian folklore dances *e.l.*) or also other dances? Who can say what dances he saw in a wedding celebration?" A third

and conclusive discussion box includes an illustrated map with the road from Montana to Yambol. Students are asked: "Did you see where Yambol is? And Montana? It is almost at the other side of Bulgaria! However, both here and there people sing almost the same ditty, when they decide to tease a maiden and a bachelor who like each other…and if they like each other, they might wed! Do the ditties seem funny to you? And how otherwise? Weddings are always happy – regardless whether they are around Montana or somewhere around Yambol…"

In the teacher's instruction booklet (Gaitandzhiev et al. 2005c) accompanying the textbook, the authors explained that the three texts and the following discussion boxes direct attention to the tendency of folkloric texts to appear in different versions, interpretations, and nuances in different places and with different melodies. Regarding the contemporary animal tale, the authors write: "[w]e hope that many classes will receive with pleasure also our wink at an extraordinary actual contemporary, present-day theme. The popular children's literature writer Grandpa Punch made with his typical sense of humor a joyful parody, which could help third graders sense better the generic specificities and social meaning of the tale. We hope also that, as we experienced, children will try to sing Grandpa Punch's 'tale,' many of them, without intention, will use the melody of 'Colorful Wheels Are Coming Up.' The versification of the last four lines (refrain) of the contemporary 'tale,' however, do not coincide with the rhythm of the folkloric ditty – excellent opportunity for children who wish to improvise on the lines any kind of 'version' of the of the ditty's melody" (ibid: 13-14).

Let me explain in detail what pedagogical considerations stood behind the exercise and instructions to the teacher. By defining the contemporary tale as a parody, the textbook authors keyed the exercise to Bakhtinian carnivalesque—a joyful

experience of ambivalent double speech: derogation coupled with affirmation (Bakhtin 1984). In this sense, the authors prompted school students to revisit the canonic authority of "authentic" folklore with the contemporary animal tale. A specific example of carnivalesque ambivalence appeared in the fact that both Gaitandzhiev and his critics read the contemporary animal tale as a humoristic sexual teaser. Gaitandzhiev's critics described such sexual connotation as abusive and corruptive. Gaitandzhiev, on the other hand, insisted that the vast majority of Bulgarian "authentic" folklore songs were actually saturated with metaphors of sex. Reconnecting folklore with sex was for him a prime way to revive the "authentic" nature of folklore as culture of *bitie* (everyday life). While Bulgarians usually admit that folk songs often had sexual innuendo (for instance the implicit sexual symbolism of pepper in the song *Dilmano Dilbero* [Buchanan 2006: 422]), they also tend to restrict associating folklore with sex to intimate settings. Their sense was that relating folklore to sex sounded "dirty," i.e. backward. Informants commonly distinguished between chalga and folklore by pointing to the explicit "hyper-sexual dirt" of the former versus the heightened artistic purity of the latter. Only in informal communications would people reiterate Gaitandzhiev's view with many examples of folk traditions alluding to sex, usually claiming with a smile that Bulgarians are after all "backward-dirty" people. Gaitandzhiev used to comment on the distinction between folklore and chalga with his discursive authority of a well-respected academic. He claimed that the dichotomy between sexually explicit chalga and chaste folklore showed Bulgarians' ignorance of their tradition rather than good moral conduct. He dismissed claims that the animal tale was improper for children insisting that folklore helps children express sexual imagination rather than repressing or denying it. In his mind, the notion of a-sexual "clean" folklore came from the puritan

imagination of totalitarian communism, which emphasized serious chasteness as decorum of modernity. Seriousness, he maintained, was euphemism for compliance.

There is another duality of subversion-affirmation, which was actually invisible to Gaitandzhiev, his detractors, as well as to myself during the time of my communications with Gaitandzhiev: the patriarchal subtext of the animal tale. Gaitandzhiev and his co-authors intended the animal tale to widen the intertextual calibration (Briggs and Bauman 1992) with the ditties by changing the goal of the driving. The male villagers in the two folklore ditties took their women to wedding ceremony; the Wolf in the contemporary context drove his to a beauty pageant. Thus they parodized the a-sexual "purity" of canonic folklore, in which marriage tames "dirty" sexual drives. Meanwhile, the animal tale maintains a narrow intertextual gap with the ditties in regard to gender roles. Both the contemporary and the canonic texts deploy women as passive (driven) objects whose beauty holds power over active (driving) men. In this hidden point I see Gaitandzhiev not acknowledging his legislating power. Whether girls are driven to their marriage or to contest in beauty pageant, they play the role of "unreflexive" traditional people who need the protection and mediation of modern reflexive men. As a result, Gaitandzhiev and his intellectual allies shared with their detractors the same purifying and hybridizing practices Bauman and Briggs (2003) find in the cultural work of modern European legislators (such as Lock and Herder), "…they accorded a type of consciousness to the elites that they denied to subalterns, and they promoted particular types of literacy practices, imbued them with value, and provided access to aristocratic and bourgeois men respectively" (312).

Neither Gaitandzheiv nor his opponents (or myself) found fault with the depiction of women as males' objects. Opponents addressed their critique to the fact

that the Vixen tempted the Wolf to exploit her beauty in an immoral manner: marriage or relationship as instrument of earning easy money (which Bulgarians commonly associate with fraud and deception). In the context of chalga, the two animal protagonists connote the stereotype of popfolk singers-bimbos, whose musical carrier is targeted to catching a rich husband (see chapter 1). The textbook authors indeed sought to ironize the entire interaction in the folklore ditties. However, their eye was not tuned to criticizing gender hierarchies, and so while opening up the canonic morals of gender relationships (sexual desire legitimized in marriage), they kept intact the canonical gender roles (the desirous male and his female object) in their attempt of intellectual interpretation.

The gender of Bulgarian modernity

This chapter does not revolve exclusively around gender. However, this is a central perspective to analyzing the verbal strategies intellectuals deployed when intertextaulizing their legislative role from socialism to democracy. My fieldwork has taught me that Bulgarians, at large, equate modern Europe with "rational virility" and the Balkans with "seductive femininity." This equation is not particular to Bulgaria. Fraser (1990) argues that, in principle, it is inherent to the modernist formulation of the public sphere as the locus of the bourgeois man. Bulgarian socialists endeavored to erase gender as a social category. Gender differences together with class, ethnicity, and religion were associated with the maladies of bourgeois society. Yet, Verdery (1996) shows that Eastern European socialist regimes did not eliminate gender from social life but shifted their location from the patriarchal family to the paternal state. Women gained more access to the public, but needed to carry a double responsibility of national citizens and "natural" mothers. Ghodsee (2009, 2005) criticizes the return of gender politics in post-socialist democracy. In contrast with the official liberal

ideology, actual social life has reintroduced gender as a factor of exclusion, inclusion, discrimination, affiliation and solidarity.

Building on this gender critique, I argue that when Bulgarians relate with nostalgia to socialist modernity they express expectations that the state would retake its former paternalist role of protecting ordinary people (i.e. the *narod*). Within this expectation, intellectuals are supposed to play their previous role of brokers, who channel the official protocol of modernity to the people. Chalga is a metonym of such expectations. Bulgarians denounce chalga's sexual texts while valorizing the alleged sexual "decency" of socialist culture, especially socialist-realist folklore. People told me that "authentic" folklore is modest because, unlike chalga, it connects gender to many realms of social life, not only to romantics and sex. Over and over again people recalled with fondness the time in which rearranged folklore (*obrabotka,* "right hybridity") defined Bulgarian national culture, not chalga ("false hybridity"). The textbook authors aimed to deconstruct this perception. They endeavored to create a new national culture that emerges from everyday life (*bitie*) reality of contemporary Bulgarian people (rather than from the ideological narrative of the ideal Bulgarian people—the "authentic" *Narod*). To do that, they erased the generic differences between folklore and chalga. They brought to the public an existing vernacular reading of Bulgarian folklore, which sees sexual meanings hidden in many presumably a-sexual metaphors.

Why was this act of bringing this vernacular reading of folklore to the nation so explosive? Why was teaching schoolchildren to recognize gender and sexual meanings in folklore stained as chalga? Because Bulgarians perform modern (virile) face by presenting themselves as endangered by (feminine) Balkan backwardness. Balkan backwardness does not carry any definite meaning. It can be anything that

reiterates Bulgarians' sense of gap with, digression from, or (if to emphasize the language ideology perspective) recursivity from perceived forms and practices of modern European life: from corrupted officials, low quality consumer culture, smalltime fraud, public impoliteness, and neglected public space, to nouveau rich/Mafia elite, peasant lifestyle, "Oriental" minorities (namely Gypsies and Turks), and, of course, "seductive" chalga music. Relating to backwardness in public does not mean that one immediately loses modern face. Modernity, just like heteronormative sexuality (Berlant and Warner 1998), is a category of encoding evolution in public and private life through practices of purification and hybridization. To protect their modern face people are expected to claim victimhood by distancing themselves from such manifestations with verbal gestures of denouncement, mocking and most often by ignoring them with silence. In any case, one is supposed to fear the danger and shame of their proximity with acts and utterances that index Balkan backwardness.

Gaining pleasure from indices of Balkan backwardness, on the other hand, runs the risk of being stained with the harsh stigma of failure, called *prostotiia* ("boorishness," "simplemindedness"). People whom I discuss in this and the next chapters encounter this risk in many different ways as well. *Prostak* is the name of a person who loses face because of indulgence with shameful acts (*bezobrazie*), i.e. someone whose *bitie* (everyday life) is totally divorced from any *poniatie* (essence, concept) of modernity. In this sense, *prostak* cannot feel shame and fear of backwardness, because by not grasping the essence of modernity, this person supposedly cannot reflect upon his or her own *bitie*. Following this perception, Bulgarians often claim that chalga cannot be considered cultural genre. It is not a genre because it arguably has no essence (*sŭshtnost*, meaning also "self"), no concept (*poniatie*, also "ideal"), and no face except indulgence in *prostotiia.* It also cannot be

characterized as "cultural" because it reflects reality as-it-is (everyday life, *bitie*) rather than reality as-it-ought-to-be (art, *izkustvo*). This is a socialist realist concept to which I will relate in greater detail later. Indeed, oftentimes people employ chalga as a metonym of the entire field of Balkan backwardness, which gives a concrete sense of its dirty, noisy, and kitschy, and, as I will show momentarily, also femininely irrational and seductive qualities.

Associations of chalga with femininity are more implicit. I heard from men and women alike that chalga is corruptive, because it tempts Bulgarians to abandon the current route to European rationality, i.e. adhering to norms and practices of liberal democracy. For instance, "The Temptation of Chalga," the artistic exhibition to which I referred in the introduction, attempted to reflect upon the experience of post-socialist transition through this "bright, shiny, noisy, scandalous, kitschy" cultural phenomenon (from the official press release of the exhibition). Both the male and female artists who participated in the exhibition depicted mostly either women as sexual objects (see introduction), the "bimbo" female stars—*folkadzhiiki*—whom I discussed in the previous chapter (figure 1), and effeminate popfolk male stars (figure 2).

Fig. 3—*Zvezdi* ("Stars") *2004-2005* by Adelina Popnedelva, from the exhibition "The Temptation of Chalga," Sofia City Gallery, May 1-31, 2009, picture: Eran Livni

Fig. 4—*Tri zvezdi* (Three Stars), *2000-2001* by Georgi Bogdanov and Boris Missirkov, from the exhibition "The Temptation of Chalga," Sofia City Gallery, May 1-31, 2009, picture: Eran Livni

When Bulgarians relate to chalga's power of "temptation," they actually ascribe agency to the signified objects of their speech act. I learned that people often experience chalga as a non-human feminine power, which threatens to destroy the archetype of enlightened mastery: the rational man. Testament to this danger is the colloquial relation to chalga as "she," *tia*, with which modern Bulgarian men and women ascribe to "her" many of Bulgaria's post-socialist maladies. This is also the common standpoint of Bulgarian intellectuals. For instance, the Bulgarian ethnomusicologist Rozmary Statelova (2003) charges "her" with seven sins of detachment from Europe. Statelova maintains that chalga has created an archetype character "the chalga person" who, in radical opposition to the archetypical "ideal Bulgarian," is not purely Bulgarian but mixed soul with Gypsies and Turks; the geographical border of this person are regional-Balkan rather than circumscribed by the Bulgarian nation-state; the Orient rather than the Occident is this person's point of cultural orientation; the consciousness of the "chalga person" is the cultural emptiness of pre-independent Bulgaria under the Ottoman yoke; and this person's pleasure comes from contaminating the corpus of "authentic" folklore music (*narodna muzika*) by making it an object of erotic vulgarity under the pretext of modernity. Additionally, the journalist Martin Karbovski (1999) defines through "her" a state of national stupidity, the classical musician and conductor Emil Tabakov declared that "she" was the only reason he would consider emigrating from Bulgaria, another famous Bulgarian classical musician, Haigashot Agasian, stated that he would vote for the party that would ban chalga by law (Dimov 2001). Rejecting the temptation of chalga is an arête of virile (rational) modernity; that is, all men and women who hold the capacity to conquer slavery and develop mental and intellectual capabilities to become masters.

"Authentic" Narod vs. "corrupted" folk

Let me now turn to how the arête of virility is elaborated in the distinction Bulgarians hold between two cultural forms: "authentic" folklore (*narodna* kultura) and "seductive" chalga. Bulgarians usually perceive the first as the quintessential culture of the modern Bulgarian nation; they see the latter as threatening the nation with "oriental" corruption. Liberation from slavery toward rational mastery is central in the popular historical narrative of nation-state Bulgaria. It stems from an outdated official narrative, which is still promoted usually by ultra-nationalist groups. As this narrative goes, Balkan backwardness is Bulgarians' "collective trauma" of being torn from Europe during 500 years of enslavement to the "Turkish yoke" (*Turskoto robstvo*), the derogatory name for the period of Ottoman rule. Meanwhile popular nationalist narrative considers Bulgarians the first European nation, which emerged during the First and Second Bulgarian Kingdoms, 681-1018 and 1185-1396 respectively. The most important cultural significances of that period are, first, the Cyrillic alphabet, which was invented by the two brothers Cyril and Methodius, and, second, the autocephalous Bulgarian Orthodox Church. As the narrative goes, Bulgarians lost their national identity and turned into the Sultans' slaves, after the Ottomans conquered the Bulgarian lands. As a result, Bulgarians have remained outside the reach of European modernity. People in Bulgaria believe that national identity during the Ottoman time continued to exist only in the folklore traditions of Bulgarian villagers as well as in Bulgarian Orthodox Christianity. Only in the turn of the 19th century was Bulgarian nationality re-born, inaugurating the so-called "the Revival Period" (*Vŭzrazhdane*) that culminated in the establishment of the Principality of Bulgaria (1878). Thanks especially to modern Bulgarian revolutionaries and/or authors and intellectuals, most prominently Hristo Botev, Ivan

Vazov, and Vasil Levski, Bulgarians regained their national memory and managed to revolt against the Ottoman domination. In the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish war (1877-1878) the Principality of Bulgaria was created out of the Ottoman Empire. The nation-state of Bulgaria received its full independence in 1908 after its unification with the autonomous province of Eastern Rumelia.[42]

As I wrote in the introduction, even more than a century after gaining national independence Bulgarians still maintain that they lag behind modern Western Europe, the prototype of rational mastery, because they need to "catch up" (*navaksvane*) with what they missed during the dark era of living in the "Orient." European modernity is the goal of Bulgarian nation building: closing the gap of modernity and thereby returning to Europe. Whether via socialism or via democracy, for Bulgarians, catching up with Europe means following synthetic doctrines of how to mobilize Bulgarians so as to heal them from the habitus of slavery (Bulgarians prefer to relate to it in a psychological manner, "slave mentality") and adopt the rational lifestyle of modern European masters.

The dialectics of evolution appears also in the colloquial distinction Bulgarians make between two sociocultural categories: "the *Narod*" and "the folk." Obviously, this distinction is a local version of Herder's definition of the "Volk" and "the rabble in the alley" (e.g. Benedix 1997: 47). However the Bulgarian definition is wider than the distinction between "authentic peasants" and the new urban lower class. Both categories signify the same social stratum: the basis of Bulgarian nation. Modern Bulgarians distinguish between the "authentic" (i.e. ethnically homogeneous, pure, organic) social basis, "the *Narod*," and the "contaminated" (hybrid, multiethnic) one, "the folk." "The *Narod*" is the Slavic equivalent of the German term "das Volk,"

[42] For a scholarly study of Bulgarian national discourse, see Crampton 2007.

in which Bulgarians identify the ideal people of modern nation-state Bulgaria. "The folk," on the other hand, is the nation's lowest common denominator, the actual and essentially backward, social base of Bulgaria's everyday life (see in detail chapter 3). This base consists, at the top, of the post-socialist Money elite: corrupted politicians and civil servants, Mafia goons (*mutri,* "stupid animal face") and their chicks (*mutresi*), illicit businessmen, bimbos, and nouveaux riches. At the bottom, it includes "primitive" peasants, urbanized peasants, urban poor, and Gypsies. This association reiterates Herder's argument that the rabble in the alley "never sing or compose, but only scream and mutilate" (ibid, in direct relation to chalga, see Statelova 1993).

Bulgarians consider the ideal people (the *Narod*) as more "real" than the counterpart category of "the actual people" (the *folk*). The reason is that that the "real Bulgarian people" are allegedly those who are ostensibly closer to their generic essence. Thus "authentic" folklore is the historical evidence of real Bulgarians—the *Narod*; folklore is also the *Narod*'s cultural canon that encapsulates the essence, the independent self-consciousness of Bulgarian identity (the concept of *izvor*, Buchanan 2006). Chalga, on the other hand, contaminates the "authentic" essence in the everyday life of the Balkans (i.e. "fakelore"[43]) whose multiethnicity has resulted from Bulgaria's role as a historical buffer zone between world empires. At present, Gypsies are the stereotypical performers and audience of chalga (see in detail chapter 4). Unlike other sections of the society who can potentially turn into *Narod,* Gypsies are confined to a stereotypical role of seductive siren, whose singing tempts Bulgarians to forget their national goal and digress back into the traumatic Ottoman past. When

[43] The term "fakelore" coined by Richard Dorson (1976) became obsolete in US and Western European scholarly discourse under the impact of the "invention of tradition" paradigm. This term still makes sense in Bulgaria. I realized that both scholars and ordinarily people still at large ascribe factual authenticity to their folklore canon.

they listen to chalga, Bulgarians "run the danger" of turning into Gypsies—the quintessential rabble, "the folk," "effeminate" slaves.

This distinction between "the *Narod*" and "the folk" is significant in Bulgarian socialist realist reading of the Bakhtinian dialectics of high and low cultural practices (Bakhtin 1984). Under the influence of Socialist Realist philosophy (specifically George Lukács, e.g. Tikhanov 2000; Mojeiko 2009), artistic practice (*izkustvo*) stands for high culture while everyday life practice (*bitie*)[44] stands for vulgar esthetics (of the rabble, slaves). In socialist ideology this division classified aesthetic practices that had or lacked class-consciousness.

More than two decades after the fall of socialism, people in Bulgaria have already accepted Western democracy as the ideological basis of everyday life. However, they still expect all aesthetic expressions, including folklore and popular arts, to perform reality as it was during socialism—reality not as it is (the reality of everyday life, the reality of "effeminate" slaves), but as it ought to be (reality of class consciousness, the reality of" virile" masters). Art is supposed to present an evolutionary model of modern progression from slavery to mastery. Artists are a type of intellectuals whose role is to comment upon everyday reality but in a positive way, as defined by the state, which offers operative course of change. Generic canons are supposed to provide artists with the essential basis of reflecting on their artwork and judge its aesthetic (i.e. evolutionary) value.

This perception is eminent in the contemporary local scholarly discourse. For instance, the Bulgarian folklorist Georg Kraev (2009) conceptualizes a folklore dialectics between the upper-ruling masculine world and the lower-laboring feminine

[44] My analysis here draws upon Lemon (2000), who explores the relationships between the image of Russian Roma in art (particularly literature and theater) and everyday life (*byt*).

world, which compose Bulgarian selfhood (his term is "the classical folklore person"). Statelova (1993) emphasizes that the Bakhtinian definition of high and low culture distinguishes not only between the upper and lower social strata but also between the upper and lower parts of the body, the loci of high-quality intellectual and low-quality carnal esthetic pleasures. In this sense, Bulgarians usually see chalga, and particularly *kiuchek* (the Balkan belly dance associated with chalga and invoking stereotypes of backward Gypsy ethnicity) as phenomena of lower body-lower quality carnal pleasure. Another scholar doubted my basic ability to study Bulgarian music when I argued once in our conversation that the popfolk star Azis adopted the vocal style of folklore female singers. This scholar stopped the conversation and quizzed me: "Mr. Livni, could you please list to me the regional map of Bulgarian folklore music?" I managed to escape the quiz when I lied that this was what Bulgarian informants told me. This explanation sounded plausible to this scholar. It reaffirmed the notion of post-socialist deterioration. That is, the "chalga person" (Statelova 2003), a cruder version of "the folk", reflects the life reality of people in present-day Bulgaria much more than "the Bulgarian *narod*."

What is essential in the socialist-realist dialectics is not so much the proletarian doctrine but the ideal of evolution toward modernity, elevating everyday life toward "reality as it ought to be." In public, Bulgarians identify the realm of art—"reality as it ought to be"—with forms that stands for European modernity; they identify the realm of everyday life—"reality as it is"—with inability to perform these forms, which provoke judgments of Balkan backwardness. Both during socialism and afterwards, the locus of this ideal reality has been the everyday reality of modern European nations, as reflected through the Bulgarian gaze. During socialism the center of this locus was the USSR and the Eastern bloc; after 1989 this center shifted

to the European Union (and, to lesser extent, the US). The common opinion in Bulgaria is that the function of all arts and artists in Bulgaria is, then, to prompt evolution. In order to be considered culture, artists should produce aesthetic expressions of European modernity, which all Bulgarians would be able to emulate. Art is also expected to reject actual reality—what people see as life in the Balkans—in order to guide Bulgarians how to adopt modern lifestyle. One informant, for instance, told me once that Romanians made the best music in the Balkans. The reason was that it sounded and looked so Western that one could not even imagine that it was produced in Romania.

Stemming from this socialist-realist dialectics is that Bulgarians judge the performance of aesthetic genres according to how successfully performers materialize the concept—*poniatie*, meaning also generic conventions—and attributes of evolution. This formulation of platonic mimesis entails that performers are supposed to replicate canonical performance of each genre. For instance, the American musician and ethnomusicologist Angela Rodel, who graduated from a Bulgarian folklore music conservatory (an institution that was founded during the socialist era) in the early 2000s, told me once that in singing exams students were asked to imitate the way various model singers, who represent the "authentic" style of each region, perform "canonized songs." Thus Valkana Stoyanova[45] served as the model for "authentic" Thracian singing in such exams, Boika Prisadova[46] stood for "authentic" folklore from the Rhodope Mountains. Rodel learned in school that successful emulation of model singers was a sign of professionalism.

[45] "Бълка Стоянова," accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LaHSEdHhCJI.
[46] "Родопите. Бойка Присадова - Личко льо," accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_VZety5Q6lY.

Other informants expressed the notion that interpretation of folklore singing was improper, a sign of *haltura* ("low quality work," see chapter 1). Knowing the generic conventions means that a performer—another form of musical intellectual—does not sing out of mere talent, just like Gypsies (whose performance paradigmatically represents *haltura*). A modern folklore singer is supposed to materialize abstract values with her voice—she should have the intellectual capacity to reflect on what she does. Being a product of *shkola* (school, doctrine) means that she has internalized the generic consciousness of the musical practice. The feminine pronoun is not coincidental. Bulgarian folklore singing is canonically a feminine art, an art of temptation rather than contemplation. Hence, informed emulation indicates for Bulgarians that a singer is a real artist with "high professional standards." She does not grasp only the practice of art but also its abstract concepts, its *poniatiia* (the plural of *poniatie*). This is the reason why the poetics of popfolk mimetic artificiality, which I analyzed in the previous chapter, sounds so live to Bulgarians; it reiterates the same logic of performing pre-defined *poniatiia* of Western pop.

The tension between "the *narod*" and "the folk" underlies also the distinctions Bulgarians make between "chalga" and "popfolk." Nobody could offer me a clear way to distinguish between the two generic signifiers though I realized that people did not use them interchangeably. I realized that "chalga" signifies "wrong" hybridization of tradition and modernity in a manner that does not signal evolution. Its only characteristic is that it deviates from "right" hybridizations of folklore and modern musics. This deviation invokes the historical narrative of inherently wide calibration between Balkan-Bulgarians and modern Europeans. In the context of the evolutionary myth, chalga represents the seductive "folk," i.e. the sirens' temptation to surrender to backwardness. Popfolk is also derivative of "the folk" and so it also carries

derogatory meanings of lowbrow culture. However it also presents Bulgarians with the possibility to evolve voluntarily from "the folk" to being Western consumers ("the pop"). They do so by rejecting "dirty" chalga in favor of a "cleaner" form of popfolk.[47]

Gencho Gaitandzhiev—a modernity heretic

Gencho Gaitandzhiev (1935-2010)—the head-author of the music textbook that invoked the scandal—was a rare informant who was absolutely not apologetic about the popularity of chalga hybridities in Bulgaria. On the contrary, he actually welcomed its non-canonized and seemingly spontaneous character as a sign of a grassroots democratic culture. Presenting himself as a modernity heretic, he utterly rejected the myth of evolution from the "Turkish yoke" to Occidental Europe. This myth and its respective negative rendering of chalga as destructive temptation to backwardness indicated to him that despite the current democratic political structure, present-day Bulgarians still maintained what he called "the totalitarian mentality" of the communist era. In his mind, totalitarianism was Bulgaria's national trauma, not the Ottoman past (which he refused to recognize as the "Turkish yoke"). Gaitandzhiev's pedagogical goal was to deconstruct what he saw as the politics of domination underlying the dialectics of (socialist realist) national culture. He argued that this dialectics promised a utopian Western reality if people rejected their autonomy in favor of submissiveness scripted by national authorities. However, this script perpetuated traditional power structures of class (urbanity) and ethnicity-religion (Bulgarian Orthodox Christianity). Particularly villagers and Roma (and in a more ambivalent manner also Turks) played in the evolutionary myth the same old role of the Other, i.e. Balkan slaves. The issue of male patriarchy skipped our

[47] See similar attempts to "clean" "dirty" popular music in Algerian Rai (Schade-Poulsen 1999) and Turkish Arabesk (Stokes 1992) as well as chapter 4 of this dissertation.

attention. I admit that we did not discuss how the equation of masculinity with rationality and femininity with temptation implicate Bulgarian distinction of national modernity. This idea came to my mind later, while I was writing this chapter.

Gaitandzhiev's criticism of modernity prompted him to claim that Bulgarians were caught in fear and shame over their imagined trauma of backwardness, and therefore they could not tolerate cultural symbols unless they had official and final meanings fixed in definite generic taxonomy. Against the grain, Gaitandzhiev identified chalga with the ideal of folklore—culture emerging grassroots from ordinary people's lives. That was the reason he advocated music classified as chalga; that was also the reason why his perception stirred such antagonism. Gaitandzhiev maintained that people in Bulgaria were drawn to chalga's musical openness because it related so much to their heterogeneous *bitie,* i.e. real-life experience. But at the same time, people were also ashamed and afraid of their own attraction because if they did not follow the generic doctrine of modern culture, they ran the risk of being tagged as the *folk*.

Gaitandzhiev addressed his critique primarily to academics, urban intelligentsia, politicians, and journalists, who, in his mind, have been fostering totalitarianism while pretending to fulfill the role of the intellectual elite—directing ordinary Bulgarians away from the Balkans. He maintained that, both during socialism and afterwards, Bulgarian intellectuals have willingly conveyed doctrines of imagined evolution toward European modernity, which ordinary Bulgarians have been expected to follow. In so doing they helped the political regime to delude people that compliance was the successful evolution. Gaitandzhiev did not oppose ideologically either communism or democracy. He was actually a faithful adherent of the utopian communist ideal of popular democracy. In this sense he reminded me

Eastern European leftist intellectuals like Slavoj Žižek and Václav Havel, who embraced democracy, as a system of self-determination not as a new top-down imposed model substitutive of communism, whose slogans and rituals people are now required to chant and practice (Žižek 2002: 89-90).

Gaitandzhiev was particularly motivated to reveal to me what he considered as the "satanization" of chalga—the allegations against "her." Oftentimes he came to our meetings with newspaper clippings, whose authors mocked popfolk singers, related to chalga as a metaphor for all local social maladies, or blamed the music for destroying the nation. He asked me to photocopy and read carefully these clippings, because, as he said, they were highly valuable documents of Bulgarians' "totalitarian syndrome." He stressed that Bulgarians explicate this syndrome in local social life with intertwined anxieties of fear and shame regarding the self-perceived trauma of Balkan backwardness.

Shame in particular is a central theme in local public culture. Since the *Vŭzrazhdane* Bulgarian literati have defined their goal as cultivating a modern national consciousness in order to release the people from their historical shame of slavery (e.g. Daskalov 2001). Modernization aims also to resolve the self-perceived emotional complex of Bulgarians; that is, as a nation, they suffer from low self-confidence.

Gaitandziev told me that fear and shame have driven Bulgarians to see democratic freedom as a risk of national deformation and disintegration. What he meant was that people in Bulgaria preferred totalitarianism to democracy because they constantly lived in fear and shame of being caught in performing backwardness. Hence they felt more comfortable when an authoritative power told them how to

think, i.e. when the regime provided them with a fixed prescription of indexical relations between signifier and signified.

He taught me that Bulgarians acknowledge this sort of cultural rigidity with the colloquial phrase "the Bulgarian doesn't have plan B" (*Bŭlgarinŭt nyama vtori plan*), meaning, there is only one single way to do and think about things. I inquired other informants about this phrase. I was mainly told that the reason for this monosemic rigidity was Bulgarians' inherent peasant mentality, which confines their ability to think flexibly (see chapter 3). According to this perception, the Ottoman rule is to be blamed for this mentality. The Turks tore "the first European nation" from its organic land and did not let it develop. When the rest of Europe developed modern urban life, Bulgarians were held as a mob of peasants.

Irony was a central point in which Gaitandzhiev positioned himself against the evolutionary discourse of modernization. Both sides regarded irony as a rhetorical power that upholds democracy. They disputed over whether irony was supposed to affirm or subvert the socialist realist dialectics of evolution. As I wrote earlier, Gaitandzhiev identified humoristic polysemy as a vernacular terrain of democracy, which countered the serious dogmatism of totalitarianism. Ironic laughter, the sensual reaction to the multiplicity of a sign's optional meanings, stimulates imagination that grasps plurality of political meanings. He especially valorized laughter that reacted to double voice. His idea was radical not only to the intellectual elite but also to ordinary Bulgarians. Ordinarily, Bulgarians consider humor as risky because it digresses from seriousness—the presumed prime affect of modern episteme. Irony, in this sense, is a humoristic utterance that claims playful suspension of seriousness without aiming to replace it. Usually, people in Bulgaria express irony when they purposefully mimic what they see as backward behavior. Exaggeration indexes mimicry, and audience

laughter indexes the existence of a Bulgarian public—a community of receivers, which keys mimicry to digression from modern decorum. Bulgarians are accustomed to keying speech to modern forms by exhibiting controlled digression to practices they recognize as backward. They are familiar with social practices habitual in the Balkans, but this familiarity is beyond temptation; people know how to mimic backwardness as if they were communicating with people from Europe.

Gaitandzhiev taught me the colloquialism *kazionno*, with which Bulgarians mocked, during the socialist era, performances that mechanically depicted the official protocol. This is what Žižek defines as the socialist realist concept of the "typical:" an officially codified phenomenon "which enabled us truly to identify the truly progressive forces active in the social situation." (2000: 175) Gaitandzhiev stressed, though, that this sort of mocking is half-hearted. With all its mechanical character, performing the official protocol is, for Bulgarians, a modern safe ground, while digressive humor, particularly sexual humor, runs the danger of performing backwardness.

The satirical play "Misunderstood Civilization" (*Krivorazbrana Tsivilizatsiia*) by Dobri Voinikov (published in 1871 [2006], 7 years before Bulgaria's autonomy from Ottoman rule) satirizes the ways in which Bulgarians reveal their backwardness when trying to mimic modern lifestyle. The concept of irony in this play is foundational to the Balkanist metadiscourse of modernity. Unlike Gaitandzhiev's irony that highlights double speech derived from polysemy, the play identifies irony with failed mimicry of European modernity. Failure comes from the fact that people, who are essentially backward, mimic exterior manners of modern behavior without having basic understanding of what modernity actually means. In this sense, chalga is a judgmental label of such failed mimicry. It symbolizes attempts to perform pop

music decontextualized from the socio-cultural environment of "real" modern pop: the Western world.

The dominance of the digressive over the polysemic irony was the reason why Gaitandzhiev preferred to advocate folklore and pop music hybridities without labeling them as chalga. He attempted to advocate vernacular soundscapes of Balkan heterogeneity, however he knew that any reference to chalga would immediately associate them with noise and dirt. In this sense, he had to be much more careful than just avoiding the "ch" word. Associating music with Balkan heterogeneity was enough, since all political hierarchies of nation-state Bulgaria have marginalized such musical imagination. Bulgarian intellectual legislators (the camp that opposed Gaitandzhiev's musical pedagogy) stressed that they had to conquer their temptation to chalga. For them, ascribing cultural value to the sort of polysemy called chalga was anti-modern. It denied the founding charter of the Bulgarian nation-state.

How did Bulgarian intellectuals counter Gaitandzheiv's concept of polysemic irony with accusations of fraud and deception? And how did they reclaim their role of modernity brokers and gatekeepers by stirring the scandal against his textbooks? My discussion turns now to answer these questions in detail.

Academics and TV Broadcasters attacking Gaitandzhiev's textbooks

I left Bulgaria for a few weeks trip to the US in January 2008. Upon my return I called Gaitandzhiev and scheduled a coffee to touch base. I found him in a bad mood. He said that he was highly upset with a new anti-chalga attack that broke out during my absence. He showed me the exercise from the music textbook for 3rd graders and explained to me how his attempt to stimulate an interactive experience of folklore as a cultural practice of everyday life received an image of fraud, deception, and abuse.

I knew that this was not the first time that Gaitandzhiev was condemned for corrupting children with chalga. I learned beforehand that from time to time, education officials tried to remove discussions of popfolk performers from his textbooks on pedagogical pretexts. Usually such attempts were not explicitly addressed to chalga but to considerations of modesty and musical quality. For instance, once he was asked to remove a picture of the popfolk singer Sofi Marinova. Apparently this demand was not because she was *folkadziika* (a popfolk female performer, see chapter 1) nor was it also because she was Romani. The education official, who raised this issue, only hinted to Gaitandzhiev that Marinova's Romani ethnicity was the real reason. Explicitly, though, he complained that Marinova's dress had inappropriately low décolleté. When Gaitandzhiev pointed to other pictures in the textbook of female singers who wore more exposing clothes than Marinova, the official just insisted that those singers were a different case.

The appearance of the Romani popfolk singer Sofi Marinova in another of Gaitandzhiev's textbooks had been at the center of a public scandal a few years earlier. In the fall of 2004 a committee of parents from the city of Stara Zagora (Southeastern Bulgaria) protested against the decision of the municipality to implement the usage of a musical kit by Gaitandzhiev and his team in the city's kindergartens. The protestors especially directed their critique to the music kit "Colorful Music" (*Sharena muzika*, Gaitanzhiev et al. 2004) for being an "apology for Romani songs." What trigged their anger was a picture of Sofi Marinova with her young son as well as a recording of a song sung by Marinova in Romani and Bulgarian (the song was included in the CD accompanying the kit). Gaitandzhiev told me that he and his team indeed had a political goal in their mind. They intended to show through the song that Bulgarians and Roma could live in multiethnic harmony

instead of clash and conflict. However, the protesting parents and the media that covered the protest did not accept this message. They interpreted the presence of Romani musicians in the kit as a counter-educational act that corrupts rather than cultivates modern musical taste (as well as modern behavior). This interpretation was rendered in the rhetorical question that appeared in the Bulgarian press: "is it the pureblooded Bulgarian children who need to integrate in the Romani minorities or the opposite?" (Peicheva and Dimov 2005: 121)[48]

Gaitandzhiev informed me that this time there were two lines of attack against his textbooks. The first came from the media and the other from a group of academics. He believed that they were interconnected; he angrily said to me that they spun slanders against him in the same way people were terrorized during the socialist era. He explained that, back in the time of the previous regime, people used to live in constant fear that someone might contrive slanders that would circulate and subsequently hit the slandered person. I learned that such slanders commonly revolved around disloyalty to the regime. Nowadays, slanders are either about alleged informers of the National Security Service (*Dŭrzhavna Sigurnost*, the internal secret police of the socialist state), or about people who allegedly indulge in *prostotiia*. Both during socialism and after, though, the motives for slanders have remained the same: power, revenge, greed, and envy. Both Gaitandzhiev and other people told me that in Bulgaria one needed to be very cautious not to disclose any sort of success. Once

[48] Sofi Marinova tends to shy away from being associated with Romani ethnicity, although she does not deny her identity. Her ability to walk the fine line between integration and ethnicity has earned her status of an "integrated" (i.e. assimilated, see chapter 4) Romani. For instance, she was elected to represent Bulgaria in the 2012 Eurovision in Baku, Azerbaijan. Her song "Love Unlimited," which celebrated regional multiculturalism, was not very successful. It did not qualify to the final after taking only the 11th place in the II semi-final. That was her fourth Eurovision attempt after three unsuccessful duets with the Bulgarian singers Slavi Trifonov and Ustata in the local annual pre-Eurovision competition.

people think that someone else is too high up in a field, there is an immediate urge to crush this person so that s/he "won't boast" (*da ne se pohvali*).

Gaitandzhiev shared with me that someone had told him that an academic group, to which I will refer with the pseudonym "Council for the Humanities," filed a complaint against his musical textbook for 3rd grade with a high official in the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. Gaitandzhiev learned about the complaint from a friend who saw a copy of the letter, which the Council circulated within limited academic circles. The letter was supposedly a follow up on a conference the Council held about the language style of textbooks used in Bulgarian schools and universities. The declared goal of the conference was to encourage scholarly and educational literature written "not only in a correct literary language, but also in a language, that is cleansed of excessive specialized terminology, accessible, and clear, i.e. language and style, which allow easier processing of the scholarly material."[49] The chair of the Council, Prof. Dochka Ivanova (pseudonym), who signed the letter, pointed her critique to the humoristic exercise in Gaitandzhiev's musical textbook for the 3rd grade. In the Council's view, the exercise was a paradigmatic example of incorrect language style. Prof. Ivanova cited one of the speakers in the conference who disqualified the pedagogical professionalism of the textbook, because it presumably encouraged negative social behavior, such as "aggressive driving, bribery, and ruthless effort of some young people to realize by any means their baseless sick ambitions" (ibid). Following this critique, the "Council

[49] This is a quotation from a letter by Prof. Dochka Ivanova (pseudonym), the director of the "Council for the Humanities" section to a high official at the Bulgarian Ministry Education and Science (Spring 2008). The topic of the letter was, "clarifying comment on letter [*omitted identifying details*] from the "Council for the Humanities." The letter from which I quote was part of the agreement between Gaitandzhiev and Prof. Ivanova, in which she apparently withdrew a previous letter of critique against his musical textbooks.

for the Humanities" recommended to the Bulgarian Ministry of Education to ban Gaitandzhiev's musical textbook for 3rd graders from the Bulgarian education system.

The letter did not provide specific explanation about what in the language of the exercise encouraged socially degrading behavior. Narrowing the intertextual gap between the contemporary animal tale and the canonic folklore ditties without cues of denunciation hit the cultural buttons of fear and shame of *prostotiia*. Not specifying the problem in the exercise followed the ethical code of modernity: ignoring digressions to backwardness. Prof. Ivanova only pointed to the problem without mentioning chalga explicitly.

Gaitandzhiev acknowledged that the Council's letter endangered his reputation. It played the game of turning people against him by spreading slanders behind his back. However, he felt confident to stand for his name in the academic environment. He sought support from two opposing images of the Bulgarian academia. The first was the negative image of academics as fossilized relics of socialism. Gaitandzhiev turned to his male pedagogical authority to reiterate the gender stereotype of the former socialist academia as a stagnate place for "old nannies" (*stari babi*). The second was the old socialist positive image of academia as the forefront of national evolution. Gaitandzhiev was also a product of the socialist academia. He was a professor of music pedagogy at the Bulgarian Academy of Science (BAS) until retiring in 1992, 3 years after the democratic changes. His professional authority was so established during the socialist era that he could hold an oppositional attitude to the mainstream musical academe.

Claire Levy, a senior ethnomusicologist at BAS and Gaitandzhiev's widow, told me that he initiated a new approach to studying music in Bulgarian schools. Instead of aiming to teach schoolchildren music literacy, i.e. to sing musical notes, he

advanced teaching music as a medium of social communication. This agenda included introducing local and Western popular musics alongside more politically correct genres (namely, classical music and folklore). As the director of BAS' musical publishing house *Muzika* (1975-1988), he initiated the first academic publications in Bulgaria of books about socialist popular music (*Estrada*) as well as Western pop, rock, blues, and jazz (until then considered capitalist decadence). Gaitandzhiev was also a central figure (legislator, in Zygmunt Bauman's terminology) in the formation of popular music in socialist Bulgaria. He was among the founders of "The Golden Orpheus" (*Zlaten orfei,* 1965-1999) the international popular song contest—the prime event in the Bulgarian *Estrada* (socialist pop) industry.[50] He also participated in the well-known initiative "Flag of Peace" (*Zname na mira*), an international youth festival led by Liudmila Zhivkova, the daughter of socialist Bulgaria's leader Todor Zhivkov. Additionally, Ministry of the Interior officials used to consult with him on musical issues. For instance, in the 1970s he recommended to neighborhood municipalities in Sofia to let rock bands practice in public cultural centers (*chitalishta*). In the 1980s he recommended to the Ministry of the Interior not to suppress the growing wave of heavy metal bands. In both cases his way to support popular music trends was to convince the authorities that Western music would be less subversive to socialism if it were legal rather than "forbidden fruit."

Gaitandzhiev's reaction to "Council for the Humanities" seemed to be successful. He informed me that he contacted Prof. Ivanova to let her know that he was planning to sue her for libel, since the letter attacked his professional integrity (and source of income) without any factual basis. They agreed to meet. Apparently he managed to threaten her. He told me that she came to the meeting with a bouquet of

[50] About the history of this festival, see Genov 1992.

flowers and a box of chocolates (*bonboniera*) apologizing for the misunderstanding and promising to write a letter of withdrawal to the Ministry of Education. She also invited Gaitandzhiev to speak about his pedagogical ideology in the next meeting of the Council. Gaitandzhiev was pleased with his victory. He was satisfied especially with what he understood to be the reason he managed to threaten Prof. Ivanova. Apparently the police had accused one of her close family members, a medical doctor, of taking bribes from hospital patients. Prof. Ivanova was ready to pay lips service to Gaitandzhiev just not to get her family involved in another lawsuit. He concluded that the only way to seek justice in Bulgaria was to turn slanders back to the offender.

I followed Gaitandzhiev to the reconciliation meeting with the members of "Council for the Humanities." Maria Popova, is colleague on the writing team, also joined us. He knew that his speech would not change anybody's mind. He had no faith in the intellectual integrity of the Council's members, whom he considered to be nothing more than mere apparatchiks. For him, these people represented the totalitarian syndrome of Bulgarian society; their only intellectual capacity was to trace deviations from the official concepts of modernity. He decided to go to the meeting because he wanted to use the opportunity that Prof. Ivanova felt vulnerable and had to invite him. He thus could show these people who tried to destroy his work that he was not afraid of them; they could not stain his name with slanders. He warned me not to talk with anybody. If they know that you are a foreign scholar researching chalga they will only try to drag you into an argument in order to patronize and abuse you, he said.

The meeting began with an anti-climactic introduction of Gaitandzhiev. Prof. Ivanova announced to the nearly 30 people in the room that Prof. Gaitandzhiev would substitute the scheduled speaker for the gathering, a known academic folklorist, who

was sick and had to cancel his participation. I understood later that Prof. Ivanova did not inform the Council members about her previous communication with Gaitandzhiev. They did not know that his speech was part of their agreement. To the best of my knowledge, the participants in the meeting knew that he was the author of the music textbook they criticized in the conference. The attitude in the meeting room was respectful but inimical. I sensed that people disliked him not less than he disliked them; however they made an effort to hide their mutual antipathy and receive him with professional formality. Gaitadzhiev broke the formal politeness with an opening disclaimer. He stated that he did not intend to lecture about his pedagogical credo but wanted to say in a few words about why he thought that no music should be censored out of Bulgaria's educational curriculum. He also announced that he would not stay for any further discussion after his talk because he was already tired from this kind of debates.

In the speech that followed Gaitandzhiev repeated a short version of a narrative I heard from him in our one-on-one meetings as well as in one university class that I observed. He also delivered his speech with the same typical voice of Bulgarian educated male, which he used both with me and in the classroom: slowly, low pitch, accentuated diction, straight from his head without any notes. In all other occasions his speech could go on for a few hours. At the meeting he spoke for about half hour. He mentioned his long-standing campaign against Bulgarians' "totalitarian mentality," which, in his words, began during the socialist era. He brought his usual examples, how he learned in school that (modern) cultural forms had to follow strict aesthetic rules and knowing these rules was the prerequisite enabling listeners to experience culture (in a modern manner). He brought his favorite musical example, that it was incorrect during socialism to compose melody in which subdominant

followed immediately the dominant. Another visual example was the rule that his art teacher, Hristo Boiadzhiev, instructed class that blue and green could not go together, since their pairing generated kitsch. He brought up another story from the same class that subverted the authoritarian socialist modernity with humor. A classmate of his asked the teacher, "so why did the good Lord put blue sky above green fields?"[51] Both examples led Gaitandzhiev to conclude that all aesthetic value judgments were a matter of the ideology of their time.

He maintained that forty years ago the Beatles were denounced as garbage, nowadays they are valorized as cultural classics. The same thing happened also with Bulgarian pop music. Lili Ivanova and Vasil Naidanov, two emblematic Socialist pop (*Estrada*) singers, hold nowadays status of cultural icons (Naidanov even suggested once to the Bulgarian parliament to pass a bill that would ban chalga). However, Gaitandzhiev reminded the audience that only in the second half of the 1960s such pop music became legal in Bulgaria and it took more than a decade until (in the early 1980s) he could include *Estrada* in his school music textbooks. The same thing happens now with chalga, he said. People now say that Azis is garbage, however within a decade or two everyone will regard him as the classics of this period. The coda of Gaitandzhiev's speech explicated his opinion about his audience. He said that the intellectual elite is to be blamed for the cultural rigidity of ordinary Bulgarians. People could not conceive of plurality of opinions because they learned that to be modern meant to be obedient, to follow cultural conventions as if they reflected absolute and eternal truths.

[51] Interestingly, the international Romani flag is a horizontal blue stripe above a horizontal green stripe (with a wheel in the middle). In Romani imagination the color combination represents the connection with nature while the wheel represents the Romani legacy of nomadism. For Bulgarians, this color choice might affirm the stereotype of "Gypsy kitsch," which I discussed above, called also *shareniia* (mishmash of elements that do not match). See, "File: Flag of the Romani People .svg.," Wikipedia, accessed October 25, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Roma_flag.svg.

Gaitandzhiev stayed for a follow-up question-answer session despite his introductory statement that he would leave immediately after his speech. In the informal setting of the follow up session, which presumably was not supposed to take place, Gaitandzhiev and the members of the Council expressed more freely their opposition to him. This informal exchange was also more suitable for the participants to make direct references to chalga (as denigration) and popfolk (as a kind of normalization). Evidently that was not merely a clash between two intellectual horizons, but a dispute about regimes of hybridization, what modern popular music texts and images went along with Bulgarian folklore without risking its "true" spirit. The members of the Council maintained the socialist model of hybridization with adaptations to what they regarded as "pure" Western pop. Gaitandzhiev held a different form of Bulgarian tradition, whose locus of purity was invisible. He imagined multiethnic dialogue being the "true" spirit of Bulgarian folklore. In his mind, unlimited hybridization freed Bulgarian tradition. He did not see, though, that this approach played the same game of authority—Gaitandzhiev used his power to shift the regime of hybridization from state officials to the "invisible hand" of the private music market (whose political economy of patronage led by the shady *shef* was at the center of the previous chapter).

One young academic invoked Adorno's critique of popular music in order to defend "modern" distinctions between high and low culture. He claimed that the role of intellectuals was to maintain high cultural standards according to objective, absolute, and supra-historical values. This opinion reiterated Statelova's (1993) critique of Gaitandzhiev. She considers the concept of music as culture of "reality-as-it-is" (*bitova kultura*) "a turned-over pyramid" thus arguing that popular music should meet rational concepts of aesthetic quality, not only satisfy "crude" popular

tastes. Needless to say, Bulgarians receive Statelova's perception more favorably than Gaitandzhiev's.

Another academic stated that she was in favor of pluralism of ideas, but this pluralism should not lead to relativism in values. Meaning, there was place in contemporary Bulgaria for cultural phenomena such as popfolk music. Yet, it should be clear that this aesthetic pleasure is for the lower stratum of both the body and the society; by no means could popfolk be tied together with highbrow genres such as folklore and Western pop. Gaitandzhiev dismissed his critics. He equated democratic pluralism with post-modernist relativism, in which there was no a priori taxonomy of high and low. Particularly, he insisted that the taxonomy of Bulgarian music reflected imposition of modernist authoritarianism rather than Bulgaria's actual cultural reality. He thought that the existing generic concepts of folklore and pop music represented cultural ideology enforced by the elite and preferred to base his intellectual definitions on the cultural tastes and practices of ordinary Bulgarians.

The disagreement escalated to explicit hostility when Gaitandzhiev raised his experience as a musical authority in the socialist state. One participant tried to refute Gaitandzhiev's claim that the socialist regime censored Western pop. She recalled having LPs of the Beatles at home. Prof. Ivanova, who sat by Gaitandzhiev during the entire session, intervened and backed him by saying that she was old enough to remember how it was illegal to own Western LPs. Then another participant confronted Gaitandzhiev that he could not come to lecture to them about such things. After all it was also his fault that the Beatles and others were forbidden; "we thought that they were bad because you told us to think in such a way," she concluded angrily.

I don't know why Gaitandzhiev did not reply to this accusation. He could inform her that he was actually responsible for the emancipation of Western pop in

Bulgaria. I had the impression that he saw himself so much above these academics that he felt it beneath his level to defend himself in front of them. He ignored the accusation and reiterated his comparison between the Beatles and Azis. He said that just back in the 1960s people "satanized" the Beatles by attributing to them all sorts of social deviations and dismissing their musical quality; nowadays we do the same thing to musical artists such as Azis. People don't know, however, he continued, that Azis is actually a decent person, formally trained musician, and a highly skilled singer. This statement was not well received. At this point the participants stopped taking Gaitandzhiev seriously. For them, it was absolutely ridiculous to compare Azis with the Beatles—one is a disgusting *chalgadzhiia* while the others are the herald of modern Western culture. A few tried to protest but the rest began to laugh at Gaitandzhiev. He kept on reminding them how the media blames popfolk singers for seducing youngsters to immoral and dangerous behaviors. His favorite example was Ivana's song "Something Untypical,"[52] in which she asks her lover to get wild with her; among other things she wants him to get drunk, drive aggressively, and rush with his car through red light. He reminded the audience how the media used the song as evidence that all bad things in Bulgaria arrive from chalga. A mid-age woman said with a smile that she actually liked this song; it was a rare case of a popfolk song that actually wasn't bad at all.

Gaitandzhiev thanked the audience sarcastically for "the patient listening" and said that he wanted to end the conversation. He went to the back of the room and approached his colleague Popova and me. Popova sighed and told me that even hundred Gaitandzhievs wouldn't change these people's closed minds. We got up and

[52] "Ивана - Нещо нетипично," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FS6abD2M5YA&list=PLIY14qx7iNJ_WjafW1tM2nVW0xcpn2s_x.

left the room. Prof. Ivanova followed us. She shook our hands and thanked Gaitandzhiev for his participation. She apologized for the negative attitude of her colleagues. She seemed supportive of his position. She characterized the Council members as being overly conservative. Then she departed from us and went back to the room to chair the continuation of the Council's meeting program.

"This Morning"—bTV

Gaitandzhiev was less successful in dealing with the media's line of critique against the musical exercise. In this channel he found much less power to exercise his musical expertise. Gaitandzhiev sent letters to the media venues that attacked his textbook, in which he tried to reclaim his discursive authority by reminding his long list of journalistic publications as a public intellectual. However, he found the media environment vastly different than the one he knew during socialism. For young journalists, who were tuned to rating, he was a "mothball" (*naftalin*)—the slang nickname of socialist-type outdated intellectuals. For the more elitist journalists, he was too radical, too out of touch with the current formulation of national evolution.

There was another factor that, if true, severely harmed his case. I bring up this factor because, for me, it shows that Gaitandzhiev did not understand the unequal powers by which the "invisible hand" forms music tastes, just like public opinion. Gaitandzhiev received information that the whole scandal was actually spun by a well-connected publisher, who competed with his publisher (*Bulvest-2000*) on the same market segment of school textbooks (a rarely profitable business in the printed media [alongside with tabloids]). The competing publisher tried to push Gaitandzhiev's publisher out of the market by juxtaposing chalga with one of the most sensitive fields of national evolution: education. The implied allegation of such

keying was that, for crude commercial purposes, *Bulvest-2000* reduced its school textbooks to the level of tabloids.

Obviously, I could not verify this claim. I tend to be suspicious to conspiracy schemes, which are highly popular in Bulgaria. However, interlocutors with whom I discussed this case insisted that, in Bulgaria, such schemes were plausible manners of seeking money benefits and power. Bulgarians take it as given that there is no fair competition. If somebody wins it is because this person is a crook or has the right connections (this is one of the reasons why people are cautious "not to boast" [*da ne se pohvali*], see above). These notions prompt a common conclusion that the entire economic, political, and judicial systems of the country are rigged to benefit Mafia barons. I believe that this is one of the reason people tend not to take Gaitandzhiev seriously when he described the private music market as a reflection of the spontaneous popular taste. For Bulgarians, it is obvious that Mafia organizations control all local private and public businesses. I did witness illicit actions in my fieldwork. In many cases people admitted also connections with Mafia elements. However most people related to corruption as a fact of life in *kleptokracy*—both academic and popular term of post-socialist Eastern European economies, such Russia and Bulgaria, which are arguably based on protectionism and theft and so are less adaptable to capitalism, as opposed to central Eastern economies such as Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland, which seem more modern both locally and in Western Europe (e.g. Eyal, Szelényi and Townsley 2000).

In late January 2008, the show "This Morning" (*Tazi sutrin*) broadcasted half an hour-long item titled "mistakes, errors, and misunderstandings in school textbooks." The item began with a report followed by a live discussion with a music teacher for the 3rd grade. Thereafter the show's host, Anna Tsolova, led a studio

debate with four participants: Miron Krumov—the scriptwriter of two popular shows on bTV, *Sblŭsŭk* ("Clash") and *Tova go znae vsiako hlape* ("What Every Child Knows"),[53] Tsveta Brestnichka—a representative of *Roditeli* ("Parents"), a parents NGO, Veneta Hristova—the editor-in-chief of *Bulvest-2000*, the publisher of Gaitandzhiev's music textbooks, and Maria Popova—the co-writer in Gaitandzhiev's team, with whom we attended the meeting with the "Council for the Humanities." Gaitandzhiev told me that he wanted to go to speak on the show, but when the producers contacted the publisher and asked for representatives of their side, they insisted that the publisher could send anyone in the studio except Gaitandzhiev. He interpreted this condition as an intention of the show's producers to locate the publisher's side in an inferior defensive position. He insisted that he was an authoritative musical pedagogue, and so, his presence in the studio could undermine the agenda of presenting his textbook as a paradigmatic example of "mistakes, errors, and misunderstandings in school textbooks."

In the rest of the chapter I will propose a gender reading of the transcription that shows how the participants in the item (as well as in the next TV case, "Slavi's Show") key their intellectual identity to legislation or interpretation by evaluating the potential risks that arise from minimizing the intertextual gap between folklore and chalga texts. The majority of legislators criticize the textbook by widening the intertextual gap between the adapted animal tale and the canonic ditties. Men do so by confronting the risk and judging the tale explicitly or implicitly as chalga. Two pairs of females perform the two poles of victim-slaves of backwardness. On one hand, the show host Anna Tsolova and Tsveta Brestnichka, the representative of the parents' association (and herself a literary author), perform the role of "righteous-victim

[53] "Clash" is a Sunday morning debate show, "What Every Child Knows" is the Bulgarian version of the TV show "Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?." Both shows hosted popfolk singers. "Clash" also dealt with popfolk as one of the social problems of Bulgaria.

mothers" who spoke on behalf of the conscience of the Bulgarian *narod*. The editor Veneta Hristova and the textbook co-author Maria Popova take the opposite side of "erroneous women", who, due to lack of modern values, "abuse" their pedagogical duty to teach the right-conduct of modern freedom in contrast to backward licentiousness. The moderating third side, Miron Krumov, performs the role of the "rational man." He is not a professional pedagogue but a young educated professional employed by bTV as a scriptwriter of an educational show ("What Every Child Knows"). Krumov does not hide his pleasure of the "chalga" text he read. However, his "virile rationality" (or his work as a rower in bTV's media business) allows him to control the temptation of chalga. He can draw a strict normative line between modern digressive irony and backward pleasure. My reading suggests that the exclusion of Gaitandzhiev from the item allows Krumov to hold the authority of virile rationality thereby emphasizing the agenda of disclaiming the textbook under the pretext of risking small children, particularly girls with chalga.

Tsveta Brestnichka from the association "Parents" keys the item to victimhood with a rhetorical question she raises toward Popova and Hristova, the "erroneous" women." The dialogue that ensued from this question reveals the dynamic of gendered rationality in regard to chalga, in which females constantly fall in the self-contradictions of esthetic pleasure and moral denunciation while males manage a rational balance between them.

The rhetoric of pleasure highlights a need that school textbooks would be attractive and meaningful to children. The rhetoric of denunciation reiterates an obligation that attracting children would comply with generic standards of seriousness. These two rhetorical tracks collide in the debate over the question whether children could distinguish between aesthetic and moral reading of the

contemporary animal tale; whether they could recognize it as a parody rather than as a celebration of licentious behavior.

I point to the interplay between the rhetorical tracks in the transcribed portion of the item by marking with **bold** claimers of virile rationality; underlined words disclaim feminine seduction; *italicized words* index the polysemic irony of the textbook authors. *Underlined and italicized words* index the more common digressive irony.

The show host Anna Tsolova introduces the item. She frames its agenda of disclaiming the humoristic exercise in the musical textbook for 3rd graders:

Hello again. **Mistakes**, **errors**, and **misunderstandings** in the textbooks from which Bulgarian school students study. We will talk about this until 9 (the item began around 8:30 am and was designed to last half an hour *e.l*). We have concrete examples. We expect to hear more examples from our guests.

Then Tzolova introduces the participants in the debate. She starts with Miron Krumov hinting at his role of balancing between the two feminine poles. Tsolova says:

"Anna Tsolova: Miron Krumov, *surrounded only by women*, good morning
Miron Krumov: Good morning
Anna Tsolova: he is by me, **the scriptwriter of "Clash" and "What Every Child Knows**," In his capacity as…Because **thanks to him and the team that prepares** the broadcasting every evening go…many mistakes, **I assume**, in textbooks.

Miron Krumov reiterates his middle ground position with one of the metonyms of Bulgarian intellectuals: professionalism. He keys his professional authority to an alliance between commercial TV as the powerbase of (capitalist) democracy and pedagogues who represent the generic canon of European modernity. With this position he seconds Tsolova's metanarrative against the textbook. Krumov opens with a statement:

"First I want to make a clarification that is necessary for people. The questions in 'What Every Child Knows' are not written by the scriptwriter (Topic subheading: Errors and Misunderstandings in the Textbooks *e.l.*). But by **people, professionals,**

who deal only with that. And because *the issue is the distribution of money,* these people, we don't show them too much

Anna Tsolova: so that.....no....

Miron Krumov: I now spoke with them. They told me that from morning to evening, **when they read all kinds of textbooks**, **they see** all sorts of mistakes in them"

The position of rational man also allows Krumov to take the risk of performing chalga later in the item. Tsolova intends to introduce the animal tale that stands at the center of the item by reading it out loud from the textbook. Krumov volunteers to read it loudly. He might have done so to protect Tsolova from the danger of *prostotiia* by reading such a text live on air; he might have done so because as an educated male he has the internal power to invoke chalga without losing his modern mindset (just as Slavi Trifonov, whose satirical critique of Gaitandzhiev's textbook follows this section). Krumov secures his association with a chalga text by exaggerating his vocal and facial expressions. This exaggeration keys his reading to a digressive irony as if he mocks the animal tale. He earns a compliment from Tsolova after completing his reading. She smiles with seeming embarrassment and says: "Thank you very much, it was very expressive."

Then Tsolova introduces Tsveta Brestnichka "from the association 'Parents,' an association that is particularly active when there is a need to defend the rights of Bulgarian schoolchildren." Toward the end of the item, Tsolova allies herself explicitly with Brestnichka when she said that "but look what, I don't want my child to sing years after that song, do you understand? This is my wish, I don't want it." These words alluded to Brestnichka's earlier protest, "I beg your pardon, my children are learning this *(pointing to the textbook* e.l*).*" The argument Brestnichka raises in the debate was that textbooks did not require the approval of parents. Children are in the hands of adults, whose intellectual quality no one inspects. She suggested that

"righteous" parents should be such inspectors. They are the conscience of Bulgarians who carry the responsibility of cultivating modern rational freedom.

Lastly, Tsolova introduces the "villains" of the item: Veneta Hristova ("A publisher of one of the biggest, I think, publishing houses.... that publishes Bulgarian textbooks") and Maria Popova ("who is a musical pedagogue
and the co-author of one textbook that is with me here"). These figures stand in opposition to the parental conscience of Anna Tsolova and Tsveta Brestnichka; they stand also in opposition to the rational authority of Miron Krumov. Hristova represents the negative values of cheating and fraud (*dalavera*). Popova is construed as a "pseudo-pedagogue;" she represented the Bulgarian failure of only mimicking the façade of rational freedom, without grasping its implicit meanings.

The agenda of the item is that the authored animal tale confuses freedom with licentiousness, because children could not distinguish between aesthetic pleasure of the parody (Wolfy drives his girlfriend Vixy in a Mitsubishi Jeep to a beauty pageant) and its presumed manifestation of immorality. The participants specifically point to the Mitsubishi and golden coins as immoral. By no means do they find fault in the role of females as competing objects in a beauty pageant (see transcription below). At least once in the item, an interviewed teacher boasts that a girl in her class won a regional pageant (see transcription below). This agenda was further established after the initial introduction with a news report about the "scandalous" animal tale and the ensuing live discussion with a music teacher for the 3rd grade. Only in the report the classification of the tale as "chalga" becomes explicit. Otherwise, throughout the item people only imply associations of the tale with chalga. Such implications employ the strategy of avoidance. The participants maintain modern face by referring only

indirectly to the "ch" word, which is normatively inappropriate to be said on a live TV broadcast.

A video report preceded the studio conversation. It was later broadcasted again in the primetime edition of bTV news. The report addresses the impact of contradictions between present democratic education (in which rational freedom is confused with licentiousness) and past socialist education (which emphasized this distinction). Throughout the verbal report, "Sing, Jump the Fingers" (*Peiat, skachat paltsite*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFzuT01Qxtc, accessed November 1, 2014), a socialist didactic song about the names of the fingers, is played in the background.

The reporter Ivan Georgiev directs the responsibility of the corruptive animal tale to pedagogues. He foregrounds the context of the scandal—democracy and elementary education—at the opening of the video report:

"Each **school chooses** the textbooks that students will use"

Then he introduces:

"This is the song that 3rd grade students study, whose **teachers have chosen** the music book published by the publishing house 'Bulvest'"

The reporter demonstrates the "absurdity" of the tale with a group of 3rd graders, 3 girls and 2 boys, who read it out loud to the camera. Then the reporter turns the spot to the seductive danger of the tale: children gain pleasure without understanding its sexualized and materialist subtexts.

"Many children say that the song from the 3rd grade textbook is entertaining and different"

The camera shows two girls who give their commentaries with an amused smile. One girl says:

"in my opinion very cool. The text is nice"

Another girl describes the Vixen and Wolf:

"Aaah, I imagine a terrific car. I imagine the Vixen with a very beautiful dress and all made up (smiling). And the Wolf with some sort of suit. They go to the pageant"

Then the reporter turns to the adults' reactions hinting that the children get an immoral pleasure. He alludes to the context of capitalist democracy with reference to "Japanese cars:"

"The *modern musical version* of a tale about the Wolfy and the Vixen evidently contains information that children find interesting. But for sure this is **not** the story of the *Japanese automobile industry***"**

Todor Stoev, a schoolteacher comments by claiming his role as an intellectual legislator. As a male educator he was safe enough to explicate associations with chalga:

"Well, I think that it's **not very appropriate** for a textbook **in general in schools** after all, a bit reminds one of chalga this text in my opinion"

A young woman leafs through the textbook and reacts with evasion:

"No, no, you, you, made made some kind of a joke. This **can't be** the textbook."

An aged woman looks at the animal tale in the textbook and comments with maternal rationality:

"well, I think that it is very **stupid** (laughing *e.l.*). **Simply not** for children"

A man with a small child comments:

"well, **isn't normal**. **At all**, isn't normal"

A couple of young males look at the textbook and laugh. One of them explicates the chalga association, but, as older Bulgarians would suspect of youngsters, leaving it ambiguous whether he is entertained or scandalized:

"Eeeh hardcore *chalga"*

Ivan Georgiev, the reporter, concludes emphasizing sarcastically the alleged absurdity of the musical exercise:

"*It becomes clear that the sooner 3rd graders learn the song about the beauty pageant miss, bride Vixen, who is being driven in the expensive car of the well-dressed, groomy Wolfy, the faster they will receive a good grade"*

His conclusive words key to digressive irony. He ties the animal tale with the normative context of "the folk:" opportunism, deception, and fraud.

Then he changes the tone of his speech to a serious critique, in which he switches to a castigating tone:

"Just as teachers, parents often **get shocked** by the textbook's contents. In such cases what comes to one's aid is the *dark sense of humor*. The problem is that these **jokes are always at the expense of children"**

The report ends with the last lines of the socialist didactic song "Sing, Jump Fingers," meanwhile the camera shows again the man with the little child. The child cries and the man tries to calm him down saying:

"nothing scary, nothing scary"

The next part in the show presents a conversation between the host, Anna Tsolova (in the transcription *AT*) and Katerina Miteva (*KM*), a 3rd grade music teacher in a Bulgarian village, Poleto, who spoke with Tsolova during class time. The conversation points to the "corruptive" effect of the exercise, especially on young girls, who are "naturally" more prone to sexual seduction. Tsolova makes the

transition to the conversation by referring to the crying child, the symbol of victimhood, at the end of the report with an utterance of digressive irony:

"*Nothing scary…the child got scared of, of, the text….of the little song*"

Then she turns to introduce her interlocutor, an educator who herself was confused by the pleasure of the textbook. Two allusions to gap with modernity imply the reason of the confusion. The teacher is a woman and a villager:

"Ahh, now I would like to include Katerina Miteva who is an **elementary school teacher** teaching with this textbook in a school in the village of Poleto. We will include her briefly, so that she will tell us what **she thinks** about this text, **generally** about the textbooks from which **she teaches**. How do children look at this text. Do they like it? Do they **not like it**? What do they understand from it*?* So that we will give the word to the guests in the studio. Mrs. Miteva hello

Katerina Miteva (speaking from class, children sitting as if they are during lesson): hello

AT: ahh, and you are in the middle of class even

KM: yes we are at school in class (laughing) with the schoolchildren with whom we learn this little song

AT: and how exactly, **how exactly do you teach** them this little song? What did the schoolchildren understand from it?

Mrs. Miteva first aligns herself with "authentic" Bulgarian folklore. This claimer allows her to distance herself from her students who might identify themselves in the humoristic tale. It also allows her to congratulate her rationality by fetishizing one girl from class:

*"*Thus, look what, this is **one ditty**, which is given additionally after **a ditty from the Montana region.** And the schoolchildren had alone to choose a way in which they would sing it. Ahh, some, *some of them liked the text,* because for *every girl, a tiny dream is to become a beauty miss. Even in our class there is one girl who won*

AT: and *every boy to have a little jeep*

KM: (laughing *e.l.*) Ahh, indeed, and every boy to have a little jeep. And one of the girls to win a *pageant to become a beauty miss in the municipality here. And for them*

it is interesting, they want to sing the little song. Hmm, for them it is interesting" (***coughing*** *e.l.*)

I see Mrs. Miteva's cough as a metadiscursive sign of intellectual authority. She distanced herself from the danger of being stained with chalga by, first, claiming that she did not like the animal tale:

"However, as a content, I don't especially like it "

And, then, using her discursive authority of a music teacher to widen the intertextual gap between the animal tale and the folklore ditties:

"**Aa, the melody that they have to sing by choice on the basis of the other little song, which is above the ditty. It is a little folklore song, the other. And on the basis of this melody they need to sing this, which you read already on-air"**

Then to Anna Tsolova's request, the teacher performs her footing in folklore also melodically:

"AT: and what was the **melody** your schoolchildren chose, Mrs. Miteva?

KM: so, I can **sing** just a…

AT: yes, please, *do sing*

(KM sings the first line of the ditty from Montana) so, "colorful wheels are coming up"

Would the teacher follow the textbook instruction and apply this melody to the contemporary animal tale, as she expects her students? In my opinion, Mrs. Miteva avoids running the risk of being blamed of performing chalga on air. Her refusal conceals her alleged failure. Mrs. Miteva refuses to perform on TV what she expects her students to do in the more secluded space of school. The teacher rejects the alleged failure by stating that:

"On the **basis of this melody they needed to sing** the *other text*, which is below (the Mitsubishi Jeep poem *e.l*). But **it didn't, did match**, **because the one is folklore ditty.** And the other is a kind of invention to me.

(*AT breaks in laughter, KM smiles and* **looks down**)

AT: and what? *Did somebody sing this little song, from your schoolchildren? Did someone succeed?*

KM: the children*, the children tried to sing*, but

AT: the ditty

KM: yes, but, *it didn't come out as it needed*

AT: **well now, you have been teaching little children music for many years, you teach, how different texts, different times, are reflected in the music textbooks**?"

Anna Tsolova shifts the judgment back to Miron Krumov, the representative of male rationality in the studio. Mrs. Miteva allies with Krumov thereby defending her and her students' educational practice:

"Because, just as **Miron** said very **cleverly**, this is a *contemporary fable*

MK: **exactly, yes**, it is a *clever contemporary fable*. Ahh, I, as **a teacher for many years**, **by the way also in middle school, a music teacher and in the elementary class teach.** The **schoolchildren handled well the material**, **which was provided for them in the textbook.** But this is something new, which, and for me actually is new"

The teacher, though, does not manage to fit perfectly with the agenda of the studio. She shifts the moralizing tone back to an amused identification with her schoolchildren:

"As text, ahhh, to *the children it is interesting*. They are *present-day little children, so that they are interested in jeeps, in ahhhh, in pageants for beauty miss*

AT: and already in the *3rd grade are they interested in jeeps? And already in the 3rd grade are they interested in jeeps and in pageant for beauty miss?*

KM: well"

Thereafter, the focus of the conversation between Tsolova, the broadcaster, and Miteva, the village schoolteacher, shifts from reflecting on immorality to simulating it with digressive irony. The teacher presents to the viewers a girl called Simona, who participated in a regional beauty pageant. As I mentioned earlier, the pageant itself

does not carry meaning of moral failure. It reiterates the normative association of women with esthetic pleasure of backward slave rather than rational deliberation of a rational master. Moral failure comes from the fact that the girl lacks the means of subordinating her pleasure of being an appreciated fetish to modern normativity. In the following section of the transcription I will point to what I read as the moral failure of Simona (feminine child), and more severely, the failure of the (feminine adult) teacher, whose temptation to boast (*da se pohvali*) is seemingly stronger than her obligation to provide her 3rd grade students with intellectual means to limit her satisfaction with her own physical beauty:

"*KM*: yes, yes. *Even the girl who goes to the beauty beauty miss.* I can *show her to you here. She is by me.*

AT: oh, yes, show her to me

KM: *if you want*

AT: …**a handsome little child**

KM: (approaching a girl sitting at a table by the wall *e.l.*) (to the girl *e.l.*) get up, *(to AT e.l.)* here is the girl, (to the girl *e.l.*) say what is your name

The Girl: Simona

KM: *Simona won a pageant.* Say what a pageant you won

Simona: mini miss and mini mister, the city of Simitli (the regional town of the village of Poleto *e.l*)

AT: *ehh, ehh, bravo. Congratulations Simona (KM laughs e.l.), do you like, do you like this…*

KM: *(to Simona) do you like this little song?*

Simona: yes, very much

AT: *(to Simona e.l.)* what do you **understand** from the little song? *Wolfy, is he a good hero or a bad hero?*

KM: (mediating the question to Simona who does not hear the studio *e.l.*) what do **you think** about the little song? *Are Wolfy and Vixen good heroes or not?*

Simona: they are good"

(Pause, **AT nodding her head**)

To conclude, I argue that the dialogue between the studio and the village class reassess the line of the previous report showing that not only schoolchildren but also teachers get confused, misled, and consequently, corrupted by chalga. The triangle of three female intellectuals—Tsolova, ambiguous Miteva, and the "victim" child Simona—invokes the common rendering in Bulgaria of women as slaves: even if they are conscientious of their "seductive nature" they still "lack" rational concepts (*poniiatia*) that allow them to translate their emotive morality into either rational reflection or practical action. Tsolova, the show's host, enacts this conception by playing the role of worried mother (which she held throughout the item). Miteva enacts the narrative by playing the role of a caring teacher, who is well immersed in Bulgarian folklore however, as a woman, is unable to protect its generic purity. The result was ill-educated girl (Simona), who lacks the basic conscience to distinguish between rational values and their digressions.

In addition to the gender featuring of rationality vs. temptation conflict, the dialogue between bTV's studio in Sofia and the school in the village of Poleto alludes also to Bulgarians' division between the city, the locus of modern rationality, and the village, the locus of Bulgarian roots, a locus of "authenticity," i.e. of the folkloric *izvor* (source) coupled with backwardness. I will expand on this division in the next chapter. Let me state that, in principle, Bulgarians valorize village people as those who are fluent practitioners of the "Bulgarian national spirit" (*bŭlgarshtina*), which is most essentially encapsulated in Bulgarian folklore. At the same time, also, people often say that villagers lack the intellectual capacities to reflect upon it and maintain its generic purity and "correctness." In other words, Bulgarians hold the perception

that villagers can express the basics of the national spirit but cannot defend it from absorbing lifestyles of local others, namely Roma and Turks. This is the role of the city whose modern educators and intellectuals might be removed from the practice of the "Bulgarian national spirit," however they both share it with villagers and have the capacity to reflect on it rationally, or more precisely generically, that is, to modernize "Bulgarians' national spirit" by explicating its essence, convention, and genetics.

Simona's reply seems to affirm the items' agenda that the textbook is indeed harmful to children, particularly to girls. Tsolova concludes the interview:

"Well, so, Mrs. Miteva, I thank you for this participation. *We won't interrupt your lesson any more*

KM: yes

AT: *Continue to do your work.* Thank you very much for this participation, really. Katerina Miteva, a music teacher in the elementary school in the village of Poleto"

Then Tsolova turns to the studio participants to solicit their reactions. In my opinion, the textbook's co-author Popova and the editor Hristova cannot deliver their perspective to polysemic irony, that it is a stimulus of pluralistic consciousness. The previous news report and conversation with the village teacher already foregrounded Popova's and Hirstova's guilt. They were supposedly responsible for Mrs. Miteva's and Simona's inability to recognize their role in the patriarchal power hierarchy of modernization: to direct female seductive power to becoming "righteous" mothers not "erroneous" bimbos (who distract males away from their driving duty toward modernization).

First Tsolova addresses the co-author Maria Popova and the publisher's editor Veneta Hristova:

"And now to the people who included this song in the music textbook for 3rd grade. Why did you decide to do that? Who, who actually wrote this little text?

Maria Popova (MP): this, this is not so important. I am really happy that Mrs. Miteva some things actually said *that this is not a song.* Especially text, especially for song. But this is a, *variant, a contemporary variant* for what children sing. And it, it *is not for studying in class* this song.

AT: but **it is already** in the textbook

MP: it is so that children will *make an attempt with this melody***,** so that they *will try to sing with a more contemporary* text

AT: can't we **confuse children** when they are in the 3rd grade**.** And clearly **we have already confused them** I don't know if because of the textbooks but **clearly we have confused them** that Vixen and Wolfy are good heroes

Tsveti Brestnichka (TB): absolutely **we have confused** them

AT: but whether it is that we confuse them or that that the textbook reflects *everything that is going in...the families*?

MP: *exactly, the humor*

AT: musically….

TB: excuse me, but this, in my **opinion is extraordinarily not a clever tale**. There are two heroes, who are going to the pageant, where Wolfy would count money ringing, so that a beauty miss would become his Vixy. **What exactly are we educating the children** with this text?

MP: now, yes, I will tell you, Ahh, you see that present-day children are totally different from yesterday's. By yourself you saw that they accept this text, there is nothing scary nothing bad. *The humor, the metaphors, everything is necessary, for the child*

TB: of course

MP: With the *textbook they make the language, everything, more lively, for children*

TB: of course, I agree that the humor and metaphors are necessary, but explain to **me exactly what does this text educate children**?

MP: what things, what do you want to educate? Not to become beauty Mss.? Really? *Here is the child who already took part in a pageant*

TB: **nothing bad**

MP: *this is around him, is it bad to….*

TB: **nothing bad that the child took part in a pageant**. The bad thing, ehhh, the idea which teaches children this text. *We count money and become a beauty Miss*

MP: but this is *not education, this is a fact*

TB: but excuse me, how do you say that this is not education. **Everything that children touch educates them**

MP: **naturally, naturally**

TB: and when such things are in the textbook, and **the textbook is an institution children accept such things as norm.** What is the norm to which we introduce them?

MP: **what is the norm to which we introduce them**? In, all the textbooks

AT: the question is **whether children understand** the metaphor *just as*…

MP: of course, o*f course they understand*

AT: **they don't understand it**

TB: **they don't understand it**, absolutely clear **that they don't understand it**?

AT: Wolfy is a good hero according to this child

Veneta Hristova (VH): and *why won't he be presented as a good hero*?

MP: now, are they?...

VH: why *should we fixate that Wolfy is necessarily bad hero*?

TB: because they act through bribery and corruption

VH: (posturing doubt with her face *e.l.*) **where exactly**?

MP: **where exactly bribery and corruption here***?*
(speaking over each other *e.l.*)
TB: *(to AT e.l.)* **quote please**…

MP: *you are going so far*

TB: (receiving a copy of the textbook from AT *e.l.*) **of course that we go far**

MP: so *much that you catch one text which is funny*
Which is interesting

TB: but **for us it is not funny at all**

MP: **maybe for you it isn't funny**, *but you are not the same age as these children*"

This dialogue displays the common conclusion I encountered regarding the textbook. "Low quality" pedagogues do not only create a chalga text—the

contemporary animal tale—but also drive a professional village teacher to teach it in class. The teacher was too passive to resist and so taught the "inauthentic" hybridity of modernity and tradition to the children even though personally she disapproved of it. As a result, children's' theoretical and practical knowledge of "the Bulgarian national spirit" degenerates rather than evolves. As Miron Krumov uttered later in the studio debate, the animal tale was inauthentic because in order to be folklore, texts need to include truthful historical representation of the Buglarian *Narod*:

"**Please let me interrupt**, in their fragile age…they are too small for such kind of metaphors. The metaphors that **need** to be in textbooks especially in elementary school classes **need to bear the test of time**. Like for example, **the fables of La Fontaine**. Like, for example, the tales **of Elin Pelin** (a classical Bulgarian writer from the early national period 1877-1949 *e.l.*) etc. This thing, not only that it is not a contemporary fable. It is also a bad example of a contemporary fable. This resembles….This is an interpretation of real-life in a way that one can write in yellow newspapers for example. Do you understand? **Textbook cannot be, cannot be** newspaper. This is an interpretation for you, this is a fact that Wolfy drives Mitsubishi and that they pay money to win the pageant. This is not a **fact**, this is an interpretation. A **fact is that Bulgaria was founded in the year 681** (referring to the reign of Khan Asparukh, the founder of the first Bulgarian Kingdom *e.l*). This is a **fact**"

A conversation I had once with a couple of Bulgarian friends in a bar illustrates the issue of historical truthfulness. One of them, an amateur historian, claimed that archival documents contradict the national myth about the Bulgarian medieval kingdom—the first nation of Europe that was occupied and subjugated for centuries to the "Turkish yoke." He insisted that the Bulgarian nation actually emerged from the multiethnic Ottoman-Balkan society. The other person dismissed this perception altogether. She argued that documents were unreliable historical source because people could fabricate in them whatever fit their needs. "When I want to know our history, I listen to folklore songs," she stated. They provide the most reliable evidence about the Bulgarians *narod*. She did not deny the ethnic heterogeneity of the Ottoman Empire. She also agreed that social reality of the

Ottoman Balkans was much more complex than the nationalistic binary between the oppressed *narod* and their Turkish imperial oppressors. However, for her, the picture of the *narod*, as it appears in folklore songs, of a former medieval kingdom that declined into a weak rural society was the historical truth on which her modern Bulgarian identity was based.

Krumov emphasized that the goal of folkloric truthfulness was moral:

"Let's speak as a whole, in principle. The **purpose of textbooks is to shape**, the **consciousness**, the child…**the moral guidance**, so that children will grow up as **quality members of the society, as good people"**

In my mind, the answer of the schoolchild Simona to the question whether Wolfy and the Vixen are good or bad heroes: "they are good" "proved" Krumov's argument that teaching fakelore as folklore destroyed the ability even of young females to distinguish between morally good and bad.

But what was so immoral in the parodic animal tale? Why were Wolfy and Vixy obviously bad heroes? And what exactly made this contemporary poem to be "hardcore chalga"? The participants in the items raised issues of sexual and material licentiousness when explaining the immorality of chalga. Maria Popova and Veneta Hristova, seconded Gaintadzhiev's point of view. They defended the quality of such songs whose lyrics he considered clever humoristic capturing of the everyday life reality of contemporary Bulgaria. However, all the other participants dismissed this argument reiterating the common expectation of the cultural elite in Bulgaria, especially pedagogues, to offer to the "non-educated" masses models of emulation, i.e. texts that represent modern reality "as it ought to be" rather than reality "as it is." The next appearance of media critique against the musical textbook, with which I close this chapter, shows the veteran popfolk performer, Slavi Trifonov (the pumpkin head component of "the chalga unholy trinity" in the introduction) performing

modern face by countering the polysemic irony of the textbook with irony of digression. Just like Gaitandzhiev, Trifonov minimizes the intertextual gap between contemporary pop and canonized folklore in a manner that alludes to chalga. However, he frames his act with cues of grotesque, which stress to the audience his disapproval of this proximity. Meaning, he proposes a "wrong" hybridity of folklore as a legislating intellectual, who knows how to hybridize pop and folklore in the "right" way and whose satire aims to warn the public against the risks of chalga temptation—forgetting the rules of "rational" purification, or in other words, losing orientation with modernity.

"Slavi's Show"—bTV

As I mentioned earlier, Slavi Trifonov is an emblematic chalga figure. Bulgarians see him as one of the inventors of popfolk music. Trifonov is a patriarchal owner-manager of a media production firm ("7/8 Production"), who employs his own professional music band ("Ku-Ku Band")—a unique phenomenon in the Bulgarian music business. Meanwhile Trifonov denounces both chalga and popfolk, which, in his view, have nothing to do with "real" Bulgarian music. He points to the prevalence of popfolk cover songs to claim that this music only reflects the loss of Bulgarian identity. His goal is to develop a new genre of Bulgarian ethno-rock, that is, "right" hybridity of Western pop with Bulgarian folklore motives. Despite this goal, Trifonov's repertoire is not free of cover songs taken from the same channels of circulation of popfolk hits.[54]

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[54] For instance, Trifonov's song "Open Wound" ("Слави Трифонов и Ку-Ку Бенд - Жива рана," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnEf9Y71avk) is an adaptation of the Israeli oriental duet "Everyone has" ("Shlomi Shabbat And Lior Narkis Singing Lekol Echad Yesh" accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6vsgK1bBAg).

Let me explain how Trifonov defended his choice of producing and performing popfolk in an academic conference "Chalga Pro and Con" (New Bulgarian University, June 25-26, 1999). In his speech, Trifonov locates his own modern identity in his classical music background, which has armed him with moral, intellectual, and mental capability to confront seductive chalga, to conquer and gradually modernize *her*. This is what Trifonov said in the academic conference (Kraev et al. 1999: 64-65): "I thought a lot, but I have no one to tell it to—neither the press nor the radio will be interested. I collected a team of super-professional musicians ("Ku-Ku Band" *e.l*), to do that (chalga *e.l*) highly professionally. The only way out is that—I tell you. I love Mahler very much, the 6th symphony—tragic, if I play it for you, I will put you everybody to sleep—exactly in 10 minutes. We can't tell everybody to listen to Mahler and Tchaikovsky from tomorrow. It won't happen. Really, this one who says 'to fuck his mother' (an idiom of *prostotiia e.l*)—the driver (an idiomatic *prostak* [person who indulges in *prostotiia*] *e.l*), he wants to listen 'All the Pigs for Appetizers.'[55] The only way out, believe me, because I am inside these things, is to make things professionally. This will take between 8 and 15 years so that people get used to this music. Tarkan (a Turkish mega pop star *e.l*) is chalga. The Bulgarian language explains a large part of (Bulgarian) folklore with Turkish terms. Tarkan sings a song, which becomes a hit in Bulgaria and everywhere in the world, but it is made professionally. God willing, a Bulgarian Tarkan will appear and will become famous, not like Vasko *Krŭpkata* (a Bulgarian singer who imitates 1960s and

[55] "All the Pigs for Appetizers" (*Vsichkite praseta na mezeta*) is a "classical" chalga song. The singer is Ruslan Mainov, who was discovered and produced by Slavi Trifonov. The following homemade youtube clip demonstrates vividly the semiotics of *prostotiia* performed in the song: "Всичките прасета на мезета :-)," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2V9A_DczSaI. The lyrics of the song go in the following way: This is the time to chase the pig with a bottle of "Dom Perignon"/I love pork meat/I run after the pig/With a knife like a razor/Stay, stay, catch it/Pigs, Pigs/All the pigs for appetizers/Pig, Pigs/All in jars in the basement/Moist Black pudding/Spiral *nadenitsa*/*Bahur* and *lukanka* (all the four are types of local pork sausages *e.l*)/Give, give, give wine!

1970s rock *e.l*), not like *Dzhandema* (a Bulgarian socialist rock group, *e.l*), but in the condition that he plays Bulgarian music professionally. Neither Pancho Vladigerov nor Petko Stainov (both famous Bulgarian classical music composers *e.l*) did like Gershwin, to make a symphonic orchestra, they used Bulgarian music. This is what I wanted to say."

Slavi Trifonov performed his virile power as a musical legislator in regard to Gaitandzhiev's musical textbooks in mid- February 2008, nearly a month after the outbreak of the public scandal over Gaitandzhiev's textbook. Trifonov commented on the newspaper report I cited at the beginning of the chapter ("Little Girls Learn about Mobster chicks") on his late night TV show, "Slavi's Show" (on bTV as well).[56] This report criticized another textbook by Gaitandzhiev and his writing team, "Music for 4th grade." Trifonov mocked the presentation of a contemporary folklore-style song "Get Up Dear Stoian"[57] as if it was an "authentic" folklore. Without labeling it explicitly as chalga, Trifonov denounced the (fakelore) "inauthenticity" of the song in the textbook by pointing to the fact that the song's lyrics were written by Peio Peev, a text-writer of a popfolk music label, and the singer was Vesela, a former popfolk star. Trifonov made clear in his speech that he did not think that such a song was appropriate pedagogical material. The item began with a comic introduction that keys the item to digressive irony. Then Trifonov metadiscursively claims his modern position vis-à-vis the item by reminding the audience that he is professional musician, a graduate of the state Conservatory and a director of a professional music band ("Ku-

[56] "Slavi's Show" is a unique popular culture institution in Bulgaria running 5 times a week since 2000. It is exceptional in Bulgaria that a commercial TV show, which includes a live big music band "Ku-Ku Band", survives on the screen for such a long time.

[57] "ork kanarite i Vesela liube Stoqne," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHfNef5ADM4. The singer of the song is the popfolk and folklore singer, Vesela. For the lyrics, see "Весела-Любе Стояне," Mp3 Muzika, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.mp3-muzika.eu/Весела-Любе-Стояне-texts-158136.html.

Ku Band"), who, despite his engagement with chalga, is well versed in "pure" genres (classical music, folklore, an Western pop music).

In the following transcription of the item, I show how the claimers of modernity allow Trifonov to perform a role of legislator who defends Bulgarian modern culture while performing chalga. Underlined words mark his warnings against perceived seductive backwardness. *Italicized and underlined words* mark his utterances of digressive irony. And **bolded words** mark claimers of virile rationality.

"*And what do we read, we, children (yelling). What do we read, we, children, I'm asking. Here, look at what we read in the music lesson for fourth grade* ……..Learn Girls About mobsters (showing on the computer monitor a news report about Gencho Gaitandzhiev's textbook for the fourth grade). *Now I'll read it.* Published in a music textbook for the fourth grade is a piece of the popfolk singer Vesela. So**,** fourth grade, published in a music textbook (turning to the band). **You studied all music here, Ku-Ku band**

Godji (the leading musician of "Ku-Ku Band" e.l.): **yes, yes, yes**

Slavi Trifonov: Published in a music textbook for the fourth grade a piece by the singer Vesela. She is a (pop)folk singer. **Which pretends this song to be folklore**. *This is, however, folk art. Different. One of the most honorable*, **to put in quotes**, text writers of Payner (the biggest popfolk record label *e.l.*) Peio Peev. The song is called 'Hey Get Up, Dear Stoian' (*Ya stani libe Stoiane*). In it, *a maiden exhorts her lover Stoian to buy her this and that so that she will give him some* (laughter). **I quote part of the so-called folk art**:

"Hey get up, dear Stoian
to go early to the market

for a little maiden to buy
for a white face—face powder
for a slim torso—a belt
for a white neck—a necklace
for every finger—a ring
for a slim figure—a waistcoat
then with you I will come
and only yours I will be"

How lovely that said the Narod's genius Peio Peev. Sing Peio (a wordplay with the Bulgarian verb peia [to sing] *e.l*). *Sing that song, folklore artist.* **This song, as you see, dear TV audience**, *teaches real contemporary virtues. What does a maiden need? Rich brother (figuratively, a young guy older than the maiden e.l) with money. But with lots of money. Oh well, he can be not so rich. He can be a rich uncle* (figuratively, an older adult *e.l.*) *with money. He can be a rich Grandpa* (figuratively an old man *e.l*) *with money. The age is not important. It is Important that he will be rich.* **And let's continue with the quotations. Under "Get Up Dear Stoian" there is also an assignment for the Miss in quotes which literally says:**

'years will pass. You will like a dark brave; what conditions will you put to him if you haven't already fallen for a different brave and things have arrived already to wedding?'

Let's analyze first. That brave. According to the assignment the girl needs to look for dark brave. (Let's) see what dark is what gets 'dark,' dear audience. The adjective "dark" is used usually for a black shaggy sheep (laughter and applause *e.l.*). *Consequently the brave needs to be black and to be shaggy* (laughter *e.l.*). *And if possible a sheep, and more precisely a masculine sheep, ram. Consequently girls. You who are in the fourth grade. When you grow up look for ram company, meaning, any dark friend. Now I'll criticize myself. Why do I underestimate the positive influence of popfolk on youngsters? Thus for example everyone who watched Galena's clip in the*

bathtub (an allusion to a porno web clip of the popfolk female singer Galena *e.l.*) *knows that it teaches the children that what is most important is hygiene. Isn't it so? This is clear for everybody* (applause *e.l.*). *Except that it clearly proves Archimedes' theorem, which determined that a body dipped in water becomes famous.* (applauses and laughter). *And Azis? This person is an example of racial tolerance. Sleeps with Kitaetsa* ("the Chinese," the nickname of Azis' proclaimed male lover *e.l.*). *Except that, there is nothing bad that present-day children imitate popfolk (female) singers. But as a more sober-thinking (person) I want to advise girls not to be so material. They need to know that when a person is good, it doesn't matter what color his yacht will be. Under the influence of the folklore art of the (pop)folk (female) singers, and in particular the folk art of Peio Peev, I have another suggestion for a school song with educational character, which reveals the complex relationship between a young macho goon and a naughty wannabe "mutressa"* (goon's mistress *e.l.*)."

Trifonov shifts his speech to a parodic (or digressive ironic) performance of chalga. He uses the same intertextual methods of "Get Up Dear Stoian," entextualizing sexual meanings within a purified environment of "authentic" folklore. However, to invoke digressive-ironic effect, Trifonov takes the strategy of a double speech. He calibrates the poetics of the musical background and tone of speech to folklore, while combining the folkloric vocabulary and syntax of the lyrics (in **bold**) with the hyper-sexualized vocabulary of chalga (underlined). The digressive ironic outcome of this combination is marked with *underlined italics*.

First Trifonov makes a transition by defining the frame as a claimed parody of chalga that fits with the morals of avoidance:[turns to his orchestra] "I need your help (the clarinet player begins a folklore-style sentimental overture *e.l.*)." (Slavi turns to

the sound technicians *e.l.*) But give me like that, folkish that has an echo (the clarinet continues with a sentimental folklore melody *e.l.*)."

Then he performs his parodic version of the "fakelore" song with a dramatic tone:

> **"A girl young beautiful** (*momiche mlado hubavo*)
> Was looking at a **brave dark** (*iunakche vlako*)
> In a *car black glamorous*
> And saying to him slyly
> 'Oh you **brave dark**,
> If I make for you a *reed-pipe*
> A *reed-pipe* like an enjoyable *kaval*
> (in colloquial Bulgarian the verb "to whistle" means both to play the flute and to give a blowjob *e.l.*)
> Would you upgrade me
> Would you upgrade me
> With Botox on my **face girly** (*litse momino*)
> With silicone boobs
> And anti-cellulite massages?'
> The **brave dark** answered:
> '**Girl, little beautiful**
> Get off the Jeep immediately
> One *reed-pipe* is not enough
> for these expensive procedures
> In the bathtub to videotape yourself
> (again an allusion to Galena's web porn video *e.l.*)
> On the web to put yourself
> And then call me up.'"
> ("Ku-Ku Band" cut the sentimental "folkish" mood with a popfolk-style[58] coda *e.l.*)

Gaitadzhiev could stomach somehow what he considered unfair presentation of his pedagogical ideology on "This Morning" Show. Slavi Trifonov's parody, on the other hand, hurt him deeply. Trifonov not only allied with the detractors of the textbook, he also pushed further the argument that linking Bulgarian folklore with contemporary everyday life is an act of chalga corruption. Gaitandzhiev told me that he was particularly offended because he risked his own face to defend Trifonov in public. He also presented Trifonov in his textbooks as the showcase of contemporary

[58] I identify the coda as popfolk rather than chalga, because the tune sounds as a typical "Ku-Ku Band" style of fusion between Bulgarian folklore and Western pop.

local popular music, against the view of Bulgarian musical establishment (to which Trifonov was another *chalgadzhiia* [a chalga performer]).

The way Gaitandzhiev soothed his offense revealed to me his inability to go beyond the role of intellectual legislator, which he aimed to deconstruct. He tried to undermine Trifonov's presentation of himself as a cultural safeguard by turning him into to a simpleminded Bulgarian. In other words, Gaitandzhiev tried to present the parody about his textbook as a failed performance of avoiding chalga. First, he reminded me that Trifonov was not the author and pricipal of his text, but only the animator of what his scriptwriters wrote for him. Gaintandzhiev dismissed Trifonov as even less powerful rower of bTV than Miron Krumov, the scriptwriter from the item on "This Morning." Second, Gaitandzhiev stressed that "Slavi's Show" needed to earn rating and therefore it addressed the lowest common denominator, i.e. the wide Bulgarian public that loves chalga but is habituated with the totalitarian shame and fear to deny it. His conclusion of the sketch was that Trifonov indeed was a very talented musician, however not a very commendable person. His performance of modern rationality was rather mimicry of a Bulgarian who is captured by the ordinary fear and shame of backwardness.

Gaitandzheiv lost the debate that followed the scandal over the textbook. His attempt to employ his discursive authority as musical pedagogue to interpret Bulgarian folklore rather than legislating it got defeated. Slavi Trifonov, on the other hand, managed to engage with chalga and save his face of a gatekeeper and modernizer of Bulgarian traditional culture. The reason was that Trifonov and his colleagues never abandoned their duty to hybridize pop and folklore "rationally," without letting their (backward) temptations conquer their reason, as Gaintandzhiev presumably did according to his opponents.

Trifonov still continues to host popfolk singers on his TV show. Once he even arranged a music audition contest on his show, which he called "Be a Popfolk Star." In Fall 2010 he even included the popfolk singer Emanuela in his concert tour in the US and Canada. At the same time he also continues his negative depiction of chalga, which he expresses both seriously and comically, oftentimes together with other popfolk performers. Gaitandzhiev, on the other hand, lost not only his textbook project and teaching positions, but more severely, his mental power to live. I saw how this scandal crushed his spirit completely. His physical health was not so good anyhow. Now it deteriorated so rapidly that he had to quit also his radio show. Our meetings became less and less frequent in the following months. I met his wife, the ethnomusicologist Claire Levy, more often. She told me that he had withdrawn into himself.

In the few times I met Gaitandzhiev after the scandal we continued to talk about the same topics, but he already admitted his defeat. All the issues of chalga were past memory for him. The last time I saw him was a few days before I left Bulgaria at the end of my fieldwork (June 2009). That was the first time I went to his home. He bitterly complained that nothing remained from all his lifework; he was forgotten. At the end of the meeting he followed me to the elevator when time arrived to go. Before I went down, I told him that I was looking forward to seeing him next summer when I come back to Sofia. He smiled to me bitterly. I felt guilty. I knew that I was lying. Deep inside I knew that it was the last time I would see him. Unfortunately I was not wrong. Gaitandzhiev passed away in April 2010.

Conclusion

My objective in this chapter was to unfold how Bulgarian intellectuals employ distinctions between authentic folklore and corruptive chalga to recontextualize in democracy their role during socialism: the cultural brokers of the regime's language ideology of evolutionary modernization. The scandal over the adapted animal tale in the music textbook pointed to a clash between two camps: a majority of intellectual *legislators* who sought to retain their previous role and a minority of *interpreters* who aim at abandoning it. The two italicized terms (proposed by Zygmunt Bauman) key the debate to the question of knowledge-power, whether the intellectual elite should keep holding an exclusive power to direct ordinary Bulgarians how to adapt "traditional" cultural forms and practices to the current hegemonic paradigm of modernity (EU and US) or whether democratic intellectuals should limit their role only to mediating a pluralistic communication about Bulgarian tradition and modernity. In the textbook case, the debate revolved over whether its authors betrayed their intellectual duty, that is, whether they misguided children with chalga dressed as folklore, or whether they successfully made folklore relevant to present-day children.

I analyzed the scandal ethnographically from the standpoint of Gencho Gaitandzhiev, the head author of the textbook and a leading interpreter. My theoretical perspective was informed by Bauman and Briggs' critique of interpretation; that it makes the knowledge-power nexus invisible rather than breaking it. Gaitandzhiev and his detractors alike shared the same perceptions of themselves as modernizers, whose exclusive self-reflexivity allow them to confront the risk of hybridizing "pure" folklore in modernity for the wellbeing of ordinary Bulgarians, whose mindset is limited to their "traditional setting." Legislating intellectuals

identified this setting with "the Balkan Orient;" Gaitandzheiv and his allies identified it with the "totalitarian syndrome" of the previous regime. Despite their opposition, however, the perspectives of both camps stemmed from a gender dichotomy of the socialist discourse of modernization, which counters rational virility with feminine seduction, the first stands for European modernity and the latter for its digression into Balkan backwardness. I showed the explication of this opposition with the exclusive license male intellectuals took to minimize intertextual gaps between modern and folkloric texts in an "improper" way that provoked connotations with chalga. The scriptwriter Miron Krumov and the popfolk star Slavi Trifonov invoked chalga in a digressive ironic manner to warn the public against what they saw as dangerous misinterpretations of democratic freedom. Gencho Gaitandzhiev invoked chalga in a polysemic ironic way in order to free the public from what he considered as their dangerous habit to oblige with any regime of modernity without understanding its nature.

As I wrote above, I cannot determine why Gaintandzhiev lost in this debate. I pointed to a few possible reasons, which could be commercial or political. I do think that his position was less effective because operating within the same gender dichotomy of European modernity and Balkan backwardness he used his male intellectual discursive authority to define the risks of modernity, however he did not translate his power to offer the "traditional" public any sort of patriarchal protection.

I will shift my ethnographic scope in the next chapter to an examination of how ordinary ("traditional") Bulgarians use chalga to recontextualize in democracy their socialist identification with the traditional ("pure" "authentic") *narod*. I will particularly deal with the post-socialist class of "urbanized peasants." These are Bulgarians who run the risk of not modernizing "correctly" thus representing "reality

as it is," "the rabble in the alley" (which never sings only makes noise), effeminate slaves, or as Bulgarians derogatorily label them(selves): "the folk."

Chapter 3

Marina's Prom, or the Hazards of Dancing *Kiuchek*

You want only classical stuff,	*Iskah samo klasika*,
Who do you think you are,	*Na k'va se pravish ti,*
That we are all from the village, except you	*Che vsichki sme ot selo, no ti ne si,*
You are so pretty, but better shut up	*Tolkova se hubava, no po-dobre mlŭchi*
I'll put for you some Serbian (music), go away	*Shte ti pusna malko sŭrbsko i si vŭrvi*

"Some Serbian (Music)" (*Malko Sŭrbsko*)—Slavi Trifonov and Ku-Ku Band, 2008[59]

In the previous chapter I discussed how Bulgarian intellectuals employ chalga to recontextaulize in democracy their previous role during socialism of articulating, regulating and disseminating the official language ideology of evolution from tradition to modernity. The scandal over the adapted animal tale in the music textbook engendered a debate between two camps over their competing perceptions of intellectual duty to protect Bulgarian tradition from the risks of democratic modernity. The majority camp identified risk in the absence of political power that authorizes intellectuals to cultivate the social base—i.e. the Bulgarian *narod*—with "proper" forms of evolution. The textbook's detractors used it as evidence that when intellectuals could no longer authorize "correct" fusions of folklore and modern culture, the society was injured. The minority camp of populist intellectuals found risk in Bulgarians' expectations to follow official forms of modernity and tradition. Gencho Gaitandzhiev, the head writer of the textbook, recognized a totalitarian syndrome in such expectations. He and his writing team saw it as their intellectual

[59] "Слави Трифонов и Ку-Ку Бенд - Малко сръбско," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oT8pth7gDwQ.

duty to "heal" especially the young generation from this syndrome by encouraging them to create spontaneously adaptation of Bulgarian folklore to present-day life.

Drawing upon Zygmunt Bauman's postmodern terminology, I related to the first camp as *legislators* and to the latter as *interpreters*. The two terms helped me to analyze the textbook scandal with Bauman and Briggs' critique of the power inequality embedded in associations of modernity with risk. I argued that Gaitandzhiev and his allies, not less than their rivals, reinforced the prior discursive authority of Bulgarian intellectuals to define pure forms of tradition and modernity and protect the former from its perceived inferiority to the latter. The two camps battled over what safe democratic hybridizations meant. For "legislators," it meant maintaining the authoritarian canon of modernized folklore but now voluntarily. For "interpreters," it meant populist liberty to fuse tradition and modernity without any official form. Throughout the ethnographic narrative I showed that considerations of safeness and risk related more to intellectuals' shift of political power from a single-party and the government to the commercial media market. Both camps had to convince the consuming audience (whom they identified with the social base, i.e. the *narod*) what model of hybridizing tradition and modernity would provide Bulgarians with more effective (and hence, safer) adaptation to democracy, the authoritarian paradigm that limits chalga or the populist one that emancipates it.

To understand why the authoritarian model got better reception than the populist model of Gaitandzhiev and his allies, I turn now to the dialectical counterpart of the intellectual elite: Bulgaria's social base, discursively called the *narod*. I ask how Bulgarians, who do not hold discursive authority to define relationships between nation and tradition, employ chalga to recontextualize in democracy the previous role of the social base in socialist evolution: being the authentic source (*izvor*) of

Bulgarian modern nation, its "bearer of tradition." As I mentioned in the previous chapters, this status carried simultaneously a derogatory meaning of Balkan recursivity, that is, marginality or digression to concepts and practices identified with European modernity. Indeed, these two roles of the *narod* (authentic and backward) were not unique to socialism; they stem from the Balkanist strand of the language ideology of European modernity. However, something new happened to the line of backwardness after the introduction of democracy following the collapse of socialist regimes 1989. Bulgarians split it from the line of authenticity and put it in discourse with a new name—the *folk*. This split was more than semantic. It stressed one major anxiety regarding transferring power from the elite to the *narod*. Bulgarians expressed fears that the social base was not capable to distinguish voluntarily between modernity and "pseudo-modernity," between "real" modernization of Bulgarian tradition and its corruption and between "rational freedom" and "licentiousness."

The language split between the *narod* and the *folk* guides my analysis in this chapter. I show how non-elite Bulgarians both reject and reaffirm the socialist discourse of evolution when negotiating what they see as the hazards of democracy: modernity corruption and pseudo-modernity. I argue that, as the idiom "after democracy came" indicates, post-socialist Bulgarians have welcomed democracy as the next language regime that defines them as essentially traditional and subjects them to the current project of modernization. Instead of evolving into a member in the family of Soviet nations the defined goal is now integration with the capitalist global world (more specifically, the EU). Continuing the trope of intertextual gaps from the previous chapter, my analysis reveals that the *narod* and the *folk* (or more precisely, utterances, texts and forms associated with the two signifiers of social base) equally hold large gap with cultural forms Bulgarians associate with the current regime of

modernity. Both the *narod* and the *folk* signify Balkan liminality to modern Europe. However, when Bulgarians perform a *narod* face they express obligation to minimize (or, more precisely, erase) this gap (through socialist evolution or democratic integration). When they perform a *folk* face they widen this gap, most times ironically (in the polysemic or digressive meanings of the word, see the previous chapter). My ethnographic case will explore the poetics of performing *folk* face and the strategies of switching to formal speech in which people perform either modern urbanity or the face of the authentic *narod*.

Positive and negative associations of chalga with the *folk* allow Bulgarians to maintain ambiguity regarding the authoritarian ("legislative") and populist ("interpretive") formulations of democratic integration. With *negative* associations people key their speech to the authoritarian rhetoric that shifts the responsibility of minimizing the gap with modernity from the modern elite to the traditional *narod*. I encountered negative associations most often when people portrayed chalga as a sign of modernity crisis. They condemned the non-evolutionary character of chalga hybridities to identify themselves as the *narod* that, unlike the *folk,* was capable of spontaneous integration. With *positive* associations, people key their speech to populist calls for grassroots integration. I met people who identified themselves as the *folk* in order to claim that they have already abandoned the socialist concept of authentic folklore in favor of popular culture, which for them represented the macro configuration of democratic modernity: globalization (more in detail, later). Gaitandzheiv and other "interpreter" intellectuals used to distinguish democratic modernity from the socialist one by equating liberal pluralism with postmodernity. These Bulgarians did reject modernity altogether but tried to capture what they saw as the hybrid nature of globalization.

Conceptually, this chapter opens a debate with Michael Kearney (1996) who equates the category of modern social base with peasantry and defines two analytical perspectives—derogatory and celebratory—to the role of peasants in the cultural and economic dialectics of modernity. He links the derogatory perspective with *modernists* who formulate peasantry as urbanity's primitive stage of development. The celebratory perspective belongs to *romanticists* who load peasantry with pre-modernity nostalgia. Kearney maintains that both the modernist and nostalgic perspectives to peasantry stem from the essentialist dualism of *traditional village* (or *country*) vs. *modern city*, in which the first is instrumental for the hegemony of the latter (Williams 1973). Kearney argues that anthropologists played central role in inventing the category of peasantry as modernity's object. They formulated peasantry in the late 19th century as modernity's internal Other, equivalent to the "primitive"—the colonialist form of external Otherness. Bauman and Briggs (2003) stress the role of folklore as a prime cultural realm invented by modern intellectuals in the 18th century to naturalize peasant otherness within the realm of language. The Balkanist concept of the Bulgarian peasant is an offspring of this project.

Kearney argues that during the Cold War both capitalist and socialist modernizers employed the dualist essentialism of the city vs. the village when competing to develop (or in the socialist context, to evolve) the "peasants" through enterprises of industrialization and urbanization. Dynamics of globalization in aftermath of the Cold War, he maintains, require us to evaluate the degree to which the category of peasantry is still valid to characterize communities' social and cultural traits. The relevance of his argument to Bulgaria is not inferential as Kearney lists it alongside with Romania, former Yugoslavia and Poland as one of "the most strongly peasant nations of Europe" (ibid: 9). Kearney finds that in such countries (as well in

other non-European peasant societies such as Mexico, his main ethnographic filed), "'rural' communities demonstrate demographic and what appears a cultural *persistence* (my italics *e.l.*) few observers foresaw a decade ago" (ibid).

I italicized "persistence" to highlight a language consideration that Kearney leaves outside his discussion and which is relevant to my study: what prompts Bulgarians to keep holding to the previous (developmentist) identification of the social base with peasantry even after they were not forced to do so. This question is crucial to this society, in which socialist peasantry oftentimes carries painful memories of imposed collectivization, confiscation of land and other property, agricultural industrialization as well as demographic control. What adds also to this question is the fact that currently the majority of Bulgarians no longer live in villages.

Bulgarians' persistence in holding onto language forms of peasantry reminds me of the strategy with which Bulgarian villagers negotiated the socialist enterprise of rural development (Creed 1997). They both sabotaged and complied with their formulation as *peasants* on the path of evolution into *proletariat*. Creed argues that Bulgarians employed this strategy, to which I referred both in the introduction and chapter 1, "conflicting complementarities," not only to express ambivalence to the socialist legacy of development. It actually helped them domesticate socialism in a way that benefited them not only the regime that enforced it. Creed writes that his informant-villagers employed this strategy again in the transition from socialism to capitalist democracy. They kept voting en masse for the former communist party in order to sabotage as well as to comply with the new political power that now demanded them to privatize agricultural production and compete alone in the commercial market.

I analyze in this chapter a language component of "conflicting complementarities" which relates to Kearney's suggestion to replace the category of *peasantry* with *ethnicity* in order to deconstruct the element of subalternity embedded in the dialectics of developmentism (the evolution of traditional peasants into modern urbanized). He proposes a new category of social base—"polybian"—that centers on subaltern subject position in complex circuits of worldwide *value-power* exchange (his alternative to the more static nexus of culture and economy in *capital*). Polybian identity transcends modifications (or hybridizations) of developmentist peasantry, such as "worker-peasant" (ibid: 104), that stress immigration and dislocation while still reiterating the dualism of ruralty vs. urbanity. These "hyphenated peasantries" (or, in my words, hybridities), he argues, indeed capture the crisis of late modernity. However they still maintain the power of modern hegemonies to imagine themselves by inventing antithetic pre-modern peasant life.

Kearney suggests also shifting the unit of ethnographic study from the "pure" locus of peasants—the village—to personal polybian lives that emerge within hybrid webs of ethnicity through "the flow of general value in its various forms (surplus labor, money, information, goods, services, energy, style)" (Kearney 1996: 174). He offers *reticula* to be the metaphor of polybian social spaces. With this biological synonym of rhizome and hypertext Kearney proposes tracing "the cultural construction of person and community" (ibid: 179) within transnational webs of "…production, loss, transfer, accumulation, and consumption, that is, the differential distribution" (ibid: 168) of value-power.

Let me begin my critique of Kearney's post-developmentist concepts with a reference to Creed, who quotes the diatribe of a Bulgarian villager against the word "post-socialist transition." Reflecting on the century old history of Bulgarian national

history this informant utters that the society has always lived in a state of transition: from an Ottoman province to nation, from monarchy to Soviet socialism and now to a capitalist democracy. Every regime propagated its model of transition with a promised destination of modernity. In practice, modernization always required ordinary Bulgarians to reject their current social reality and adopt new one. However, once Bulgarians approached the destination, the political climate outside Bulgaria changed and with it the local regime. New hegemonies announced their power by abandoning the previous destination and defining a new destination of transition. The villager concludes his diatribe with what Creed sees as an unperceived accurate diagnosis of Western capitalism. That villager complains that Bulgarians were doomed to live in a never-ending transition with no destination and no end—transition for the sake of transition.

Indeed, I oftentimes encountered notions of developmentist subalternity (to use Kearney's terminology) in utterances of non-elite Bulgarians who, as a mater of fact, considered themselves at the bottom of modern European development. "Simpleminded people, peasant state" (*prosti hora, selska dŭrzhava*) was one of the crudest statement with which my informants both celebrated and denigrated themselves. Bulgarians' humoristic self-reference of being the last hole on the *kaval* (see chapter 1) keys *narod* subalternity to peasant folklore. The Leninist framework of socialist evolutionism reinforced this stereotype of utter inferiority during the Cold War. I realized how prevalent it remained even two decades after the fall of the previous regime when people lamented to me that, as a peasant society, Bulgaria lacked the basic social prerequisites of modernity: proletariat and bourgeoisie. "Legalist" intellectuals reiterate this perception when arguing that, in the absence of social conditions of grassroots modernization, only the state should lead "proper"

evolution of the *narod* in order to protect it from the consequences of wrong contact with modernity: turning into a corrupted *folk* whose of main cultural characteristic is being people who listen and perform chalga. On the other hand, considering the Balkanist anxieties of ethnicity, the self-perception of peasant society has also self-affirmative aspect. Defining Bulgarians as peasants meant that they are still Europe's incomplete Self, not exterior Others. Being peasants and not an ethnicity means to Bulgarians that they can still minimize their gap with Europe; their fractal recursivity from modernity still has the potential to be erased.

The way the villager in Creed's study relates to capitalist transition casts a less favorable light on Kearney's emphasis on the motive of movement in the concept of ethnicity—the circulation of value-power over global reticula. Ethnicity indexes to Bulgarians a very specific sort of movement, that is, of poor guest workers in manual labor jobs (such as construction and seasonal agriculture) that Western Europeans do not want to take. The association of transition with poverty appears also in the words of the popfolk singer Marta (see chapter 1), who relates to her constant travel to gigs as *chergarska rabota* (nomad's work, or literally rug-holder work, "you fold your rug and go away" as the proverb goes).

Referring to Irvine and Gal's (2000) triad sociolinguistic processes (iconization, erasure and fractal recursivity), I suggest that both Balkan peasantry and ethnicity iconize difference to Europe. However Bulgarian nation-builders (like in Greece and Turkey—the other two post-Ottoman societies remained ethnically and religiously heterogeneous after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire) designed the path of language modernization by stressing peasantry as the national realm of liminality Europe thereby eliminating ethnicity as an icon of difference. This was not the only way to modernize in the Balkans. Yugoslavian and Romanian nation-builders took a

more ambivalent path, sometimes tolerating sometimes suppressing local ethnic identities. As a realm of fractal recursivity, both peasantry and ethnicity signify wide intertextual gap from urbanity—the icon of European modernity. In Bulgaria (just as in Turkey and Greece), the association of the social base with peasantry discloses the commitment to minimizing this gap. The language ideology of modernization means that peasants should turn into urbanites. Ethnicity stands as an antonym. It means further widening the intertextual gap from urbanity back to the stereotypical landscape of the Ottoman Balkans.

Following Kearney's methodological focus on personal polybian lives emerging in the global reticula I analyze how his post-developmentist model actually revalidates developmentist manners of domination and power. The case of Veselin Karchinski, which stands at the center of my ethnographic narrative, reveals how Bulgarians experience democratic ethnicity as a source of risk of fractal recursivity with modernity rather than as possibility of erasure (i.e. integration) and how they negotiate their notion of risk by performing *narod* and *folk* faces in regard to chalga.

Vesko (the diminutive of Veselin) is a native of Goritza,[60] a small village in north central Bulgaria and a current resident of the capital of Sofia. I met him when he worked as a fruit and vegetable vendor in a street booth at the upper-middle class neighborhood in which I lived. During our close communication for a period over two years, I heard from Vesko about his early life in the village during the socialist era, the political changes that pushed him to immigrate to the big city, as well as his struggle to survive during the early democratic era.

Vesko drew to me a self-portrait that both countered and affirmed Kearney's concept of polybian. He identified himself as an urbanized-peasant (*selianin v grada*,

[60] The names of Veselin Karchinski, his family members, work colleagues, and native village are all pseudonyms.

literally "villager in the city") and expressed his ambition to transform into a full urbanite (*grazhdanin*). He planned to do so by starting a family fruit and vegetable store that would guarantee middle class life to his daughter, Marina. Chalga was the most common topic in regard to which Vesko articulated the social experience and meanings of his self-portrayal. Above all, he articulated to me through speech acts of chalga the new regime of class, which was packaged in rhetoric of liberation from the limitations of being a socialist peasant. As I will show momentarily, Vesko recognized the risks and potentialities of his new transitional position. He negotiated these risks with expressions of shame and affinity with musical images Bulgarians recognize as chalga. Similarly to the intellectual elite, Vesko and his social environment identified chalga with what they saw as hybridities of traditional and modern Bulgarian culture that fell outside the official (socialist) canon, above all the Gypsy dance music of *kiuchek* (the strongest stereotype of Balkan ethnic recursivity).

Vesko's ambivalence of shame and affinity with chalga also challenges Kearney's argument that popular culture is a major mediator of the transformation of national peasants (whom he identifies with folklore) into global ethnicities in the aftermath of the Cold War. Kearney maintains that within the developmental dialectics of modernity folklore provided peasants with capital of authenticity. Working and living in the Californian border zone on us and Mexico, he argues that, transcending this dialectics, polybians can now exceed national boundaries and form personal and communal identities as well as seek power by producing and, even more importantly, consuming mass mediated values and symbols circulating worldwide.

Indeed, the World Music wave of the 1990s was one of the strongest expressions of this utopian hope that transnational popular music dialogue, particularly between post-peasant-émigrés, would propel new global social ties and

ethnic class-consciousness (e.g. Lipsitz 1997). In the context of Bulgaria, particularly Dimov (2001) and Rice (1996, 2002) express this hope when drawing lines of continuity from socialist folklore to democratic chalga. Similarly to Kearney, both scholars rely on equation of cultural forms with defined social identities. The transformation of folklore into chalga indicates to them the transformation of the Bulgarian social base from national peasant (the *narod*) to globalized ethnicities (i.e. polybians).

Taking a postmodern perspective Dimov abandons the socialist grounding of Bulgarian folklore in pure national canon and core (the Bulgarian word is *izvor*, also "essence," "authenticity," "spring," e.g. Buchanan 2006 and chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation). In his view, tradition is always hybrid in the sense that it is the general term of festivity (*praznik*) and everyday life (*delnik*) practices common in Bulgaria. This definition prompts him to shifts the locus of folklore from the quintessential Bulgarian village to a Bulgarian identity emerging from a multiethnic dialogue particularly with Turks, Roma, Greeks, Serbians, Romanians and Macedonians. This perception is what prompts him to suggest renaming chalga "ethnopop," to stress that Bulgarian folklore (as well as Bulgarian national identity) has not fell in crisis with the collapse of socialism but has remediated from the musical apparatuses of the state to global media.

Rice proposes a Marxist analysis[61] of how musical transformations from folklore to chalga[62] react to the transformation of the local economic base from socialism to capitalism. He argues that the emergence of chalga and decline of

[61] Rice employs a "component parts" model formulated by the Russian revolutionary Nikolai Bukharin (1925). This analytical model includes: genre or function, instrumental technique, human or social organization of musicians, formal elements (rhythm and harmony), style or expression, content or subject.

[62] In his 1996 text, Rice identifies chalga specifically with Wedding music (*svatbarska muzika*)—the earliest chalga current, which was at its peak around the 1989 changes. In his later text from 2002 he widens chalga to include also what Bulgarians recognize as popfolk.

folklore mediates the historical reorientation of Bulgarian national identity from the pure village to the global multiethnic world. Rice maintains that early chalga exposed the crisis of the communist rhetoric in the late 1980s. The unprecedented popularity of non-authorized performers, such as the wedding musician Ivo Papazov, signaled to Bulgarians that the ideology of socialist progress embedded in folklore was profoundly detached from the new economic conditions. Rice concludes that anxieties around chalga reflect socialist pessimism regarding the ability of the state to maintain its hold vis-à-vis the democratic wave of ethnicization and globalization. When located within the post-Cold War context, chalga, he believes, has the power to promote a vision of attenuated Bulgarian nationalism, which contrary to fears of Balkanization (that reiterate the modernist mythology of clash between the Occidental European and Oriental Ottoman civilizations), can seek multicultural ties across the Balkans and beyond.

A more ambivalent perspective to chalga comes from Donna Buchanan (2006) and Carol Silverman (2012) who stress in different ways the political economy of homogenization that underlies the post-socialist hybridization of Bulgarian music culture. Their critiques resonates with Feld (2005a) who argues that forces of domination build on the split between original sounds and their electronic replication and transmission (schizophrenia) and the cycle of action and reaction (schismogenesis) which has blurred borders between exotic and familiar, local and global and generated world music and world beat. Buchanan argues that socialist production of village feminine voice in folklore women choirs of the state radio circulated to the World Music market as *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares* but did not create a new venue of social mobility for Bulgarian peasants. Rather, this circulation shows the decontextualization of European Balkanism from Soviet progressivism and

its recontextualiztion in post-socialist French neo-colonialism. Silverman argues that the global circulation of Roma as a metonym of musical excellence has been a double edge sword. Roma musicians could sometime seek international careers as "authentic" representatives of Gypsy music (in its schizophrenic and schismogenetic forms). On the other hand, the cultural value-power of Gypsy music has not translated into political value-power but reinforced longstanding Romani marginality and stereotypes of otherness.

Veselin Karchinski, his family, friends and colleges elaborated to me an additional mechanism of language homogenization, which reaffirms Buchanan's and Silverman's critical perspective to post-Cold War globalization, on one hand, and challenges Dimov's and Rice's (and by inference, Kearney's) celebratory one, on the other. These former villager Bulgarians keyed his chalga references to shame when they recognized visible or invisible authority that required them to calibrate their communication to either modern urbanity or traditional peasantry (i.e. the Bulgarian *narod*). They expressed affinity with chalga in situations they recognized safe enough to digress from what they anticipated to be the formal rule of urbanity and peasantry and create spaces of intimate sociality. Experiencing themselves inferior to an imagined category of real urban Bulgarians, they calibrated their communication to intimacy with images they associated with the backward, corrupted or pseudo-modern *folk*.

I explore the role of *folk* intimacy through three critical perspectives proposed by Martin Stokes (2010). Shame of chalga points to the *first* perspective, which Stokes relates to Ronald Barthes' characterization of intimacy (particularly its language of sentimentality) as "unwarranted discourse…spoken perhaps by thousands of subjects (who knows?) but warranted by no one; it is disparaged, or derided by

them, severed from authority but also the mechanisms of authority (science, techniques, art)" (Barthes 1977: 1, quoted from Stokes 2010: 31). With this framework I could hear the common statement "chalga is the most popular music in Bulgaria but I personally don't like it" not as an attempt to dissociate from chalga but as a way to signal that people were entering the sensitive zone of *folk* intimacy, which required safety measures: denying personal relations with the media of intimacy—chalga.

The *second* perspective belongs to Berlant and Warner (1998) who critique the institutional enforcement of heteronormative hegemony over sexual intimacy. Their emphasis is on the power inequality that underlies Habermas' idea that personal subjectivity is publically mediated and is always oriented to the public. This critique helps me analyze how Vesko and his social environment articulate vis-à-vis his fruit and vegetable booth and a nearby café the protocol of modern urbanity and traditional peasantry as well as the limits of tolerance to digressing from them with *folk* intimacy. The consequences of successful and failed negotiation have revealed to me most vividly the mechanism of discipline and punishment implicit in the language ideology of democratic freedom.

The *third* perspective belongs to Michael Herzfeld (1997) who considers intimacy a source of shared identity emerging from shared embarrassment in regard to shared cultural practices that do not fit with the European metadiscourse of modern nationhood. In the case of nation-state Bulgaria I argue that it is the Balkanist strand of this metadiscourse that prompts Vesko both to dissociate and associate with chalga. As I will show below, he was fully cognizant of the power of such associations to invoke the harsh sense of Bulgarian "fellowship of the flawed" (ibid, see also Dent 2009). Vesko could subvert his own narrative of integration in the city by reminding

his fellows that, regardless of class and level of education, liminality to European modernity (namely, "peasant society, simpleminded people") is the common denominator of Bulgarian national identity.

Combining the three perspectives together, I argue that expressions of shame and affinity with chalga are emotional cues by which Bulgarians create intimate and formal zones of communications. Over the long period of our friendship I learned that positive and negative references to chalga were a most powerful medium of expressing inferiority to democracy's language of power, since nothing like chalga invokes a sense of subjectivity that always stands in gap with or digression from the two competing models of democratic modernity, the authoritarian, on one hand, and the populist, on the other.

The high-school graduation prom of Vesko's daughter Marina, was a climactic point, in which I witnessed most vividly (and most crudely) the stakes involved in maintaining careful balance between cues of formality and intimacy. Vesko planned this event to be his rite of passage to the status of an integrated urbanite. He located the party in the bar-café across his booth and invited his extended family (mostly former villager-émigrés in the city like him), his colleagues, and bosses, friends, and clients. At the peak of the party, Vesko cast off the inhibitions of shame with chalga and took the license to celebrate as he "really felt," with the ethnic Gypsy belly dance, called *kiuchek*. Bulgarians maintain that "real" urbanites can ostensibly digress to Gypsy ethnicity carefree without losing face. They do that by disclaiming association with chalga (the strategy of unwarranted discourse) with digressive irony (see chapter 2). In the case of Vesko, taking liberty to express affinity with ethnic chalga without reservations brought to his demise. He was punished with losing his workplace,

personal orientation and, finally, his ability to fulfill his goal of integration in the urban space.

I analyze Vesko Karchinski's hazardous speech acts of chalga music in four sections. The first section discusses the socialist division between the modern city and authentic (though backward) village, whose collapse "after democracy came" signals the rise of the new social base of "urbanized peasants." In the second section I present Vesko's post-socialist biography as a peasant in the city of Sofia. The third section elaborates on the semiotics and pragmatics of shame and affinity with chalga, specifically how Vesko orients his communication between the formal codes of modern urbanity and traditional peasantry as well as *folk* intimacy. The fourth section discusses Marina's prom and its unfortunate aftermath. These four sections guide my critique of Kearny's post-peasant paradigm (as well as Rice's and Dimov's lines of continuity from folklore to chalga). In my view, the ethnographic case of Veselin Karchinski indicates that even though popular culture symbols are indeed available globally across divisions of class, the ability to translate symbols to value-power still depends on the modern dialectics of urbanity vs. peasantry and their unequal relations. In the context of Bulgaria, this is the authoritarian formulation of democratic integration, which, much more effectively than the populist one, rewards former villagers with recognition of urban integration when they admit their inherent backwardness, and punishes them when they express affinity with signifiers of backwardness outside the ideologically circumscribed realm of digression in which they can be tolerated.

The Socialist Dialectics of the modern City and the traditional Village

The Bulgarian Communist Party formulated the city and the village as two antithetic ideological loci from which national modernity was supposed to evolve.

According to the Soviet model, the village represented the "authentic" idyllic chronotope (Bakhtin 1981) of the pre-modern social base (e.g. Buchanan 2006; Rice 1994)—the *Narod*—the "authentic" origin (*izvor*) of the modern nation. The state built model villages in a socialist realist manner to mediate (or, more idiomatically, propagate) the official narrative of Bulgarian history, tradition and folklore (Kaneff 2004). Even though socialist modernization centered heavily on creating urban proletariat, having roots in the village carried substantial social capital. Village houses functioned as villas for vacation, gardens for growing food, as well as places of retreat after retirement. Former villagers who were well off would have a summerhouse in their village of origin. City dwellers with means would also buy a second house in a village nearby their urban residence where they would keep a garden. A Bulgarian informant once told me half jokingly that the socialist economy collapsed once the old generation in the village died. The serious part of this statement relates to the fact that, by depending on village relatives with garden and livestock, city people could overcome the chronic shortages in the government stores of fruit, vegetables, dairy, meat, and alcohol (e.g Verdery 1996, Creed 1997).

Demographic control was the major social mean by which the socialist regime practiced the language regime of purification and hybridization between the city and the village. People were allowed to move from one locus to the other only if they qualified professionally (a working position) or domestically (marriage) for the ideologically defined lifestyle of the place to which they intended to move. In some cases, state officials forced villagers to move locations with factories that needed labors. Villagers could immigrate to urban centers (and, similarly, from small provincial towns to bigger cities) voluntarily only if they went through a social path of modernization; they either studied in state institutions leading to professional jobs

in the city or formed family ties with city residents who had ostensibly developed urban lifestyle. Even though villagers did immigrate to big cities during socialism, the identity of *villager in the city* did not carry a derogatory meaning, as it began to carry "after democracy came." Stemming from a prevalent legacy of economic backwardness (e.g. Chirot 1991, Gerschenkron 1962), petit-bourgeois urbanity did not stand in many socialist Eastern European societies as standard of modernity like in Western European societies. In Bulgaria, the regime directed its power against the thin crust of local bourgeoisie in order to replace it with a socialist-realist class of Bulgarians as they "ought to be:" urban proletariat. Joining urban proletariat did not always entail immigration from the village to the city, but going through the dialectical process in which both the bourgeois city and the traditional village were supposed to coalesce into a homogenous industrial working class (e.g. Creed 1997).

The collapse of the socialist regime brought to an end the internal demographic control. The language divisions between the modern city and the traditional village lost official status as well. Nevertheless, as I will show momentarily, this language division is still embedded in daily communications as it was during socialism. Let me start with the demographic changes. Bulgaria went through a rapid process of depopulation during the economic crisis following the transition from the state-run socialist system. According to the World Bank, the total population of Bulgaria dropped from almost 9,000,000 in 1989 to slightly above 7,500,000 in 2008.[63] One direction of emigration was westward, mostly to the US

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[63] Other reasons for the negative population growth in Bulgaria (-0.5% annually), are, according to the World Bank, low birth rate (10 per 1000), shorter life expectancy than in Western countries (73 years), and aging population (17% 65 years old and above, 69% 15-64, and 13% 0-14), see "Public Data—Population—Bulgaria," Google, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.google.com/publicdata?ds=wb-wdi&met=sp_pop_totl&idim=country:BGR&dl=en&hl=en&q=bulgaria+population; "Population

(mainly to the metropolitan area of Chicago), Canada, Germany, Spain, Italy, and the UK. A second direction of immigration was from villages and provincial towns to central cities (Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, and Burgas). The capital of Sofia is the most attractive destination of internal immigration. The city has grown from a bit less than 1,000,000 in 1989 to about 1,500,000 (I encountered also non-official estimations of 2,000,000 people and more). Oftentimes, when Bulgarians claim modernity they locate themselves in opposition to the urbanite peasants who rushed to the big cities after the 1989 changes. To claim "real" urban identity means to condemn these internal immigrants as having spoiled the city landscape—i.e. they either brought the village landscape to the city or they mixed improperly tradition and modernity. The popular term with which people point to the contamination of the city is *selianiia* (village-type modes of digressions from modern urbanity).

While many villages became depopulated throughout the 1990s, those that survived capitalist privatization have maintained their previous material function (supply of food and a place of retreat). Additionally, there are villages that developed as touristic sites (such as mineral bath resorts) or textile industry (especially nearby provincial town in southeastern Bulgaria, e.g. Ghodsee 2009). Villages by the seaside and popular mountain resorts became attractive for financial investment when the Bulgarian real-estate market went through a rapid growth during the 2000s. What stimulated this development was that retired people from Western Europe (from the UK, e.g. Elchinova 2010) found rural Bulgaria both an affordable and convenient location for their post-employment life. Informants told me about villages in which English became the first spoken language. I learned also that, in the proverbial

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Growth," The World Bank. Accessed October 25, 2014, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW.

Bulgarian way, selling village houses to foreigners became for a while a popular channel of speculations and illegal schemes (*dalavera*). I heard about foreigners who bought houses that were presented to them only in pictures in villages that actually did not exist. I also heard about foreign crooks, who cheated local villagers to sell their houses for a lower price.

People expressed the sense of dissonance between the language expectation of division between the city and the village and the fact that one could not distinguish between the two loci in social reality (even in a fabricated one for the sake of propaganda). One of the first complaints I heard in regard to chalga was that the city lost its modernity while the village lost its tradition. People often described to me contemporary villages as totally rundown places in which nothing was left, except "a few old grandmas" (*niakolko stari babi*) and extremely poor Gypsies. The only villages that were presented as doing relatively well were those of ethnic Turks. People claimed with anger that the political party "Movement for Rights and Freedoms"—the non-official representative of the Turkish minority—subsidized such villages in return for villagers' votes. The only other well-off villages were those in which Nuevo riche Bulgarians and British retirees owned villas. The conclusion people drew from the current situation of post-socialist villages was that Bulgaria was doomed to lose its national identity. In due time the country will either be (re-) annexed to Turkey or become a peripheral slum of Western Europe. And allegedly one could already see this future present in Bulgarian culture with the fact that both pop and folklore music were in a state of decline, because the local taste was oriented only to chalga hybridities of cheap pop and Gypsy *kiuchek*.

Veselin Karchinski – a short biography of a post-socialist peasant in the city

I met Vesko in 2007. I lived not far from the fruit and vegetable booth where he worked and which was located in an upper middle class neighborhood in the center of Sofia. Our communication began with safer topics than chalga music: Bulgarian and European soccer. We dared to open up the topic chalga only after almost half a year of acquaintance, when enough trust was established between us. It happened after my family visited his family apartment (the Bulgarian term is *na gosti*; this is a cultural rite of forming personal relationship, see Buchanan 2006).

Vesko was 40 years old when we met. He was born and raised in a small village in the district of Pleven (north central Bulgaria), which I will call here: Goritsa. Vesko met his future wife, Tsvetelina (diminutive, Tsetsa), in high school. She was an orphan from the nearby provincial town of Dolnitsa. They got married immediately after graduating from high school. Vesko did his military service at the army hospital in Sofia. He intended to study veterinary medicine after completing his service. "After democracy came" he was forced to take a different course of life.

Vesko's father died in 1988—a year before "the changes" (another idiom of the fall of the socialist regime). His mother was then a kindergarten teacher in the village. His sister was already married. Vesko understood that, in order to survive the new period of uncertainty, he had no choice but to drop the idea of studying and immediately look for a job. He had no particular professional skills so he looked for whatever work that was available. The first job he found was in a steel factory nearby his village. That factory was one of the only industrial plants in the area, which survived the post-socialist transition. His job was to carry hundred kilograms of steel everyday. Vesko is a pretty short and thin guy; he could not bear the physical hardship of that work. After a few months he had to quit. His next job was as waiter

in touristic resorts. He lived there spending as little as possible. He used to send almost all his salary back to the village to feed Tsetsa and his newborn baby, Marina. Marina was a sickly baby and needed intensive medical care. Vesko enjoyed his job as a waiter, especially because at the restaurants in which he worked he could watch the most famous chalga stars of the early 1990s in live shows.

Goritsa was among the majority of Bulgarian villages that went through depopulation in the 1990s. With the collapse of the state-engineered economy, almost all factories and agricultural plants in the region closed down (see Creed 1997; Ghodsee 2009). Villagers received their land back after the restitution of private property, but had no money to buy machinery and seed (Creed ibid; Kaneff 2004). As a result, most of the villagers remained unemployed. In the few factories and farms that still functioned, people had to work in very poor conditions for minimal salary with no benefits or security (as in the steel factory, Vesko's first working place). Small-scale agriculture could maybe satisfy part of people's nourishment needs, but could not be a source of income. Vesko testifies that almost all his friends from the village chose to leave Bulgaria and look for work in Western Europe, mostly in Spain. Vesko decided not to join them but to stay in Bulgaria. His choice, though, was to immigrate to the city.

When Vesko's daughter, Marina, grew up and her health situation improved, he decided to move the family to Sofia. He remembers that the first year was terribly difficult. Sofia's winters are very harsh. The temperature is unstable and shifts above and below 32°F (roughly between 50°F and 14°F). The city is situated in a valley surrounded by high mountains and so fog goes down and creates heavy smog. The snow also is rarely removed from the streets; it turns quickly into ice mixed with mud and dirt. Poor apartments are not well insulated and people save on heating. Standards

of health maintenance are fairly low. Even though public clinics are free of charge, they are crowded, poorly equipped, and function with minimal staff. Private doctors are relatively expensive. Sick leaves for non-professional workers are oftentimes not paid.

Vesko and his family could rent a small basement room in the city center with the money brought from the village. The room had no heating and no running water. Vesko told me that they used to sleep in one bed hugging each other and sharing one blanket in order to keep warm in those freezing nights. They used to take shower once a week at Vesko's sister (who had moved with her family to Sofia a few years earlier). Vesko's sister was in a better material situation. Her husband was a *chinovnik* (a state bureaucrat) in the Ministry of the Interior during the socialist era. "After democracy came" he found work as a truck driver and, later, as a construction manager.

The first job Vesko took in Sofia was as vendor in a fruit and vegetable booth in the open market of "Graf Ignatiev" street market targeting upper class clientele. Vesko said that he worked in miserable conditions. The booth was uncovered and so he used to work from early morning to late night, exposed to summer heat and winter frost. He remembers how during winters he used to come back home from work with frostbites on his fingers and toes. Nevertheless, he saw no choice but to keep on working there. The situation seemed to improve when one of Vesko's customers arranged for Tsetsa to have a job in the kitchen of a nearby restaurant owned by an Israeli businessman. Vesko said that the work was physically bearable but emotionally very taxing. Tsetsa had to function under the heavy pressure of the restaurant owners (Neither Vesko nor Tsetsa ever explained what this pressure was. My impression was that they were cautious not to offend me with seemingly anti-

Semitic remarks). After a short time she had a nervous breakdown. It happened to her during a work shift. Vesko still remembers vividly how someone from the restaurant came to the booth to call him urgently. He did not want to describe to me how he found Tsetsa, but hinted that she was in a very miserable condition.

Vesko worked at the booth on "Graf Ignatiev" for almost 8 years. He quit after he received another job offer from Zhoro (diminutive of Georgi), the owner of a few street fruit and vegetable booths. Zhoro also owned a fruit and vegetable delivery line. He assigned Vesko to work in his fruit and vegetable booth in the neighborhood I lived. Vesko was quite satisfied with the new job. The salary was still low and the working hours were long. But the booth was partially covered and thus somehow better protected from summer heat and winter frost. Eventually Zhoro also allowed Vesko to take a weekly day off and an annual vacation (both unpaid, though). The clientele was more regular and residential (in contrast to "Graf Ignatiev"'s clientele of pass-byers from businesses, offices, and apartments rented to foreigners). Vesko had been working in Zhoro's booth for three years when we met. He had six working days a week. His shift started at 7 am and ended around 8:30 pm. Vesko used to start at 3 am and finish around 2 pm on weeks in which Zhoro assigned him to deliver stock from the wholesale market. His salary was 25 leva (approximately $20 during the time of my fieldwork) a day regardless if he worked at the booth or delivered produce. Days off, vacations, and sick leaves were unpaid. Similarly to many employers in Bulgaria, Zhoro also did not pay insurance or social benefits for Vesko. While working in Zhoro's booth, Vesko found a job for Tsetsa as vendor at the deli section of a nearby supermarket. She worked 14-hour shifts for two consecutive days followed by two days off. Tsetsa's monthly salary was 400 leva (roughly $320) with no paid vacations. Vesko told me that his dream was to start his own business. He was

very excited by the idea of running a small family fruit and vegetable store. He planned that Tsetsa would quit her job and come to work with him. He wished that Marina would find a white-collar job after graduating from high school (Marina was an 11th grader when we met). But since she was not inclined to pursue higher education, he thought that joining them in the store would be the best solution for her.

Earning two salaries, Vesko and Tsetsa could afford moving from the basement room to a tiny two-room apartment split from an old house. They shared a small yard with their neighbors. The house was located in a neighborhood not far away from the city center. Their monthly rent was 100 leva (around $80). Marina had a room of her own. Tsetsa and Vesko slept on a folded couch in the main room that functioned during the day as both the living room and the kitchen. They also had a bathroom. Their home was furnished basically. Nevertheless it felt very cozy. While at home they usually had the TV on tuned to *Planeta* or *Fen TV* (the two popfolk music channels). We used to socialize in the common Bulgarian way of gathering around the dining table and the TV when I came with my family *na gosti*. The dinning table (*trapeza*) provided meat dishes, salads, and soft and alcoholic drinks; the TV provided music as a background and topics of conversation, typically gossip about popfolk stars' personal life. Watching popfolk channels was a mark of intimacy between us. People playing chalga in front of guests might run the risk of losing modern urban face, and so people tend to tune their TVs to popfolk channels when they either already trust their guests or signal breakthrough into intimate communication.

Vesko also loved watching Bulgarian and European soccer on TV. He was a diehard fan of CSKA Sofia, the former sports club of the Bulgarian army. Founded in 1948, the club, whose nickname is "Reds" (*Chervenite*), was closely identified with

the socialist regime. In Europe he was a fan of Liverpool (Vesko used to say with a smile that he was "red" all around, from politics to local and European soccer). Tsetsa and Marina enjoyed watching soap operas. Marina had a computer with high speed Internet connection. She used to download movies from the web for her parents. Vesko loved watching foreign films on Marina's computer (usually dubbed to Bulgarian). He also used to read sports websites.

In many of our discussions Vesko shared with me his great wish that Marina would continue studying after graduating from high school. He put high pressure on her to do so. He believed that higher education would be the best way for Marina to complete the family's integration in the city. He said that with a college degree she would be able to find a professional job with better salary and benefits. He wanted for her to be able to live a more comfortable life than him. Vesko strongly wished that Marina would study psychology. As many Bulgarians he believed that psychology underlay both individual and social life. He had no knowledge of this discipline but believed that understanding the human psyche (*choveshka psihika*) was crucial to climbing up from the peasant state of constant struggle for survival. He often told to me that knowing psychology was the key for enduring the burdens of modern life. Vesko explained to me that this knowledge helped people to control their reality, because whatever we experience was determined by psychological factors. He used to say that psychological knowledge opened all doors in life because not only our emotions and senses but politics, economy, and the sciences were all human activities and so they depended on psychology as well. Vesko complained that psychology was not a very developed profession in Bulgaria. This fact did not surprise him, because it fit his perception that Bulgaria was backward. He was convinced that European societies were more developed (i.e. more modern) because their members have

already understood that the profession of psychology was central for the success of societies. He believed that people in Bulgaria would get it also, but later than in the West, as usual.

Vesko's emphasis on the centrality of psychology in his social experience is one of my guiding threads to articulating the language ideology of democratic integration with his relationship of shame and affinity with chalga. Vesko, like many people with whom I spoke during my fieldwork, insisted that my research and the questions in which I was interested did not relate to culture or politics but to psychology. I understood the reason only after I set out to write my ethnography. The psychological realm was the level of dealing with powers beyond the concrete present, similar to forefather spirits Indonesian Anakalangs (Keane 1997) need to consider when negotiating ritualized exchange. Enraging powers of past order runs the risk of invoking internal conflicts in the present.

I saw non-elite Bulgarians gearing their speech as a matter of caution to what they understood as the official language of urban modernity with which they had to comply. Less referential and more abstract level of emotional communication provided them with a sense of room for negotiation. In the previous chapter I expanded on this issue. The musical pedagogue Gencho Gaitandzhiev was the first person who told me that in order to understand the social experience of chalga, I should ask why Bulgarians are so obsessed with expressing hate to its associated music while hiding that they actually love it. From different perspectives, both Gencho Gaitandzhiev and Vesko Karchinski insisted that I should look at the genre as a "national psychological complex," as a syndrome of being caught between two opposing notions of failure when Bulgarians try to fulfill their national ideal: being modern society genuinely integrated in Europe. Vesko explained to me that

Bulgarians fail to be Europeans when they either indulge in "peasant simplemindedness" (*selska prostotiia*) or when they deny having peasant roots (*kompleksarnost*), i.e. expressing inferiority complex[64] vis-a-vis their rural heritage. Just as my other informants, Vesko related to the literary hero, Bai Ganio and to the dramatic play "Poorly Understood Civilization," as the most prominent cultural symbols of this syndrome.

Soliciting interpretations from my field interlocutors about the meaning of these two derogatory words, I learned that *peasant simplemindedness* (*selska prostotiia*) was, for instance, when someone goes on long distance travel via public transport with homemade cooked food. Doing so alludes to the habit of villagers to eat boiled chicken seasoned with salt and red pepper on trains and buses. The chicken is wrapped with newspapers and eaten with fingers. I encountered the counterpart of *peasant simplemindedness*, *kompleksarnost* (expressing inferiority complex vis-à-vis their rural heritage), for instance, when my neighbor in Sofia complained once about the secretaries in the office above her apartment, who make annoying noise all day long with the high heels of their shoes. When she tried to solve this problem directly with the secretaries, they dismissed her by asking if she expected them to go with *terlitsi* (the Turkish-derived word for rural, woolen, hand-knit slippers). The neighbor mocked the secretaries' reply. She said that once these women left the village they wore high heel shoes compulsively, to guarantee that they were in the city. In short, Bulgarian urban residents, but especially peasants in the city (like Vesko) cautiously walk the invisible line between *selska prostotiya* and *kompleksarnost* in their daily life in the city. Invoking the chalga register, as I will show now, is a central device with which people invite their interlocutors to communicate this negotiation.

[64] The scope of this dissertation does not allow me to expand on the concept of *inferiority complex*, which was developed by Alfred Adler, the founder of Individual psychology and is highly relevant to exploring Bulgarians' ambivalent relationship with the peasantry.

Vesko's grammar of shame and affinity with chalga

Let me now turn to the grammar of cuing speech acts of chalga to shame and affinity, with which Vesko defines spaces of formal and intimate communications, draws the lines between them and articulates his code switching. I was first introduced to this grammar when I solicited Vesko's view on the inclusion of music that connotes with chalga in school textbooks (authored by Gencho Gaitandzhiev). I also asked his opinion about why they stirred such harsh public reactions. This topic prompted him to elaborate on the risk of losing face by being marked with either *selska prostotiya* or *kompleksarnost*.

Vesko explained to me that in his daily interactions he needed to distinguish between peasants who adapted to modern urban lifestyle and "lowlife peasants" (*seliani*) who contaminate the city with rural backwardness. Maintaining the difference was essential for maintaining the right balance between the values of integration in the city while not denying his traditional village roots. As a villager, Vesko had to acknowledge his inferiority to modern urbanites but to show also that he identified with the values of the city. Failing to maintain the right balance of shame and affinity when relating to chalga poses risks Vesko's integration in the city. Both urbanites and other villagers might mark him either as simpleminded peasant (*selski prostak*) or as denier of his village roots (*kompleksar*).

Vesko navigated these two risks by considering Gypsies as shifters (Silverstein 1976) of generic representatives of backwardness from which he maintained safe distance. Silverstein's shifter concept exposes most poignantly the blind spot of Kearney's post-developmentalist paradigm of polybian ethnicity: inattentiveness to language. Employing the analytical concept of intertextaul gaps (Briggs and Bauman 1992), I argue that Vesko relates to peasantry as a speech genre

of Bulgarian socialist national imagination, in which becoming modern means abandoning ethnic identity (the category of Ottoman sociality) in favor of class (the category of European nationhood). Bulgarians utter that, in order to modernize, one should abandon ethnicity and think only in terms of class. Class became even more important in socialist language ideology, which centered on proletariat revolution as the path to modern evolution. Could ethnicity become a generic marker of democratic modernity as Kearney proposes? Vesko's speech choice of distancing himself from stereotypes of Gypsy ethnicity (on which I will expand in the next chaper) and upholding Bulgarian peasantry hints to the answer. I argue that, for Vesko, associating ethnicity with democratic modernity (as Kearney suggests) and trying to minimize the gap from Gypsies (the shifters of Balkan ethnicity) would have actually widened his gap with modernity. After all, under the impact of Balkanism, EU countries (the political paradigms of democratic modernity in Bulgaria) still hold Roma as a major ethnic problem rather than as an equal member of multiethnic Europe. Cognizant of this risk, Vesko employed the strategy of "conflicting complementarities" to recontextualize in democracy the socialist speech genre of class. He claimed being modern by minimizing his intertextual gap (as a former peasant) with urbanity and widening the gap from the antithesis of class modernity—Gypsy ethnicity.

Na kafé[65]

March 19, 2008, I passed in the afternoon through Zhoro's booth hoping to see Vesko there. I was happy to find him at work. I asked him briefly whether he had time to meet with me that evening. We used to sit together from time to time after his working day (around 8:30-9:00 pm). All our meetings until then did not revolve around any particular topic. We used to sit at the café across Zhoro's booth, drink

[65] This term means in Bulgarian "casual conversation" (conversation over coffee).

beer and chat. Our discussions used to flow associatively between Bulgarian soccer, politics, and life stories. I reveal to Vesco that I was writing a doctoral dissertation about chalga only about half a year into our friendship. When I told him about my research he did not react (Bulgarian informants usually saw chalga as a very strange topic for academic research). I learned though that not reacting was a common way people acknowledged risk. It was a strategy of killing the topic before it would unleash interlocutors to take the interaction too much away from controlled formality. In other words, not reacting to the register of chalga was a manner of declining or postponing invitations for intimacy.

The café in which we used to meet had a design Bulgarians recognize as urban European with a slightly Balkan twist—a style that marked the transformation of social eating and drinking institutions in post-socialist Bulgaria. The café was post-socialist in the sense that it reflected the blurring of borders between the modern city and the traditional village. On the other hand, the café did maintain the socialist manners of differentiating between the two loci. The physical organization of the space projected an identity of a European urban coffeehouse and not of *krŭchma* (see chapter 1)—the Balkan establishment for social drinking. On one hand, popfolk songs as well as songs from other Balkan pop genres frequently appeared on the computer's playlist at the bar. However except for playing popfolk, the café did not have any of the proverbial markers of the *krŭchma:* peasantry (*selianiia*) or, worse than that Gypsiness (*tsiganiia*). *Rakia*—the essential *krŭchma* hard liquor drink—did not appear on the menu. Cognizant of the association of *rakiia* with Bulgarian tradition, I understood that having this liquor on the menu might raise doubts about the urban character of the establishment. If *rakiia* were served people would cross the fine line between liminal popfolk and recursive chalga.

I saw the care many owners of folk clubs (discotheques playing popfolk) took to disassociate themselves from *krŭchma*. I could never order *rakiia* there. Whiskey and vodka were the most popular drinks. The common practice in folk clubs is to have a bottle of whiskey on each table (usually Johnny Walker or J&B). When people sit by the table they are obliged to pay for the bottle a price that can vary roughly between 80-150 Leva (50-120 USD). A crossover between folk club and *krŭchma* is called in Bulgarian *selska diskoteka* (village discothèque). A DJ of a casino in a small town in Dobrudzha told me with laughter that the characteristic of such places is that people go to dance there with their slippers (*pantofi*).

To be clear, I do not suggest here that *rakiia* always marks its drinkers with *selianiia* or *tziganiia*. Many of my (modern) urban Bulgarians acquaintances, for instance, consider *rakiia* a delicate aperitif, part of the culinary specialties of the Balkans. For example, I attended a wedding at which the father of the bride (a professional industry worker from a provincial town) offered to all guests his own homemade *rakiia*. The bride and the groom were young urban professionals from Sofia. There was a *rakiia* bottle on each table. The labels on the bottles were also especially made for the wedding; the names of the bride and the groom as well as the date and place of the event were printed on the labels. The supply was unlimited. The hosts encouraged people at the party to take home leftover *rakiia* bottles. The wedding organizers though framed the event with strong markers of urbanity so that *rakiia* would not index digression. Not even popfolk and a few *kiuchek* songs put the faces of the guests too much at risk. For instance, a DJ entertained the guests with recorded music not with a live band (which most often consisted of Romani musicians). The presence of a band that plays eclectic repertoire could invoke one of the metonyms of chalga: Wedding Orchestra (*Svatbarski orkestŭr*), and I don't mean

here in its prestigious World Music incarnation but in the local derogatory sense called *chagladzhii* (players of chalgiia, the Balkan-Ottoman multiethnic tavern music).

The celebrating family was not free of risks. Being a close acquaintance, I witnessed once an attempt to shame the bride with *seleniia* in another context. This young professional was forced to deal with anonymous comments that appeared on one web forum immediately after she was promoted in her work place (a big international firm). The comments tried to undermine her qualification for the job with smears of not being a truly *grazhdanka* (urbanite woman). They reminded her that until recently she was still returning back to Sofia from weekends in the province with jars of *mandzha* (cooked food). These statements implied that under the cover of an educated *grazhdanka* there was still hiding a *prosto selsko momiche* (simple village girl). Using her connection in the Sofia business community, this young woman forced the managers of the forum to remove the statements with threats of defamation lawsuit.

All the alcohol at the café where I met Vesko was imported, except local beer whose labels (*Kamenitza, Zagorka, Shumensko* etc.) carried national Bulgarian connotations, free of Balkan ethnicity. Food that usually follows *krŭchma* drinks was not served. I especially mean *kebapcheta, kiufteta* (two traditional dishes of minced meatballs) and *shopska salata* [vegetable salad with roasted peppers topped with grinded feta cheese]).[66] Industrial potato chips in bags were the only food that was

[66] *Shopska salata* (Salad from the region around Sofia) is commonly considered in Bulgaria an essential cultural mark of chalga-type Bulgarian locality. During August 2009, I encountered a news report that circulated in many media sites that this salad was actually invented in the 1950s or the 1960s by officials of *Balkanturist*—the tourism authority of Socialist Bulgaria—in order to create unique Bulgarian cuisine that was different from other Balkan neighbors. During the 1990s *shopska salata* was strongly associated with celebration of *chalga* boorishness (*prostotiia)*. See for instance, a web report of the newspaper *24 chasa* [24 hours]: the Tricolor of the Bulgarian Taste,"Трикольорът на българския вкус," August 14, 2008*,* accessed October 25, 2014,

sold.[67] The café owners allowed guests to bring in food from outside. The two waitresses who worked in shifts used to provide people with plates on which to put their food (I heard Bulgarians remarking on this practice as manifestation of *selska prostotiia*). The interior space was always dark, during daytime as well as during the evening and night hours (the working hours of the café were from around 9:00 am till 2:00 am). The music was always loud and the tables were set some distance from each other.

Also the invisible norms of encounter between people at the café keyed to a modern urban neighborhood.[68] Clients were not supposed to hold multiple interactions across tables (what characteristically happens in the *krŭchma*). The tendency in the *krŭchma* is toward breaking formal divisions of strangers vs. acquaintances (i.e. formal vs. intimate communication). People usually drink in big groups (in Bulgarian, *kompaniia*) that easily integrate people from outside. In the Western-style urban café in Bulgaria, on the other hand, people drink either alone or in closed groups. People do not seek to cross lines between drinking companies. People are expected to respect the privacy of strangers by not taking co-presence as an invitation to initiate intimate contact.

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http://www.24chasa.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=204057). One of the songs that entered the "pantheon" of classical Chalga songs from the 1990s is the hit "*Shopskata salata*" sang by Rado Shisharkata (accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdSARZjfTjE). This is a cover of the Greek song *Gia Ta Lefta* ("For the Money") sang by Antipas (accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikrI9yoZy4w).

[67] I emphasize these issues because from my experience in the Balkans and the Middle East, accompanying or not accompanying light food with alcohol is an important cultural signifier of traditional (in Bulgaria, *krŭchma* and *mehana*) vs. modern (for instance, café or pub) types of social drinking. For the intimate meanings that *krŭchma* food carries, see in the next chapter the utterance of the Bulgarian minister, Emel Etem.

[68] The neighborhood where I lived is a combination of pre-socialist and early socialist architecture for the party elite. My family and I lived at the periphery of the neighborhood in an apartments bloc that was built after 1989. Demographically, the neighborhood is a combination of old socialist elite, bourgeois bohemia, post-socialist upper middle class, and foreigners.

A type of soft core Nuevo rich self-presentation that carries the same nickname of popfolk singers (see chapter 1): *folkadzhiia,*[69] is one of the only digressions from cues of urban behavior, which, to my impression, could be tolerated at the café. The aesthetics of *folkadzhiia* stereotypically alludes to popfolk singers. It involves slim women dressed with tight and exposing clothes. *Folkadzhiiki* (plural of female *folkadzhiia)* stereotypically have silicon breasts, collagen lips, and bleached hair. Men are supposed to shave their heads (or have a close cut) and wear tight T-shirts and pants that emphasize their pumped up muscles. Both men and women *folkadzhii* are marked by ostentatious gadgets (cars, clothes, jewelry, cell phones, cigarettes, and lighters). *Folkadzhii* are associated with urbanized peasantry and so they might risk the modern look of the café. If a *folkadzhiia* commits *prostotiia* (i.e. brings the *krŭchma* into the café), shame would spill on everyone that was co-present.[70]

When I saw Vesko that afternoon I told him that I wanted to hear his opinion about an issue connected with my fieldwork. Vesko smiled and said that he would be happy to talk about whatever I wanted to hear. First, I wanted to share with Vesko the media attacks against Gencho. Secondly, I wanted to hear Vesko's opinion about the previous incident related to Gaitandzhiev's music textbooks. The parents from the town of Stara Zagora, who protested against the appearance of the Romani popfolk singer Sofi Marinova in one of Gencho's textbooks for pre-school children.

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[69] *Mutra* and *mutressa* (female *mutra*) are colloquial labels of hardcore Nuevo rich Bulgarians (e.g. Ivanova 1997). Commonly such people are associated with the mafia culture that was prominent in the transition era of the 1990s. *Folkadzhiya* (male) and *folkadzhiyka* (female) are the softer and more integrated labels of Nuevo riches in the lexicon democratic modernity. The café could tolerate *folkadzhii*; *mutri* might prefer ostentatiously richer neighborhoods, such as *Lozenetz*. Once I took a taxi to a café in Lozenetz to meet with a popfolk star-singer. I gave the name of the place to the driver and asked him if he knew how to go there. The driver told me with disgust that that café was famous; *mutri* used to meet there and shoot each other.

[70] My characterization of *folkadzhiia* is not prescriptive. People called *folkadzhiia* do not necessarily look in such a way. *Folkadzhiia*, just like all other archetypical labels, which I discuss in this dissertation, is a signifier of fractal recursivity to authoritative forms of European modernity. Being related with this label has the power to affect people's modern face.

A few hours later, a little bit after 8:00 pm, I returned to the booth and waited for an hour until Vesko finished serving the last customers. The street finally got empty and Vesko started storing the fruit and vegetable boxes in the store next to the booth (the store, like the booth, belonged to Zhoro, Vesko's employer). I offered to help him but he refused. I stood by the booth and looked at him storing all the stock, unplugging the cable of the few light bulbs that lit the booth, sweeping superficially the sidewalk near the booth, and collecting his own stuff. After he was ready, we crossed the small street and entered the café. As usual, I got a free table and took seats both for him and for me. Vesko meanwhile went to the bathroom to wash his hands and face and to dampen his hair. Then he went to the bar and took two bottles of Heineken beer, one cold, for me, and one room temperature for himself. I always loved observing the transformation Vesko passed in the bathroom. He used to look so drained and exhausted when he entered the cafe. When he came out of the bathroom he looked to me as if he had washed away the appearance of a street vendor and momentarily crossed the class lines, he was now a neighborhood resident.

As always we began our meeting with a toast. We clinked each other's bottles and said *nazdrave* (cheers). Then Vesko added his usual line, *da sme zhivi i zdravi* (may we be alive and healthy). After finishing his line he hugged my head, kissed me on my forehead and laughed. We opened with a short chat, after which I presented to him the topic I wanted to discuss with him. During my entire speech Vesko kept silent. He did not interrupt my narrative; he only looked at me with a tiny smile.

I interpreted the smile as a sign of embarrassment with the role game we played—I the interrogator, he the interrogated. Imposing structure on our discussion embarrassed me as well. I felt awkward that revealing openly my interest in chalga entailed limiting my dialogue with Vesko to a form of interview. The focus on one

topic emphasized to me the crucial difference between us, which was always present in our communication but about which we never really talked. I was the modern, educated, richer, and more powerful person than he was— my traditional fieldwork sample—the poor and weak Bulgarian urbanized peasant. There was another factor of awkwardness in our talk. We both knew what inferiority Vesko's status of urbanized peasant implied. He was not one of these important people who are interviewed on TV. For those Bulgarians who were entitled to express their opinions on social issues, Vesko was only a unit within the faceless mob, a "chalga person," as the Bulgarian ethnomusicologist Rozmari Statelova (2003) views the stereotypical member of the *folk* from the point of view of intellectual legislators (see chapter 2). I assumed that he cooperated with me nevertheless because he knew that I was not expecting him to play to me the non-self conscious association between urbanized peasants and chalga music. I believed that Vesko was ready to observe the structure of interview that I imposed only because I still claimed being his friend (practically, I drank beer with him as usual, I did not use a tape recorder, I did not take notes, and most importantly, I was not dissing chalga). I was very cautious, though, not to disclose to Vesko that Gencho Gaitandzhiev was my friend and that I disliked anti-Roma racism. I assumed that had I revealed straightforwardly my opinion, Vesko would have immediately reaffirmed it, regardless if he agreed with my point of view or not. He would have seconded my opinion only to show his solidarity with me as my friend, who came to protect me when my affinity with chalga put me at risk of being marked with *prostotiia*.

Additionally, in regard to the parental protest in Stara Zagora against the inclusion or Romani popfolk singers in music textbooks, I assumed that Vesko was aware that in EU-member Bulgaria uttering racist slurs against Roma was politically

incorrect. Bulgarians would utter them in intimate settings but avoid them when attempting to put formal urban face. Unlike chalga, though, anti-Roma racism was not limited only to intimate communication. It could also appear on the margin of urban formality. People used to key slurs to formality by denouncing Western Europeans who were presumably obsessed with ethnicity and cared more about Roma than about Bulgarians.[71] Bulgarian interlocutors insisted that Westerners' interest in Roma was an example of utter hypocrisy, especially since they believed that people from Western Europe were actually more racist than Bulgarians in regard to Gypsies. In the West, I was told, people would not tolerate what Bulgarians were ready to tolerate. Westerners would not let Gypsies be "free riders" as they lived in Bulgaria. But it was easier to throw the blame of racism on Bulgarians, because in the eyes of the West, all Balkan people were anyhow inferior "just like Gypsies" was the common conclusion.

The film historian Dina Iordanova provides a fascinating insight to this perception when writing that Balkan film-makers have internalized Western association of the Balkans with the stereotypical image of the "Gypsy." "When choosing Roma stories and characters," she writes, "Balkan film-makers use them as a metaphor in 'Balkans to Europe as Gypsies to us' sense. The fact that the Roma are considered to be the least integrated ethnic community in these parts bears direct parallels to the way the Balkans are seen in a wider context – as the least integrated group of countries within the greater European realm." (2001: 215-216) Drawing dichotomy between Bulgarians' and Westerners' attitudes to Roma oftentimes led my Bulgarian interlocutors to reaffirm Western Balkanism. People took the fact that Gypsy "anti-social" lifestyle was tolerated in Bulgaria as the proof that Bulgarians

[71] The Open Society Institute is a frequent target of such censure. After Bulgaria joined the EU the Institute has gradually stopped all its projects in the country, except projects specifically targeting Roma, such as *Romfest*, the Romani music and dance festival that takes the center of the next chapter.

could not handle modern social standards. Informants uttered with sarcasm that in Bulgaria "lowlife Gypsy traits" *(tsiganiia*) were the norm; people told me that after all, all Bulgarian politicians were corrupt and the ordinary people (the social base, the *narod*) were apathetic and passive peasants.

Vesko's reaction resonated to me with the strategy of conflicting complementarities. I got the impression that, while the animal tale indexed to him the more domesticated notion of socialist peasantry, the association of chalga with ethnicity invoked the same old (or, more precisely, modern) discursive field of Balkan otherness. For Vesko, affinity with ethnicity did not signal an opportunity of integration (erasure) with the globalized world (the landscape of post-Cold War democracy), but a drawback of such integration, the continuation of fractal recursivity with modern Europe. Vesko experienced allusions to ethnicity as recontextualizing his Gypsy-type inferiority within democracy rather than transcending it.

I stopped my speech after completing my report to Vesko about the two incidents—one are the media attacks against the presence of chalga texts in Gencho Gaintandzhiev's school textbooks and the second is the scandal in Stara Zagora against the textbooks indulgence in "lowlife Gypsy traits" (*tsiganiia*). I asked for his comments. There was a moment of silence. Then Vesko apologized; he had not heard about either of these cases. He said that there was no way for him to keep track of all the news. He worked in Zhoro's booth from early morning to late evening. He had only very little time in the morning to skim the sports websites when he drank his coffee before going to work. On days when CSKA Sofia played he could grab some time to watch the game on TV in the café. Also on his weekly day off (usually Saturday or Sunday) what he loved to do was to spend long time with sports

newspapers while drinking his coffee (nonetheless Vesko was fluent in Bulgarian politics and identified himself as a devoted "red", i.e. socialist).

After this disclaimer (Bauman 1992) of his ability to perform the role of interviewee, Vesko made an opening gesture to socialist regime of indexical positivism—how the government attempted to formalize semiotic ties between each fixed signifier and each fixed signified (see previous chapter). He reminded me of something he had said once before. On one occasion, he compared to me the textbooks from which he studied in school and those from which Marina studied. He could not understand why there was a need for more than one standard textbook for each discipline. During the socialist times, he said, all Bulgarian school children studied from the same textbooks. There was one and only biology textbook, one and only history, one and only mathematics, and so on. After democracy came, he maintained, students became confused. Now, for every discipline there are ten different textbooks and no one can know what textbook one should choose. This situation seemed ridiculous to Vesko; it was senseless. What can be so different between textbooks? He asked, chemistry is chemistry, history is history, mathematics is mathematics and so on. You have different textbooks but the subject is always one and the same subject.

When I shared this conversation with Gencho Gaitandzhiev, he reacted with anger that this was exactly the totalitarian syndrome he was complaining about. Bulgarians constantly wanted to live in a reality in which there is no diversity of meanings (in Bulgarian, "plan b" *vtori plan,* see the previous chapter). They could not deal with a plurality of choices; they felt it as anarchy, as chaos. To my understanding, the emphasis of intellectual legislators on this sort of semiotic positivism is what made their authoritarian interpretation of democracy much more

plausible to non-elite Bulgarians such as Vesko. The idea that the regime would dictate from above comprehensive rules of democratic culture did not sound strange to Vesko. On the contrary, like most Bulgarians I met, he welcomed such dictation hoping that it would normalize democratic life; it would make it much less chaotic and risky.

Vesko did not support indexical uniformity in regard to chalga. I read this move as caution not to look like *kompleksar*. I asked him whether he thought that including chalga in textbooks was indeed utterly wrong. He said that of course it was not. He thought that it was stupid to ban these textbooks. He claimed that no one could expect children to be interested in all these old folklore songs; they were so remote from children's present-day reality. Want it or not, Vesko said, children nowadays listen to chalga. I felt that this word choice instead of popfolk meant that we were intimate with each other. At the same time, Vesco also maintained his modern urban face by widening the intertextual gap between chalga and folklore. He could agree that it was impossible to ignore chalga in music textbooks but he would not accept that chalga was a present-day folklore (the approach that Gaintadziev, his co-writer Popova, Dimov and other intellectual interpreters advocated).

You cannot prevent them from listening to chalga, he continued, so you could attract schoolchildren to study music by teaching them the sorts of music to which they listen. I reminded Vesko the dirty associations of chalga. I asked him whether he would listen to chalga in his workplace. He said that of course he would not, because the people who shopped at Zhoro's booth were of higher class and would not approve of hearing this music in their public environment. If they did not care being bombarded with chalga they would have shopped at *Zhenski pazar* ("The Women's Market"—a big open market in the center of Sofia used to be known for its low prices

and peasant-style atmosphere. Recently it has been renovated to attract higher-class clientele). Customers were ready to pay more money not to be "harassed" with chalga. Vesko was sure that many of his customers listened to chalga at home.[72] He mentioned that among the regular customers at the booth were even a few famous popfolk star-singers. However, no one in the neighborhood would feel comfortable having this music played loudly in the street. People would be scandalized by such blatant exhibition of peasant *prostotiia*.

I observed a similar case of Vesko's caution of not playing chalga in his workplace in a news report in July 2008 on the evening news edition of bTV. [73] The Municipality of Burgas, the fourth largest city located by the Black Sea, forbade bus drivers to listen to chalga while driving. This order aimed at upgrading the public transportation system by removing any sort of *prostotiya* that would not offend the public. Passengers who spoke to the camera stated that drivers could listen to whatever music they wished in their private cars, but by no means could they "harass" people in public. A driver commented to the reporter as well saying that he actually suffered from an opposite problem. He did not like chalga and preferred to drive without music at all, but he was constantly forced to listen to chalga songs throughout his working shifts, which came from passengers' cell phone ringers and headphones.

The second topic shifted the focus of our conversation from peasantry to ethnicity. I asked Vesko what he thought about the parental protest in Stara Zagora. The question I raised was whether the protesting parents were right or wrong in condemning the inclusion of the Romani singer Sofi Marinova in the preschool textbook. To my surprise, Vesko replied that, in this case, the parents were absolutely

[72] Veneta Raikova, a famous Bulgarian TV host, who often invites popfolk stars to her weekly talk show "Hot" (*goreshto, Nova Televiziia*) claims that when (modern) Sofia people (*Sofiiantsi*) want to chill out, they sit at home, drink *rakiia*, and listen to (Serbian-influenced) chalga music.
[73] "В Бургас Забраниха Чалгата В Градският Тра," accessed October 25, 2014, http://vbox7.com/play:9a566112.

right and the textbook authors were wrong. Sofi Marinova is a Gypsy, he said, everybody knows it. Presenting her singing in Romani language (*tsiganski*) sets a very bad example to children. It teaches children that gypsiness *(tsiganiya*) is something good. I asked him whether he thought that including popfolk stars from Bulgarian ethnicity such as Kamelia,[74] who used to perform almost naked, was fine but including Sofi Marinova in Romani language was wrong. Vesko answered decisively that yes; that was his opinion. How come? I asked. I was truly surprised by his reply. He explained to me that to watch Kamelia naked was funny; people looked at her performance as a joke more than as a sexual provocation. She is old by now, he said, nobody thinks of her as a sex symbol anymore (Kamelia was 37 years old at the time of our conversation. She was born in 1971). Sofi Marinova was a different story, he maintained, it was enough that she was Gypsy. You cannot expect children to distinguish between "good" Gypsies and "bad" Gypsies. The word that Vesko used for "good" Gypsies was the common ethnic marker *tsigani*. For "bad" Gypsies he used the racist equivalent: *mangali*. In the next chapter I will expand on this harshly racist ethnic marker—an equivalent of the "N-word" in US English.

The way Vesko distinguished between "good" Gypsies (*tzigani*) and "bad" Gypsies (*mangali*) resonated with the democratic rhetoric of erasing Balkan recursivity through integration. Vesko took the lead over the conversation and told me in length about one village nearby his home village. In that village there were two Gypsy neighborhoods. The first one was of "good" Gypsies; they were integrated. I asked Vesko what he meant by "integrated." He answered that the people in that neighborhood shared the Bulgarian lifestyle; they were civilized, productive, and

[74] Kamelia is famous in Bulgaria for her sexual explicitness. She performed in the Planeta Derby 2007 tour only with stickers covering the nipples of her naked breast. She was one of the first *chalga* singers whose nude pictures were published in the Bulgarian edition of *Playboy*: "Специален брой на сп. 'Playboy'," Kamelia Online, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.kamelia-online.com/gallery/thumbnails.php?album=21.

hardworking. They were also educated and spoke very good Bulgarian without the stereotypical Gypsy accent. As ordinary Bulgarians, these "good" Gypsies sent their children to school, held ordinary jobs, paid their bills, and maintained a hygienic environment. They also maintained normal relationships with their Bulgarian neighbors. Vesko emphasized that the people in that neighborhood were well off. A few of them were even rich; they lived in houses built entirely of marble. The second neighborhood was of "bad" Gypsies, the *mangali*—the "worst people in Bulgaria." They lived in their poor *mahala*[75] (slum ghetto). They didn't pay taxes and bills, didn't have normal work, and didn't send their children to school. You can recognize a *mangal*, Vesko said, by the fact that the smallest finger of the right hand is missing. When a baby is born, he explained, *mangali* first cut off his or her finger to make the hand suitable for pick pocketing.

At the bottom line, he said, every *tsiganin* ("good" Gypsy) is also *mangal* ("bad" Gypsy) and therefore you can never really trust them. This is the reason why presenting Sofi Marinova singing in Romani language in a school textbook was wrong. Instead of directing Gypsy children to forget their "lowlife" background and grow up as integrated Bulgarians, you teach Bulgarian children that the "bad" Gypsy lifestyle is a legitimate one. This last sentence reminded me of the words of the protesting parents in one of the newspaper reports which attacked the inclusion of Sofi Marinova in Gaitandzhiev's textbook: "is it the pureblooded Bulgarian children

[75] *Mahala* is a Turkish derived word that denotes in colloquial Bulgarian poor slums, in contrast to the ideological modern landscape of the neighborhood (*kvartal*). As I mentioned earlier, shifting between Turkish derived words and words with Slavic roots or words derived from Western European languages is a common way for Bulgarians to distinguish between modernity and tradition. The meaning of this differentiation is not only derogative. For instance, many village-born urban Bulgarians still call the kitchen in their village house with the Turkish word *mutfak* while for the kitchen in the urban apartment they use the standard Bulgarian word *kuhnia*. The *mutfak* is a place of retreat to the familiar environment in which such people were born.

who need to integrate in the Romani minorities or the opposite?" (Peicheva and Dimov 2005: 121)

I argue that despite the straightforward racist resonance of Vesko's words, he perceived Roma not as the Other but as shifters (Silverstein 1976) of *folk* intimacy, which play on liminal space between authentic peasantry and liminal ethnicity. In this sense performing gypsiness (*tsiganiya*) is riskier than performing peasantry (*selianiya*); both index lack of fit with modern urbanity. However, Vesko maintained that when chalga signified urbanized peasantry (as was done in the computer playlist at the café or on stage by Kamelia), playing it did not run the risk of committing *prostotiia*. Performing chalga saturated with gypsiness, on the other hand, celebrated the most backward aspect of traditional lifestyle characteristically held by "bad" Gypsies (*mangali*). Such performances were supposed to be excluded completely from the society outside the *mahala*. People were supposed to be ashamed of them. Unlike peasant chalga that could be erased (i.e. integrated) within in pop music, Gypsy chalga led only to the otherness of Balkan backwardness.

In a later conversation I viewed a sort of intimacy in Vesko's utterance against Roma, which the Bulgarian cultural studies scholar Aleksandar Kiossev (2002) calls "dark intimacy." Drawing upon Herzfeld's concept of cultural intimacy, Kiossev argues that Balkan intimacy is based on a shared paradoxical characteristic: a common urge to fragmentation. People in the Balkans tend to perform higher level of modernity than their neighbors by pointing to the latter's assumed lower level backwardness. However, everybody agrees that at the bottom line all Balkan societies are equally backward, "like the Gypsies." Kiossev's paradigmatic example is the story about a Serbian soldier during the Yugoslav Civil War, who explained the difference between them, the Serbs, and the Croats: "Look, here's how it is. Those Croats, they

think they are better than us. They want to be the gentlemen. They think they are fancy Europeans. I'll tell you something. We're all just Balkan shit." (2002:184). In another place (ibid:189), Kiossev utters that "Gypsies" is the ethnic metonym of "Balkan shit." Vesko reminded me then with a smile that Bulgarians were not so different from Gypsies (he used the derogatory term, *mangali*). In that discussion he said that, just as Gypsies, Bulgarians could not do things right in the normal way. They always looked for shortcuts (*tarikatlŭk*), preferably by screwing up someone else. Vesko related to me to the cultural rule that screwing up (*da pretsakvash*) someone else is the best guarantee for you not to be screwed up (*da si pretsakan*).

However in some of our later converstations, despite his unequivocal denunciationof the "lowlife Gypsy" characteristics in what he recognized as Bulgarian mentality, Vesko showed that even such a severe racist prejudice could be a source of affinity. He did so by ascribing Gypsy ethnicity back on himself, the urbanized peasant. Vesko revealed to me that he was very familiar with Gypsy mentality because Gypsy blood ran in his own veins. Vesko explained that when he was a baby his mother had no breast milk and therefore he was breastfed by a Roma woman from his village. In the breast milk he received many Gypsy characteristics that are still active in his blood. Vesko loved to tell this story especially when we talked about chalga. He boasted that he was not just a fan of the music; he was an excellent dancer of the Romani belly dance of *kiuchek*. He said half laughingly half seriously that he received the talent for *kiuchek* with the breast milk of that Gypsy wet nurse.

To recognize the verbal decorum of urban space Vesko carefully hid what he considered the Gypsy side of his character at his workplace and exposed only his peasant face. He did so by communicating with customers with informal but

grammatically standard Bulgarian. For instance, he never addressed the customers in the formal plural second person, *Vie,* but in the familiar singular one, *ti*. He also used to call all his women customers "sweetheart" (*dusha*), regardless of their age and class. When I observed him doing it, I sensed that for his clients, this sort of address did not index sexual harassment. In public it is normatively legitimate for men to address women in Bulgaria with the word *dusha*. And women do not have legitimacy to express offense when male strangers call them in public "sweetheart" or any other similar informal remark. I learned that with informal second person and *dusha*, Vesko intended to establish sense of trust with his customers. He implied that he would not cheat them, because he was on their side as if they were from the same village.

Vesko took great pride in his ability to speak as equal with people richer and more modern than him. He connected it to his belief in communist equality (as I mentioned beforehand, Vesko was a diehard "red," just as the villagers of Zamfirovo in Creed's [1997] ethnography). Speaking informally was a way to subvert any possibility of those people to treat him condescendingly because he was an urbanized peasant. As an expert in the quality of the produce, he was momentarily equal to these people, among whom there were businessmen, parliament members, and ministers. All these titles, though, seemed to him artificial. Deep inside we are all the same, he used to say. We, Bulgarians, are all peasants, concluded Vesco alluding to the self-derogatory proverb I mentioned in earlier chapters—"peasant country, simpleminded people." Recognizing that at the bottom line all Bulgarians were peasant allowed him not to deny his love of chalga. For Vesco, to integrate in the city did not mean turning into a *kompleksar*—a person that claims modernity by denouncing his or her own traditional peasant roots.

Hence, successful performance of village informality meant for Vesko creating affinity with his customers—earning their trust in him. Failed communication, on the other hand, meant that he ran the risk of committing the shame of *prostotiia* both on himself and on his clients by drawing them back to the traditional village, or worse to the Gypsy *mahala*. Vesko knew that to succeed in his communication he should not cross the normative lines of public informality; he could address his customers with informal "you," but not embarrass them with chalga. For Vesko, throwing off completely formal inhibitions of urbanity and expressing his intimate emotions of affinity meant being able to exhibit his talent of dancing Gypsy *kiuchek* with cool (*yaka*) chalga. He promised to me that soon I would be able to see what a good *kiuchek* dancer he was. His daughter Marina was 19 years old and was about to graduate from high school in May 2008. He expected her prom (*bal*) to be a peak point in his life. He would be the patron of the event and, therefore, would be free to celebrate "as he really felt."

Marina's Prom

Thus far I presented Vesko in situations in which he articulated and negotiated the language ideology of democratic integration by signaling formal communication with cues of shame with chalga (such as avoiding playing popfolk songs in the booth) and signaling *folk* intimacy by countering shame with cues of chalga affinity (popfolk TV channels at the background when people come *na gosti*). Being able to switch between the two communication levels provided Vesko with an indication that he was indeed on the right track of becoming less a traditional peasant and more a modern urbanite. His measure of successful integration was that he was not caught within the "national psychological complex." He was neither simpleminded peasant (*selski prostak*) nor was he a denier of his village roots (*kompleksar*). The test if he had

completed the process of closing his perceived gap with modern urbanity was whether he could express his "peasant soul" (*selska dusha*) with no risk of losing urban face. Let me close now the chapter with the event Vesko intended to mark this erasure. He wished to do that by celebrating the high school graduation of his daughter in the way he "really felt:" with "cool" chalga, particularly the Gypsy belly dance music of *kiuchek*. Vesko took the risk of expressing *folk* intimacy in the modern setting of the café across his booth. The outcome of the party taught him that he went too far.

Vesko's family began the preparation for Marina's high-school prom from the beginning of her senior school year. Vesko took extra shifts in the booth to save money. He wanted to throw a big and generous party. In the evenings when we sat at the café he used to count the revenue of the day. Every time he used to end the counting with a satisfaction remark: *bereket versin* ("May [god] give his blessing").

He knew that this colloquial expression came from Turkish. He said to me with a smile that many words used in the village were Turkish borrowings. He knew also that Turcisms played on the liminal space between peasantry and ethnicity; they could invoke the imagined space of the traditional village as well as of the Gypsy *mahala*.

He put the money back in his pocket and said that it was a good day. I tried to ask him whether he received bonuses for days when sales were especially high, but he deflected my question. He promised to tell me after the prom, but we never came back to this topic. He planned to hold the party within the social network of his workplace. He closed a deal with the café owners to rent their place for the entire day. He ordered plates of salads and lamb meat cooked with rice from the nearby restaurant.

I learned that particularly offering lamb meat shows the importance of the occasion. Late April and May are the months during which Bulgarian villagers

slaughter and eat lamb especially for St. George's Day and for Easter. In general, slaughtering a lamb for a big occasion marks as a highly festive event. Lambs can be slaughtered as offerings for sickly children (so that they become strong and healthy), as a way to chase away negative things and attract good luck and strength. I can assume that, for Vesko, eating lamb prepared in a restaurant (not slaughtered in the village by people you know and roasted in the open) and in an urban setting was, quite likely, the ritual of urban integration, a mark of success, as if from then on things were supposed to become only better.

On the party day bottles of whiskey and vodka were put on each table in addition to soft drinks and nuts. People could also order beer and wine on the house. *Rakiia* was not part of the alcohol supplied by the cafe. Vesko brought with him from his native village homemade *rakiia* in plastic bottles of mineral water. The *rakiia* was not offered to everyone but only to the closest family guests. The café was closed for regular customers. However, Vesko invited in people who mistakenly entered the café; he asked them to join the party, to become the family's guests. This crossing of lines between invitees and strangers did not turn the café into *krŭchma.* Vesko followed the Bulgarian tradition of celebrating one's own festive occasion by showing a village-style generosity (*shtedrost*), which entailed treating all co-present people with food and drinks (*pocherpka*), regardless if the people enjoying the treat are acquaintances or strangers.

Having limited money to throw a party, Vesko and Tsetsa had also to rely on their workplace connections to provide Marina with material means of a real prom, as it should be—as ostentatious as possible. Vesko's boss, Zhoro, sent his son to pick up Marina from home with his black Audi car. The car was clean and shiny. Zhoro's son drove Marina to the café, afterwards to her school and from the school to the hotel in

which the prom party was about to take place. I went with Vesko, Tsetsa, and a few family friends—all of them former residents of Vesko's village Goritsa—in a big cab that followed the Audi car to café. On the way, Vesko and one of his friends talked about family members and friends who stayed in the village. The two speakers heightened the festive affect of Marina's prom by emphasizing the gap between themselves, the city dwellers, and those, who lagged behind in their peasantry. Vesko and his friend shared the opinion that people in the village had unrealistic expectations that those who moved to the city would keep in close touch with them. Vesko said that he worked from early morning to late at night, so when could he find the time to keep in touch with people except with his mother? Vesko's friend concluded that people in the village could just not understand that life in the city was drastically different. City people could not afford wasting time in the way village people could. All agreed that people have too much free time in the village; in the city one does not have free time at all.

I took the role of a family photographer for the entire day. After we all arrived to the café I joined Marina and one of her girlfriends in the Audi car of Zhoro's son. We left the place and continued to Marina's school. I recorded/photographed Marina and her girlfriend how they stood out of the car's open roof and yelled the standard line of all 12th graders counting their school years: *I koi kaza?* ("and who said?) *1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, yuuuhuuuu*. Marina was dressed with a purple gown that was sewn especially for her graduation day. Just as her other high school mates, she was allowed for one day to violate formal urbanity without being stained with *prostotiia*. During the season of graduation parties (May to early June) I observed high school graduates celebrating in the streets of Sofia with ostentatious cars and clothes that span from elegant to Gypsy-type suits, from evening dresses to oriental

belly dancer scarves. In front of Marina's high school stood a small band of three Romani musicians (one trumpeter and two drummers), who entertained the graduates as well as their families and friends with *kiuchek* tunes. Teenagers danced to the music together with accompanying adults. Boys performed masculine patronage by going around with bottles of whiskey and sticking money in the musicians' instruments and clothes. After spending some time in front of Marina's school, we left with everybody in a long line of cars for the hotel in which the prom was about to take place. That was the last stop on the prom day. We followed Marina to the hotel and then returned to the café to continue the celebration. In front of the hotel I saw Marina's boyfriend for the first time. He was her classmate. They hugged and kissed and walked through the hotel entrance together.

Later in the café Vesko prepared to fulfill his promise, to exhibit his *kiuchek* talent. He was so happy. He hugged me and yelled in my ear, "19 years I have been waiting for this moment. This is the greatest achievement of my life." The person at the bar picked *kiuchek* tunes on the computer's playlist. The music alongside with the alcohol, meat and cigarette smoke heightened people's excitement. At some point, Vesko climbed on a chair and started to dance emphasizing the moves of his hips and shoulders while spreading his arm to the side as if he was a big eagle. Vesko began his dance alone. Tsetsa joined him shortly after. Marina's girlfriends jumped on another chair and started to dance as well. I continued to shoot with my camera. After going over the pictures I realized that most of them were of Marina's girlfriend. She looked really pretty. I could see in the pictures that other men were staring at her as well.

Vesko was not satisfied with the party's playlist, though. It was too light for his needs. He wanted the café owners to play tunes with more instrumental

improvisations. He shouted at one of the owners that stood by the bar, "hey, stop with this music! I want now real 'lousy Gypsy' *kiuchek*s!" (*Haide, stiga s taia muzika! Iskam sega istinski mangalski kiuchetsi!*). The owner complied only briefly with Vesko's demand. He put a few tunes but then switched to other musical genres. It wasn't because of limited *kiuchek* tunes on the computer's playlist. I carried with me to the bar a few CDs with lots of *kiuchek* on mp3 files. I handed them to the barman offering him to download the files to the café's computer. He replied with a smile that he had no need for them; he had plenty of *kiuckek* already. Reflecting on the barman's control over the playlist, I understand that controlling the musical flow (Williams 1975) of the party was his way to prevent Vesko from puting the reputation of the café at risk. He let Vesko digress to *folk* intimacy but without letting the party turn into a manifestation of *selska* or, even worse, *tsiganska prostotiia*. Vesko was disappointed with the café owner that he did not fulfill his request. But he did not protest. Vesco exhausted his power to resist the invisible rules of modern urbanity. Now was the time to switch to the antithetic side of the conflicting complementarities equilibrium. Vesko complied.

Throughout the night he and the guests danced to popfolk and other Turkish, Serbian, and Greek pop hits. They danced also to foreign pop songs, tango, waltz, and, of course, socialist *obrabotki* (arrangements) of Bulgarian folklore dances. Everybody adapted to the musical flow shifting smoothly between the different music genres as if they were expecting what genre comes next. They switched from one style of dance to the other—from individual disco and *kiuchek* to couple-type waltz and tango and to the row-manner *horo* (the structure of folklore dance based on asymmetric rhythms, most commonly 7/8). When the computer playlist played folklore *horo*, Vesko, Tsetsa, and four other guests went out of the café and

performed a row dance in street. In the middle of their dance the music switched to *kiuchek*. The row immediately fell apart and turned into individual dance. The emphasis of body movement went from the legs to the hips, breasts and shoulders. People who passed by in the street stopped to observe the *horo* and *kiuchek* dances. A few of them also shot the street dance with small camera and cell phones. It was indeed not a usual scene in this elite neighborhood of Sofia. Reflecting on this scene, the way people switched from one form of dance to another according to the shifting computerized playlist, illustrated to me most eminently eminently Bulgarians' skill of adapting to switching paradigms of modernity delivered by authoritative mediators and their intermediaries (Latour 2005).

Was Marina's prom party at the café a successful event? On one hand it was; Vesko and Tsetsa were satisfied with the very good turnout of family relatives, friends and neighborhood customers. Among the guests were relatives who were still living in the village; others were villagers in the city, just like Vesko and his family. Other guests included Vesko's colleagues from the booth, as well as Tsetsa's colleagues from the big grocery store in which she worked (the store was in the same street, not far away from the booth). A few of Vesko's customers from the neighborhood also came. On the other hand, Vesko and Tsetsa complained about village relatives as well as city co-workers who presumably tried to sabotage the special festivity of the prom by reminding the family their peasant roots.

When I came to their house on the following day, I found Vesko, Tsetsa and Marina in the middle of an angry discussion about Marina's cousin (the daughter of Vesko's sister, at whose apartment Vesko's family used to take showers during their first years in Sofia), who was supposed to shoot the party with my video camera. I myself instructed the cousin how to use the video camera and provided her with

empty DVDs. Vesko told me bitterly that she shot only a few minutes. Tsetsa and Marina insisted that she did it on purpose. Although her family was in a better financial situation than Marina's, this cousin envied Marina. From previous conversation I knew that there was an on-going competition between the two families about which one has integrated more successfully in Sofia. Tsetsa and Marina were sure that the cousin took the opportunity to sabotage by guaranteeing that the family would not have a video souvenir of this big event. For Tsetsa, this behavior proved that the family of Vesko's sister never integrated in the city despite their better financial situation; they remained simple urbanized peasants. Tsetsa concluded her tirade by calling this relatives *kompleksari*.

Vesko, Tsetsa and Marina also complained that a few guests tried to spoil the celebration of integration by attending the party with work clothes. These were Vesko's colleagues who came dressed with dirty shorts, T-shirt, and flip-flop shoes—the same cloths they used to wear at the booth. Tsetsa insisted that they did it on purpose. They came to Vesco's city party but did not want to let him forget that he was still an inferior peasant.

Tsetsa said that she could tolerate all these acts of sabotage. She already got used to this sort of behavior from all those *kompleksari*. She reminded me that, in Bulgaria, envy was the strongest motive of action. I connected this remark to the cultural trait I learned from Gencho Gaitandzhiev. In the previous chapter I wrote how he warned me that in Bulgaria one needed to be very cautious not to disclose personal success. He was cautious "not to boast" (*da ne se pohvali*). Nevertheless, in my mind, Vesko's insistence to celebrate Marina's prom with chalga and its culinary associations seemed as acts of boasting. Unlike the family in the wedding party, which I described above, Vesko danced *kiuchek* to cast off inhibitions of modern

urbanity and celebrate "how he really felt." He did not limit his *folk* intimacy with any cue of digressive irony or shame and so he claimed discursive authority he did not have to redefine the rules of urban communication.

What Tsetsa could not forgive, however, was what she saw as the cruel manner by which Zhoro, Vesko's boss, reminded Vesko that the party was over. Zhoro showed generosity when he sent his son to drive Marina with his car. He also promised Vesko a day off after the prom. But late at night, before leaving the café, Zhoro approached Vesko and ordered him to show up to work on the following morning. I interpreted the order as an act of punishment. Vesko had not only to return to his low position of a street vendor, he had also to pay back for making Zhoro a participant in Vesko's *kiuchek* digressions. I can only speculate that for Zhoro taking part in such an event was not an easy task. He, just as other guests (including me), could see the stitches in Vesko's performance of integrated urbanity, particularly with the fact that he really danced *kiuchek* very well as if he was really a Gypsy from the *mahala*.

The party's aftermath

Vesko did not accept the expectation of returning to his previous position before the party. Encouraged by the excitement of Marina's prom, he decided that the time had come to realize his dream: opening his own fruit and vegetable store. On days he did not work, Vesko searched for a suitable space to rent. Meanwhile he began advertising his intentions among customers and colleagues in Zhoro's booth. The news arrived quickly to Zhoro, who, on his part, ordered Vesko to take an unlimited unpaid vacation. Vesko reacted by announcing his immediate resignation. In the next days, Vesko bought a booth that was in a short distance from the old one (the booth was owned by the municipality of Sofia. Vesko paid 500 leva [$350] for

it). He asked Marina's boyfriend to work with him. The boyfriend's father volunteered to deliver produce every morning with his car from the wholesale market. The work went well during the summer months. It looked like that the new business was developing well. Vesko began building a regular clientele of people from the nearby streets. The booth was located on a main boulevard with busy pedestrian traffic. Vesko and Marina's boyfriend seemed happy working together. Sometimes Marina and Tsetsa also came to help. Vesko was so satisfied with the successful launching of the booth that he even went one evening to Zhoro and paraded with his daily revenue. Vesko also surprised Tsetsa with new expensive electrical appliances that he bought for their home.

The momentum started to wane when the winter approached. Vesko increasingly realized the insecurities of working as a single business owner. Additionally, Marina's boyfriend complained that he got tired of that work and his father did not want to continue taking the burden of early morning delivery. Also the relationship between Marina and her boyfriend started fraying. Vesko and Tsetsa complained to me that they could not stand the family of the boyfriend; they were nothing more than simple peasants. Vesko and Tsetsa felt that Marina deserved a more "refined" boyfriend. I saw how Vesko was gradually losing his spirit.

In November 2008, Vesko, Marina and I went to the annual concert of the popfolk music channel *"Planeta televizia"* (Tsetsa could not come, she was at work). We went to drink beer at a nearby *krŭchma* after the concert. Vesko showed me his frostbites from standing long hours in the cold street. The skin on his hands was totally red and cracked. I could see that he was in great pain. Around Christmas Vesko disappeared. When I managed to find him on the phone he sounded drunk. Two months later we met again. He told me that he had decided to quit the idea of the

booth. He did not even try to sell the booth; he just abandoned it altogether. Vesko blamed Zhoro for trying to destroy him. He claimed that Zhoro bribed municipality inspectors to fine Vesko for positioning stock boxes on parts of the sidewalk that were outside the limits of the booth. From time to time Zhoro's workers used to pass in the area to watch what Vesko was doing. He broke down when temperature began to drop below the *freezing point*. Vesko had no place to store the stock at night so he used to lock it in the booth. One morning, when he came to work, he found that all the fruit and vegetables had frozen completely. He had to throw away everything.

The collapse of his new business affected gravely Vesko's emotional constitution. He used to be very proud that he had managed to escape the typical fate of his former peasant acquaintances. He was in his early 40s but felt himself energetic as a teenager. He did not smoke, did not over-drink (except some beer when he wanted to relax after work), did not neglect his body, had all his original teeth, and deeply loved his wife and daughter. Emphasizing to me the importance of psychological heath, he always used to express great hope and optimism (not a common trait in Bulgaria). He believed that being hopeful and optimistic were crucial for enduring emotional and material difficulties.

When I met him again he was different. He had become thinner, was unshaved, his eyes were red and his face was swollen. I heard from Tsetsa that he got drunk almost every night. He found all sorts of alternative jobs but quit after a short time after discovering that his employers stole his salary. When I managed to reach him he admitted that he avoided seeing me because he was ashamed of his situation. Within a year he stopped believing that his life situation could improve back. He finally accepted a job as a general worker in a construction company owned by a former resident of his village. He was satisfied that at least his boss was an honest

person who did not take advantage of Vesko's situation. The new boss paid Vesko on time, let him take breaks during the workday, and did not try to cheat or exploit him. Not working anymore with urban class customers freed Vesco from following formal rules of modern communication at work. He and his colleagues on the construction sites could listen to popfolk radio stations with no worries of losing face. Playing loudly chalga radio stations in public was anyhow the stereotype of former peasant construction workers. Vesko had lost his recognition of being modern and gave up trying to regain it back.

Conclusion

The choice Vesko took—to give up integration in the city rather than live on the liminal zone between urbanity and peasantry—brings me back to Kearney's suggestion of reconceptualizing the social base of traditionally agrarian societies (such as Bulgaria) in the era of post-developmentist globalization. Can we conclude that Vesko accepted the fate of living in a never-ending transition or has he abandoned his peasant identity and turned into a polybian—a subaltern subject position that emerges outside the dialectics of the country and the city? If the latter is true, in what space and time dimensions (alternative to modernity and tradition) should one locate the *folk* intimacy—the space Vesko and his environment create by cuing speech acts of chalga with signs of shame and affinity? And what about the context of class analysis, should we shift it from nation to globalization as Kearney suggests, or should we look analyze the folk intimacy that the chalga register mediates as an intertextual process with which Bulgarians experience, communicate and negotiate the two legacies of social base in Bulgarian national imagination: the authentic *narod* and backward *folk*? And what can we learn from the events surrounding Marina's prom about the way Bulgarians perceive the current official

narrative of national modernization: integration in the democratic global world (namely the EU)? Do non-elite Bulgarians like Vesko and his social environment really find in democracy a path of populist modernization in which they can have their own grassroots (or ethnic) voice (as proposed by intellectual legislators as well as by Kearney) or do they receive democracy as another modernization program which, while its authoritarian power cannot be resisted, at least it can be domesticated (through conflicting complementarities of sabotage and compliance)?

I managed to stay in touch with Vesko. We meet once a year during my summer visits to Sofia. Social media helps us also to keep in touch during the year and feed each other with family news. I discussed with Vesko in one of our follow up meetings what changed in his life after he abandoned the booth and become a general construction worker. He acknowledged that his life reality worsened. He did not see himself on any path of urban integration anymore. He played with the idea of going back to his village. He told me that his sister and her family did so. But, he did not seem ready to take this step and follow her. Instead, Vesko and his family find resources (or values-powers, in Kearney's terminology) to maintain personal and communal space. Their social network develops in a reticulum manner encompassing their home in the margins of Sofia city center, Vesko's native village, Tsetsa's hometown, Vesko's temporary construction projects all over the country and sites for leisure such as CSKA soccer stadium. Marina grew and is now contributing to the family economy as a seller. She changed jobs a few times expressing her frustration with employers who took advantage of her age and lack of education denying her salary on payday. Recently she found a job in a shoe store whose owners behave fairly. They even paid for her driving lessons. Vesko took a chance to go abroad for the first time in his life. He applied for a construction job in a Bulgarian firm that

sends guest workers to the Czech Republic. He had to borrow some money from friends to pay the application fee. Unfortunately, he had to borrow money again in order to come back home. The Bulgarian firm was discovered as another money scheme. Vesko and his fellow Bulgarian co-workers were indeed hired for jobs in Czech construction sites however they were fired and thrown to the street when payday came. Not knowing any other language but Bulgarian, Vesko felt lucky that he managed to find his way back home.

This travel experience introduced Vesko to the grim reality of similar post-peasants/guest-workers from other poor European countries. Despite the language barrier he felt strong subaltern solidarity with them. One can indeed find in this solidarity a beginning of what Kearney sees as global ethnic class-consciousness. The recent development of chalga might add to this consciousness a common language. In the years after my fieldwork, Latin American reggaeton has become the most popular rhythmic line of popfolk hits. In my view, Bulgarians like Vesko are intrigued by the rhythmic similarities between reggaeton and *kiuchek*, which allows them to enjoy familiar grooves and feel fit with global cultural trends at the same time (a rare occasion in Bulgaria).

The language with which Vesko articulates his current situation reveals to me that he did not abandon the dialectics of modern urbanity and traditional village. He identifies his class with the Bulgarian social base: the authentic *narod* and backward *folk*. More concretely he sees himself as a peasant in the city and admits the inferiority complex that his transitional position entails. Culturally he keeps distinguishing between the two categories by associating the first with folklore and the latter with chalga.

Vesko never denied that losing his booth hit him financially. But he could find comfort with the fact that he domesticated for himself a place in the city in which he could live as he really felt without pretending to be someone else. His self-soothing words revealed to me a language comfort zone that does not stem from a polybian subject position but rather from recontextualizing in democratic life the traditional strategy of modernity domestication: sabotage and compliance. Vesko was happy that he did not need to play anymore the role of a modern urbanite to all sorts of *kompleksari*. He could show affinity with chalga music without limiting it with shame. If there was no danger of being abused by other, more powerful, peasants in the city (such as Zhoro, the owner of the old booth), Vesko himself had no problem to express his affinity with chalga. He loved all Balkan musics, from popfolk hits to Gypsy *kiuchek*, from Serbian *turbofolk* to Turksih *arabesk*. He testified that he was in his soul a Bulgarian villager and remembered that as a baby he suckled Gypsy rhythms with his breast milk. By no means did Veselin Karchinski deny his village roots. Despite his difficult financial situation, Vesko was happy that he could still live in the city without turning into a *kompleksar*.

The ethnic resonance in Vesko's conclusion is my point of departure to the fourth and last chapter of the dissertation. I turn now to discuss how Roma participants in a Romani music festival negotiate through the self-reflexive voice of chalga their role as shifters of Balkan ethnicity, that is, being backward Gypsies to whom Bulgarians point when expressing self-perception of recursivity to European modernity.

Chapter 4

Romfest 2008: Between Ethnic Assimilation and Multi-Ethnicity

"Emel Etem Doesn't Give Money for Romfest 2008. It's Apparently Just Kiuchek and Chalga"[76]

The opening epigraph quotes a news report that circulated over the Bulgarian printed and digital media in early August 2008. The report informs about the decision of Emel Etem—at that time a government minister and the head of the State Committee of Ethnic and Demographic Affairs—to deny state funding for *Romfest*—a festival of Romani dance and music, which took place in the city of Stara Zagora (Southeastern Bulgaria) every summer between 1992 and 2010. What attracts my attention in this quotation is Etem's association of the festival with *kiuchek* and chalga (and in other utterances also with *kebapche,* minced meatball), which, in this context, invokes a stereotype of Gypsies ready to use any possible lie to exploit public resources for their immediate self-indulgent pleasures. There is another implicit line in this quotation. Emel Etem is a member of the ethnic Turkish minority that Bulgarians usually identify with the pre-national "occupation" of the Muslim Ottoman Empire over the Balkans, which they consider originally Christian (since the medieval era). By denying state funding to *Romfest* on the basis of its association with chalga, she counters her own ethnic stereotype by presenting herself as protecting national interests (i.e. public money) from Roma—the minority Bulgarians identify with present-day ethnic Balkan ghettoization.

I related to stereotypes of Gypsy ethnicity in the previous chapter when I revisited Michael Kearney's suggestion that ethnicity should be the category of class-consciousness in the post-Cold War globalized world. I discussed the ways

[76] See for instance, "Емел Етем не дава пари за 'Ромфест 2008', бил 'кючек и чалга,'" Стара-Загора.Орг, August 7, 2008, accessed October 25, 2014, http://novini.stara-zagora.org/index.php?page=novini&novina=907.

Bulgarians (like Vesco Karchinski) mark the zone of *folk* intimacy with expressions of shame and affinity with *kiuchek*, the ethnic register of chalga (e.g. Peicheva 1999; Silverman 2012). This intimacy, which is presumably not intended to circulate beyond its confined space of digression, stands in opposition to another sort of cultural intimacy—peasantry—that signifies a developmental circulation (within the context of the nation-state) from the traditional village to the modern city. Evolution was the register which keyed peasant circulation to the socialist language ideology of modernization, which Kearney calls developmentism. The main point of my argument in the previous chapter was that, although democratic Bulgaria officially abandoned evolution in favor of another channel of circulation that takes place in transnational (and post-developmental) globalized world (above all the EU), peasantry is still the standpoint from which non-elite Bulgarians can seek recognition, social mobility and empowerment. While "integration" replaced "evolution" as the code of entextualizing (Briggs and Bauman 1992; Urban 1996) Bulgaria's social base in the discourse of global circulation, ethnicity marks the same zone of fractal recursivity it marked during the era of nation-state socialism. Iconized by the Gypsy shifter, ethnicity signifies to Bulgarians the Balkanist self-perception of living in a ghetto of tradition and backwardness in the margins of modern Europe.

Gypsy ethnicity stands at the center of this chapter, in which I analyze how Roma participants in *Romfest 2008* both embrace and reject derogatory images that stem from associations of Roma with the musical and dance form of *kiuchek.* Both reactions, I argue, are strategies of negotiating a language ideology trope that ties Romani ethnicity with otherness to two presumably opposing discourses of post-1989 democratic modernity: the Bulgarian ethnonation and European transnational multi-ethnicity. I will expand on the concept of ethnonation in the sections below. The risk

involved in this sort of negotiation is what makes utterances of Gypsy *kiuchek* highly powerful. On one hand, it highlights Romani identity and accelerate its circulation between three inter-relating discursive contexts: the ethnic Gypsy ghetto (*mahala*, a Turkish-Arabic derived word), national Bulgaria and transnational Europe. However, at the same time, nothing like Gypsy *kiuchek* can reinforce stereotypes of ethnic difference, which have the power to ruin the discursive authority of Roma who attempt to perform Romani identity within and between the three contexts (the Gypsy *mahala*, national Bulgaria and transnational Europe). The opening epigraph is a paradigmatic speech event that plays on this risk. Emel Etem dismissed the modern quality of *Romfest*'s circulation of Romani identity by portraying the festival's as nothing but opportunistic exploitation of public money for a *mahala* celebration.

My goal in this chapter is to analyze the fine line organizers and participants in *Romfest 2008* walked when communicating Romani identity through *kiuchek*. Above all, I show that this fine line consists of a language mechanism that highlights the (ethno)national channel above the intra-ethnic and transnational one. My informants in the festival equated modern circulation of Romani identity with the erasure of Gypsy recursivity. Meaning, they embraced stereotypes of Gypsy *kiuchek* as identity markers long as their performance was limited to bringing the ethnic ghetto to the artistic stage. The same organizers and participants denounced identification with Gypsy *kiuchek* offstage (i.e. in real life communication) when addressing the festival to the national audience, which ties circulation from the Gypsy ghetto to modern Bulgaria with assimilation in the Bulgarian nation (or more precisely, ethnonation). Interpreting the semantics and pragmatics of switches between embracing and denouncing Gypsy *kiuchek* I explain in this chapter why and how replacing peasantry with ethnicity as the democratic category of social base indexes to

Bulgarians widening the gap with transnational Europe (the current hegemonic geographical configuration of modernity, that is, Europe within the global world) rather than minimizing it.

Greg Urban (1993) defines two kinds of function in discourse: meaning-bearing (or signaling) and goal. Meaning-bearing has to do "with the stretch of a discourse for the communication in which it is part" (ibid: 241). For example, Urban writes, "verb forms can distinguish whether the sentence is to be understood as declarative or imperative" (ibid). Goal, on the other hand, is "the way in which speech, as a form of social action, is used to accomplish goals of the speaker," such as "to build a social alliance or to provoke or to obtain information" (ibid). Urban maintains that, unlike signaling, the goal function is not specified independently. We can infer it only through observation of the role of discourse in social life. Goal pertains to individual wants and needs and so it comes alongside a third cultural one, which "involves discourse in the service of collective social purpose" (ibid). He points to a potential tension between individual goals and cultural functions. The first function makes use of the ability of language to serve diverse wants and needs. However, this ability can come in conflict with the cultural function that depends on the regimentation and normativity of discourse. The ability of meanings to be communicated depends on formal coding of what discourse could be used in what social context.

Using this threefold functional definition of signaling, goal and culture to my analysis of *Romfest 2008* I ask how the festival organizers used *kiuchek* as the most effective form of communication between the assimilated Romani organizers and the audience (whom the organizers considered ghettoized Gypsies). However, to be able to homogenize (or, in other words, entextualize) the festival within the language

ideology of nation-state Bulgaria, the organizers operated on the goal and cultural levels of this seemingly non-modern cultural form. They attempted to erase its associations with ethnic recursivity without changing its signaling function by framing the stage performance with formal indices of assimilation (and so fitting the stage performance with the discourse of modern Bulgarian culture). They needed, though, to present this framing as a rational act of synthesis between ethnicity and assimilation in order to avoid the risk of losing assimilated face and being reproached as opportunistic Gypsies, who are ready to perform whatever face needed to earn money or any other benefit. The festival organizers took the risk and offered a path of circulation from the staged Gypsy ghetto to the Bulgarian nation (and, later, to transnational Europe) in order to claim discursive authority of brokering between the three discursive spaces (*mahala*, nation, Europe).

Three ethnographies of cultural performances of subaltern identities—Goodman (2005), Lemon (2000) and Seizer (2005)—prompt me to not study the performance of Roma identity in *Romfest 2008* in isolation from the larger contexts of the Bulgarian nation-state and transnational Europe. Also, drawing upon these studies I do not seek an "authentic" Romani voice underneath the hegemony of these two larger contexts. Instead I trace how people at the festival perform or perceive either Romani or Gypsy identities always in regard to the two presumably more modern contexts (the nation and the global world), in which "Gypsies" were invented as the shifters of modernity's ethnic recursivity and "Roma" were invented to index assimilation (i.e. recursivity erasure).

The performance of *kiuchek* and its associated stereotypes in *Romfest* mediates the Gypsy ghetto similarly to the ways Berber language, songs, narratives and museum display items mediate the Berber village in Goodman's (2005) study.

Kiuchek provides the imagined locus of "the Gypsy ghetto" with acceleration power to go on to what Goodman calls "world stage"—a discourse of communal self-presentation constituted through and for the sake of being recognized in multiple sociocultural contexts as well as in multiple webs of global circulation (such as the nation-state and World Music).

The performance of Russian Roma identity in theater and daily life in Lemon's (2000) study helps me to explore cultural texts and images as forms of mediation. I particularly pay attention to the strategies by which, to get recognition, Roma negotiate their designated iconicity of ethnic Balkan recursivity within discourses of national modernity (modern Russia, in the case of Lemon's study). My analysis of how Roma participants in *Romfest 2008* invoked stereotypes of Gypsy *kiuchek* aims to uncover the "more diffuse performance and performative moments in everyday interaction, to track how ideologies about performance reproduce social, and especially racial categories" (ibid: 27).

Seizer's study of Tamil Special drama artists (2005) allows me to add the element of risk to the performance of stereotypical Gypsiness. I examine how Roma negotiate the stigmatic consequences of digression from national and transnational modernies involved in centering the festival on *kiuchek*. Seizer writes, "the comedic scenes in Special Drama are the locus for so much stigma on actors, as well as the arena in which artists most masterfully negotiate the terms and discourses of that stigma itself. Comedy plays off common notions such as that actresses are prostitutes, for example, or that stage artists have neither culture nor morals. Such are the shared stereotypes and stigmatizing accusations that pervade life for Special Drama both onstage and off" (ibid: 21). The opening epigraph points to risk of losing state funding when celebrating Romani identity with the prime cultural form that that invokes such

deep stigmas of Balkan ethnicity. In the ethnographic discussion that follows I will show that, just as the Special Drama artists in Seizer's study, keying the festival to *kiuchek* provided these participants with the means both to resist as well as to collaborate with the discourse that stained them with markers of spoiled identity (Goffman 1963) and then sanctioned their access to the normative society (the Tamil middle class, in the case of Seizer's study, nation-state Bulgaria in the case of this chapter). The duty of the festival's organizers was to prevent the stigma from leaking (or, in other words, unwantedly circulate) from the performers to the audience. There were two channels of hazardous leakage (Goffman 2008), a minor one from the physical stage to the attendant, and a graver one from the liminal reality of festival to the everyday reality of Bulgarian national society.

I adopt Lemon's strategy of drawing thin analytical line between stage and everyday life as two realms of performativity. I use the identity marker of "Roma" (and its adjective "Romani") when speaking about members of this particular ethnic group who perform assimilation in national Bulgarian society. The identity marker of "Gypsy" (as well as "Gypsiness") denotes a digression from the national society to the stereotypes of the ethnic ghetto. My analysis traces moments in which people shift between the two language ideology contexts: the festival's stage vis-à-vis the Gypsy *mahala* and the festival as a stage vis-à-vis the Bulgarian nation and transnational Europe). I also explore how people either accentuate or underplay the switching of lines between being assimilated Roma and *mahala* Gypsies.

Reflecting on these two levels of onstage and offstage performativity I show how organizers, participants, and audience of *Romfest 2008* negotiated the links and divisions between ethnic Gypsies and assimilated Roma. For instance, people could perform Gypsiness and maintain a modern Romani face as long as their performance

was strictly confined to the stage (the concrete or imagined). Leakages from the stage to the audience could be tolerated as long as the festival attendants abandoned their role as audience and became part of the show. Then, the festival as a whole became a stage of performing stigmatic Gypsiness to an imagined audience, the Bulgarian nation and, at large, modern Europe. As I will show momentarily, the festival organizers held the responsibility to manage the division between the two realms of stage and everyday life. The first realm was the concrete physical stage and its audience; the second realm was more imagined ream of the festival as a stage and the larger Bulgarian society as its audience.

Gypsy kiuchek in national Bulgaria and transnational Europe

The local discursive field of Gypsy *kiuchek* in Bulgaria stems from the larger archetype of the Gypsy musician, as developed in Western literature, opera, theater plays, musical compositions, songs, and films. This archetype ascribes to Roma passionate musical soul for which natural rather than normative freedom is the source of power (e.g. Lemon 2000, Sliverman 2012, Trumpener 1992). Special to Bulgaria are local anxieties that *kiuchek* is such a powerful mediator of Romani identity that it violates national taboo of ethnic politics. During the transition era of the late 1980s and early 1990s, American ethnomusicologists (e.g. Buchanan [1996], Rice [1996, 2002], and Silverman [1996, 2012]) as well Bulgarian ones (Dimov [2001], Levy (2005, 2007), and Peicheva [1999, 2008]) identified in Gypsy music a power to resist the communist engineered folklore. These scholars argued that wedding bands—a precursor of post-socialist popfolk or chalga*,* which emerged as a semi-legal form probably in the late 1970s and was performed mostly by Roma musicians, above all Ivo Papazov-Ibriiama—were grassroots voices of excluded minorities and erased vernacular culture. Wedding music was not completely disconnected from the official

folklore canon. Many performers were fluent in the two genres and combined folklore motives in wedding music (Peicheva 1999, 2008). However, cross-generic combinations were only one directional. While wedding music was open to intertextual exchange, folklore remained closed, homogeneous, and purist. For these post-socialist ethnomusicologists, then, the exclusion of *kiuchek* from folklore reflected the totalitarian hegemony of Bulgarians over Roma. Dimov and Levy both attempt to embrace *kiuchek* in Bulgarian national culture by rejecting assimilation altogether. As I mentioned earlier, Dimov suggests calling popfolk or chalga "ethnopop" in the spirit of World Music's multidirectional dialogue, Levy suggests calling *kiuchek* "ethnojazz." In my mind, the emphasis on ethnicity in these two terms maybe suggests why they failed to catch on in the Bulgarian cultural discourse. These two scholars attempted to calibrate kiuchek to the language ideology of transnational European multi-ethnicity while skipping national Bulgaria's language ideology of assimilation altogether. In so doing, the generic coinages they propose stress rather than erase the equation of Bulgarian national identity with the hegemony of Bulgarian ethnicity.

Despite advocacies of Romani musical culture, the grave stigmas involved in Gypsy *kiuchek* indicate that the socialist rhetoric that equates Roma modernization with assimilation is still effective in democratic Bulgaria. Images of stereotypical Gypsies still remind Bulgarians that Gypsies' social reality still falls behind the rest of the modern world. Indeed, Silverman (1996, 2007, 2012) rightly argues that Roma musicians are not mere victims of their stereotypical derogations. On the contrary, they take part with them in order to address effectively their audiences. Turning stereotypes into World Music exotica is the major way by which Romani musicians can travel from the *mahala* to the world stage. Silverman writes that especially

musicians, whose work depends completely on the expectations of the audience, affirm or counter common perceptions about Roma; musicians exoticize themselves or emphasize integration, express pan-Roma unity or tribal hybridity according to their prescribed role in the performance. The performance of Romani identity depends on the context of the performance—the sort of Gypsiness that the audience has in mind beforehand. Not less importantly, Roma perform their identity according to the political economy of the performance; whether a performance is a state funded exhibition of ethnic traditional culture or whether a performance is a World Music commodity.

I would like to add one consideration to Silverman's analysis: how do Roma living in democratic Bulgaria operate within the spectrum of stigma and exotica when using music as a medium for communication within their ethnic community and with the Bulgarian nation-state? The requirement to perform one's own ethnic stereotypes is a defining characteristic of World Music's political economy (e.g Feld 2000). Musicians can market themselves effectively by participating in the industry of Gypsy exotica, authenticity as well as lowlife and misery. Yet, how can one transfer the cultural capital (of musical excellence) into political capital, such as national recognition, when Romani musical performance invokes such vehement ethnic anxieties followed by blames of opportunism? Or in other words, could ethnicity turn in Bulgaria from a strong negative index of ethnic Balkan recursivity into positive icons of national folklore or socio-cultural dialogue and pluralism (just as the generic labels ethnojazz and ethnopop suggest)?

Romfest 2008

My ethnographic attempt to address this question departs from *Romfest 2008* being well attended, well organized, and musically successful event, on one hand,

and, on the other hand, its ongoing almost invisibility outside the Romani community of Stara Zagora. Although the festival carried a national label, it was basically the private enterprise of Aleksandar Kracholov—a local Romani businessman and the director of *Lozenets*, a Roma-rights NGO from Stara Zagora, which advances Roma integration in Bulgarian society through cultural and educational activities. Kracholov[77] founded the festival in 1992 with state support thanks to Andrei Lukanov, Bulgaria's last communist prime minister (February-December 1990) and an important figure in the privatization of the socialist economy during early 1990s.[78] The financial start came from Kiril Rashkov, better known as *Tsar* [King] Kiro—a shadowy businessman and political figure from the elite Romani tribe of Kalderashi, who crowned himself as the king of all Bulgaria's Roma (Marushiakova and Popov 2000, Spirova 2004).[79] Additional financial support arrived occasionally from the Open Society Institute, the Municipality of Stara Zagora, as well as from the Bulgarian state. The festival's organizing group was made (in addition to Kracholov) of Romani-rights activists, Romani intellectuals, musical figures, and managers of Romani NGOs.

The festival opened with an ethnographic exhibition of objects and pictures of rural life, the common metacultural (Urban 2001)[80] perspective with which Bulgarians perform self-reflexively their circulation from traditional peasant ethnicity

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[77] This background information is based on personal conversations with different informants as well as Peicheva (2003) and Peicheva and Dimov (2005).

[78] Andrei Lukanov was allegedly a central player in the emergence of Bulgaria's post-socialist mafia economy. He was assassinated in 1996. The assassins were never found. However, the common claim is that Lukanov's death was connected with power struggles in the emerging Bulgarian Mafia (e.g. Crampton 2007)

[79] Tsar Kiro also founded in 1997 a short-lived Roma-rights party called "Freedom Bulgaria" (*Svoboda Bulgaria*), of which Kracholov and a few Roma participants in the festival were members. After the dissolution of the party**,** Kracholov and his colleagues found a political home in the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

[80] Goodman explains that metaculture is a discursive characterization of the speed of circulation: accelerative or inertia. "Metaculture—the way cultural item is talked about in regard to its past and its future—is what provokes one or the other kinds of motion" (2005: 17).

to a modern nation. In this case, the same manner of self-reflection revolved exclusively on ethnic Romani village communities. The exhibition was followed by a round-table sponsored by the Open Society Institute that dealt with issues of Romani integration. This is a common term in official communications, which explicitly indexes multi-ethnic pluralism. Integration does not entail recognition of the minority rights of Roma but stands as an antonym to the other form of ethnic exclusion, ghettoization. During socialism, integration denoted the official policy of national homogenization through assimilation. Currently integration casts responsibility on Roma themselves who are expected to find themselves ways to participating in national life. When I asked informants what integration practically meant, people usually proposed paths of assimilation in what they considered modern Bulgarian lifestyle: learning the Bulgarian language, receiving national education, quitting the *mahala* in favor of modern neighborhood, limiting families to one or two children etc.

Three nights of open-air musical shows followed immediately the round table discussion. The first two evening shows gave stage to bands from Romani neighborhoods and villages from all over Bulgaria, which performed different *kiuchek* soundscapes from Bulgaria, Turkey, Macedonia, Greece and Albania. Most of the bands were professional in the sense that their musicians play in gigs for living; a few youth ensembles were organized and funded by local Romani cultural centers. The professional bands were either paid to perform in *Romfest* or took the event as a venue of advertisement. Officially, though, the two first musical nights were organized as a competition in front of a jury of professional musicians and ethnomusicologists nominated by Mr. Kracholov.[81] The closing festive performance on the third night

[81] The jury included the ethnic Bulgarian ethnomusicologist Lozanka Peicheva, the Romani singer Nikolai Gŭrdev, the Romani composer, director, and cymbal player Andzhelo Malikov (now deceased), as well as the ethnic Bulgarian folklorist Krum Georgiev.

brought to the stage well-known Romani *kiuchek* musicians, who are the most demanded performers in Romani weddings, such as the singer Dzhamaikata and his companion trumpet player Gŭmzata,[82] the singer Dzhago, and the singer Ivan Ivanov. All these singers arrived with their own instrumental bands. The highlight of that show was the guest performance of the popfolk star Toni Storaro (the stage name of Tünçer Fikret Ali),[83] who sang over his *sinback* (recorded instrumental tracks). Toni Storaro is a member of the Turkish minority, however his repertoire is in Bulgarian (he speaks better Turkish than Bulgarian but rarely release songs in Turkish). His singing style is eclectic, combines Greek *laiako*, Turkish *arabesk*, Gypsy *kiuchek* and socialist Bulgarian *Estrada*.

Despite the success of the festival in creating an annual event of Romani music and dance, which itself enjoys wide popularity in the country, the festival remained a fairly marginal event in the cultural calendar of Bulgaria or even of its hometown, Stara Zagora. Around 3,000 people attended the evening concerts, but this audience largely consisted of the residents of "Lozenets," Stara Zagora's biggest Romani *mahala*. Audience outside this social circle (except, maybe, Roma from nearby villages) was rather rare. The concerts took place in an open-air amphitheater

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[82] Gŭmzata is the only musician on the list who is ethnic Bulgarian and has formal western music education. He is also a prominent member in Slavi Trifonov's *Ku-Ku Band*. He acquired his close affinity with Romani *kiuchek* from his Romani trumpet teacher, Sasho Roman, who himself is one of the pioneering chalga star-singers. Currently Sasho Roman works as a community activist for Romani youth. He performed in *Romfest* on numerous occasions and attended the 2008 festival with a children dance ensemble from Sofia. Sasho Roman had also a short-lived political career in the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

[83] For sample clips of these performers see:
Dzhamaikata, "djamaikata 20 evro !.avi." accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIXGfRmLrpA.
Gumzata, "Гъмзата и Emotion Wedding Agency – Хасково," accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0f7OXNM6Rnc.
Dzhago, "djago 2010 vbox7,"accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7weq_-D0zQ.
Ivan Ivanov, "ork. Kozari – Pazari," accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGtxO2R59v0.
Toni Storaro, "Toni Storaro - Unikat (Unique) 16:9 Super Quality," accessed October 25, 2014,http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Cp5V8A0P1o.

located on a hill outside the city center. It was a fairly isolated point where people do not pass by. The national media as well as the local media of Stara Zagora also provided minimal coverage. I did not notice any street advertisement for the event.

The fact that the festival remained dependent on state funding and did not develop commercial independence prompt me to start looking at how Kracholov and his assisting partners coped with two opposing discourses of ethnicity in Bulgaria: transnational multi-ethnicity and national assimilation. The first is the official framework of minority rights in EU-member Bulgaria; the second was the official ideology of nation building during socialism. Hence, Kracholov and his partners promoted the festival as a cultural venue of multi-ethnicity and, at the same time, reiterated anti-Gypsy stereotypes (similar to the one implied by Emel Etem) that keyed the festival to assimilation. Successful switching between the two discourses helped them claim two sorts of discursive authority: modern Roma in the multi-ethnic EU and assimilated Roma in Bulgaria. My goal in the following sections is to analyze the self-perception of subalternity that underlies the code switching between the two discourses. In order to access European multi-ethnicity as modern Roma rather than recursive Gypsies, Kracholov and his partners had to show first that they were well assimilated Bulgarians.

How do modern Roma look and sound?

I expected *Romfest 2008* to provide me with an opportunity to observe first-hand Roma negotiating *mahala* Gypsiness and Romani assimilation in a context in which their ethnic identity was at the center of a festive event. A mutual friend introduced me to Aleksandar Kracholov to whom I explained my research project. Kracholov invited me to be his personal guest, which included full ethnographic access to the festival on- and off-stage. In return I offered to Kracholov to act on

voluntary basis as the festival's official stills photographer. I hoped also that my photography work would lead to a longstanding cooperation with Kracholov. I offered to develop a website for *Romfest* which would expose the festival to bigger publics in Bulgaria and beyond.

We did not discuss what each of us envisioned as the target audience of my pictures. Only later I realized that he sought a way to reach national Bulgaria, while I was thinking about the global audience of World Music. The difference between us was crucial. Circulating to the national public required minimizing associations of Romani ethnicity with digression from modernity in order to key the festival to assimilation. Circulating to the World Music market, on the other hand, required heightening digression as a marker of exotica. My model idea was the website of Guča Trumpet Festival (http://www.guca.rs/), a Romani brass music festival in Serbia, which has grown into an international World Music cultural event and a highly successful tourist business (Hofman 2014). Kracholov seemed interested in principle in my idea. He agreed with me that attracting foreign tourists could help the festival break its marginality in Bulgaria and build financial independence. However, he was not ready to invest either money or any effort in developing the festival's website. Our work together began by looking for funding for the website but never developed further. Talking about this experience with ethnic Bulgarian friends of Kracholov I understood that he was hesitant to take this initiative because it meant embracing digressive stereotypes of Gypsy *kiuchek* and so risking the appearance of assimilation. To attract the Western audience he had to perform either of the Gypsy stigmas: a crazy Balkan barbarian or an opportunistic crook dressed as businessman.

My license of unlimited access and the fact that nobody actually told me what kind of pictures I was supposed to produce, confronted me with a basic ethnographic question: how should assimilated Roma look like? Above all, I wanted to avoid falling in the common trap of reiterating visual stereotypes of Gypsies. I did not want to repeat the same attitude of other photographers who took pictures of the festival: directing people in the audience to perform frantic behavior in front of the camera. I was especially sensitive to this issue, because I knew that Kracholov and his colleagues really wanted to represent Romani culture as modern Bulgarians. But how was such representation supposed to look? Nobody provided me with any codes of "ethical listening" (Hirschkind 2006)—moral physiology experienced and performed in regard to ideologies of active hearing (sermons in the case of Hirschkind's study, kiuchek music in the case of *Romfest*).

To be honest, trying not to fall in the trap of capturing Gypsies celebrating *kiuchek* was quite a difficult task. The visual expertise of professional photographer already positioned me as more modern than the festival attendants. Similarly to the conflict of secular vs. religious senses of communication that Hirschkind (ibid) defines in Egypt, people in Bulgaria hold visuality as more rational sense of communication than aurality. Just as in other European languages, roots that denote visuality (*vizhdam, nabliudavam, gledam* etc.) are respectively tied in the Bulgarian language with modern morality, that is, autonomous rational conduct. Roots that denote aurality (*slusham*, *chuvam* etc.), on the other hand, are associated with traditional morality based on subordination to authority. However, just as in the cases of Egyptian sermons (Hirschkind, ibid), Congolese Rumba (White 2008) and Moroccan Gnawa (Kapchan 2007), Bulgarians distinguish between two forms of subordination. The first is high listening, an "ethical" one; Sufi *sama'* dance or

Bulgarian *horo*, for instance, are forms with which the audience performs spiritual obedience to moral values. The second is a low reciprocation of subordination to carnal desires. Congolese *atalaku* and Gypsy *kiuchek* are among the forms with which power holders (such as Mobutu in Zaire) can seemingly mobilize the masses by manipulating their senses.

My own point of view (if to use this visual metaphor) was foregrounded by audio-visual depictions of Gypsies in films like Tony Gatlif's "Crazy Stranger" (1997) or Emir Kusturica's "Time of the Gypsies" (1988). I pretty quickly felt myself falling to the same inequality structure in those films of Gypsies performing Balkan ethnicity to modern Western voyeurs (Iordanova 2001). Also, my own intention of exposing the festival to the World Music market influenced my eye to capture images of Gypsy exotica. When people saw my camera they immediately gathered around me and begged to be photographed. Without being asked, people posed to me in the way Gypsies are usually depicted in pictures: wild, frantic, erotic. To check my bias, I took a decision to refuse picture requests of people whom I did not know. Faithful to my goal of building the festival's website, I mainly took care of covering the concert performance on stage envisioning web browsers as the addressees, not the physical attendants. I tried to guess the way Kracholov imagined the ideal addressees of the festival's web site.

I walked all over the theater and took as many pictures from as many angles as I could in order to provide Kracholov with rich visual data for selection. When I examined my photographic output, though, I saw that, even though I did not orchestrate close-ups of frantic or erotic Gypsies, I had many such images. I captured many moments in which people did not observe what I realized was the cultural framing of the festival: a musical concert. My eye was attracted especially to people

who crossed the borders between the stage and the audience, the performers and the public, as well as between festive and casual self-presentation. Exploring the ways in which attendants of the festival, including myself, imagined and performed ethnic Gypsies and assimilated Roma, and particularly how we crossed the border between the two categories was the starting point to analyzing the considerations that prompted the organizers of *Romfest* to embrace Gypsy *kiuchek* as the form of stage performance but denounced it as a form of Roma representation. Above all, Iordan,[84] a Roma-rights activist, elaborated to me the codes of "ethical listening," or, in other words, how the festival attendants had to relate to the stage in order to perform being "modern audience." Without intending, Iordan was one of my main guides to the fact that being a modern Roma meant knowing the pragmatics of when to perform digressive (or recursive) ethnicity and when to perform assimilation, or, more specifically, when to reenact stereotypes of Gypsy *kiuchek* and when to denounce them altogether.

Iordan (part 1)

One late morning during the festival, when I sat at the café of the hotel in which the festival guests resided and downloaded photos to my computer, a middleaged man approached me and asked whether he could browse the pictures as well. That was my first interaction with Iordan. He was not just curious to see what I shot. He wanted to check if I had pictures that could be useful for him. He asked me if he could upload a few pictures on the website of the Romani NGO he managed in his hometown. He did not specify what pictures interested him; he was ready to take whatever I could give him. I showed Iordan the pictures that I liked the most, those in which people were celebrating by taking the performance as a dance party (fig. 1, 2).

[84] Informants that appear in the chapter with a first name are pseudonyms. Those who appear with first and family names are real.

Iordan was completely unimpressed by these pictures. He did not say anything but his face posture disclosed that he really did not like them. What attracted his attention were pictures in which the audience was relating to the performance onstage as a concert. That is, people were sitting and observing the music performed on stage. I later learned that he wished the show to look like a concert at Hall no. 1 of the "National Palace of Culture"—the monumental performance complex built in Sofia in the late socialist era, which Bulgarians hold as the quintessential locus of modern culture (see chapter 1).

Iordan was especially satisfied when he found pictures in which people sat with crossed legs and hands (fig. 3). I did not have a particular idea in mind when I shot these pictures. Most probably I took them just to keep my finger active on the camera's button. Iordan, on the other hand, said these pictures proved that Roma could actually observe the norms of a "concert." He saw in them people experiencing music in a "civilized" manner, not in typical "Gypsy manner" of shaking their tights and breasts in "cheap" *kiuchek* moves.

Fig. 1—The singer Ivan Ivanov in Romfest 2008, picture: Eran Livni

Fig. 2—Audience in *Romfest 2008*, picture: Eran Livni

Fig. 3—Audience in *Romfest 2008*, picture: Eran Livni

My long follow-up conversations with Iordan revealed that he was not in principle against *kiuchek*. Iordan himself came to the festival with a music ensemble that he formed in his cultural center. He was also strongly dedicated to advancing Roma-rights in Bulgaria through cultural activity; and he did not ignore the special power of music to represent Roma. He did not deny that *kiuchek* was dance music for celebration not for deliberation. Iordan also knew that *kiuchek* was far away from being simple music. Not so many people could perform well its asymmetric rhythms, changing pace, improvisation phrases, and bittersweet emotional expression. So why, despite the strong link of the music in the festival with dance, did Iordan want to show audience that was sitting and observing the music rather than celebrating it with dance? To begin interpreting Iordan's and my conflicting photographic perspectives I need first to open a wider lens to the role of Roma in Bulgaria's dialectics of modern nation and recursive ethnicity.

Translating liberal multi-ethnicity to Eastern European ethno-nationalism

One may wonder why Roma should deal with this dialectics after post-1989 Bulgaria has rejected assimilation and embraced the Western agenda of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity. Bulgarian politicians and the media relate to this shift with the term "the Bulgarian ethnic model," which denotes that multi-ethnicity is natural to Bulgaria. Unlike other former socialist societies (above all those composing former Yugoslavia), Bulgarians pride themselves with a longstanding tradition of ethnic tolerance and co-existence. The ideological shift to multi-ethnicity is indeed apparent in the history of the festival, which began shortly "after democracy came" and, as I wrote earlier, was sponsored throughout its more than decade of existence by the City of Stara Zagora, the Bulgarian government and the Open Society Foundation. *Romfest*'s reputation was enhanced when the country participated in the trans-European initiative called "the Decade of Roma Integration 2005-2015." However, Kracholov's dependency on political patronage to receive state funding was probably the reason that brought to the end of the festival in 2010—a year after the Bulgarian Socialist Party lost the national election (the party was a coalition member from 2001-2005 and the ruling party from 2005-2009). I was told that competing Roma activists in Stara Zagora, who were connected with Boiko Borisov the paternalist leader of the new ruling party—"Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria"—used the opportunity to suspend Kracholov's financial resources and direct public funding for the party's own interests and projects. The end of *Romfest* passed unnoticed in the Bulgarian public.

Emel Etem's short comment hints that, while official Bulgaria has abandoned assimilation, this ideology is still prevalent as a language mechanism of ethnic homogenization that limits the ability of Roma to translate cultural pluralism into

political representation. At the basis of this mechanism, I argue, stands synonymy between the name of the nation "Bulgaria" and the name of the hegemonic ethnic group "Bulgarians." The discourse of national modernity that stems from this synonymy supports two intertwined mechanisms of homogenization which are implicit in the apparent liberal agenda of Bulgaria as well as other post-1989 Eastern European democracies. Robert M. Hayden (1992) names the first mechanism "constitutional nationalism;" Katherine Verdery (1998) calls the other one "ethnocracy." Let me present in brief these two mechanisms, which, in my mind, underlie the way both ethnic Bulgarians and Roma have been equating integration with assimilation, both during socialism and afterwards. Following this presentation I will discuss the two meanings of ethnic recursivity coded in Gypsy *kiuchek* and how assimilation operates as the cultural function erasing this recursivity and homogenizing Roma within Bulgarian (ethno)nation.

Constitutional nationalism

Hayden analyzes with this concept a systematic conflict within the constitutional and legal structures of post-Yugoslavian nation-states between seeming recognition of ethnic minority rights but actual privileges for "the members of one ethnically defined nation over other residents in a particular state" (1992: 655). What is significant in this concept is Hayden's argument that genocide, ethnic cleansing, minority discrimination ("negative action") and nationalistic chauvinism—the infamous manner of implementing ethnic privileges—are not unique to Yugoslavia, but common practices of nation-building in Central and Eastern Europe. In other words, "nation building" in this part of Europe is a language euphemism of ethnic homogenization. Hayden locates the reasons for *constitutional nationalism* not in historical interethnic hostilities but in a contradiction inherent to the modern category

of "sovereign nation-state." This category emerged in Western Europe to denote territorial sovereignty—the French definition of *jus soli* (Brubaker 1992), "a state sovereign over all within its boundaries" (Hayden 1992: 670)—replacing pre-modern forms of sovereignty that "are based on the duties and obligation of loyalty of members of social, religious or ethnic groups to the group and its leaders, regardless of where they are found" (ibid). Hayden recognizes that the modern form of territorial sovereignty still maintains some links with previous social, ethnic and religious loyalties. However, "[w]hile some elements of these distinctions remain in the recognition of different rights and obligations for citizens and resident non-citizens within the territory of a state, citizenship in the modern conception is a leveling category: all citizens are or should be equal" (ibid).

In Hayden's view, this leveling category is characteristic to Western European liberal thought in which the sovereignty of the nation comes from its being the body that unifies and represents the interests of its individual citizens. Central and Eastern European political thought, on the other hand, was formed by the alternative German concept of modern national sovereignty—*jus sanguinis* (blood right, [Brubaker 1992])—which defines the priority of the nation over its citizens. Sovereignty is the natural right of the nation based on its being a collective individual—Das Volk (*Narod* in Slavic languages). The citizen is the product of the nation. Personal individuality needs to stand in accordance with the defined characteristics of the national collective: a single language, a single culture, a single heritage and a single interest. Constitutional nationalism structures politics as the arena for realizing these characteristics. Hayden argues that, in practice, national politics is the mechanism that homogenizes the multiple ethnicities of Central and Eastern European nations in one

ethno-nation that is above the rest, discriminating, marginalizing and even excluding them.

Ethnocracy

Verdery (1998) argues that citizenship and property are two major categories through which transnational trends of privatizing "the people"—the social category of national belonging—get localized in post-1989 Eastern European democracies. She points to a couple of channels that redefine "the people." Each channel refers to an opposite historical-political paradigm but both build on the same tendency in the region of basing national identity on one exclusive ethnicity. The first channel conveys attempts to repudiate communism by restoring pre-communist manners of discrimination between citizens and non-citizens "that coincided with ethnonational differences" (ibid: 297). The second channel reinforces communist organization of social collectivities around ethnically based reified national consciousness. "This consciousness, coupled with general privileging of 'collective' ideas, made national difference a ready vessel for new political struggles" (ibid).

Unlike Hayden, Verdery sees these two channels of ethnonational exclusion as regionally specific mechanisms of democratic homogenization. She argues that in the US, for instance, exclusion works in a different way. The concept of "the people" carries a long legacy of excluding persons from the "wrong" sex and race. In post-1989 Eastern European democracies, Verdery writes, "'…'people' connotes the sovereignty of an ethnic collectivity rather than the joint sovereignty of individual 'social contractors.' The sovereign thus becomes the ethnic collectivity; democracy becomes ethnocracy" (ibid). This mechanism of homogenization entails that individual citizens are the property of the nation and not vice versa. The reason is that the nation functions as a collective individual; and so property does not define

personal space but the spatial extension of persons tied with the nation through (ethnic) blood.

Let me show now how constitutional nationalism and ethnocracy have prompted Bulgarians to designate Roma as ethnic shifters of Balkan recursivity. Two intertwined anxieties underlie this designation: 1) The state of Roma in Bulgaria is analogous to the state of Bulgaria in Europe; and 2) Roma are catalysts of "gypsification"—that is, return to the pre-national, multi-ethnic landscape of the Ottoman Balkans. These two anxieties give license to official and non-official acts of Romani exclusion, such as work discrimination, police harassment, and street harassments organized by ethnic Bulgarian hooligans. The two anxieties also key the connotation of *kiuchek* with notions of immorality and danger. These negative values come up in the commentary of Veselin Karchinski to Gencho Gaitandzheiv's textbook, which I discussed in chapter 3. Vesko did not see any moral problem with including in the textbooks sexually provocative popfolk singers like Kamelia, since she was ethnically Bulgarian. On the other hand, he could not tolerate the Romani popfolk singer Sofi Marinova, even in an innocent form of a lullaby song. As he said, at the bottom line, even the most integrated Gypsy still carries the contaminating power of the *mangali* (the racist synonym of Roma and Gypsy).

First anxiety: the Balkans to Europe as Gypsies to us

The film scholar Dina Iordanova (2001) argues that Roma in the Balkans, much like the Balkans in Europe, play the role of internal others, i.e. they provide a picture of traditional European lifestyle before modernity. Bulgarian as well as Roma interlocutors uttered a proverbial analogy "the Balkans to Europe as Gypsies to us" with neither ambivalence nor irony, neither self-celebration nor self-affirmation. People unequivocally distanced themselves from the stereotypical images associated

with the "Gypsy Others." I witnessed such dynamics when, for instance, I followed the popfolk star Bobi to a transnational Balkan music festival. Bobi was very condescending toward the Romanian band that performed before him because, in his view, they were no real Romanians, but Gypsies.[85] Yet he did not deny that most of the players in his band also were Roma. He expressed dissatisfaction with this fact explaining that he had no choice. In his words, Gypsy musicians were completely unreliable but very few Bulgarian musicians could play so well. In any case, to avoid confusion, Bobi performed with these Roma instrumentalists onstage but kept a distance from them offstage. He also made the effort to deny the widespread rumors in Bulgaria that he himself had Gypsy origins. In another case I followed Bobi to a gig in a Bulgarian village. Before the show a family of dark-skin Roma (the racial allusion of the Gpysy shifter to blackness, more in detail in a moment) approached him and asked to take a group picture. I took the opportunity to photograph the picture scene. While cooperating with the Roma family, Bobi looked at me and said with a big smile: "take our picture, these are my friends, they are Italians."[86] On the way out from the village he expressed his frustration with the low technical facilities of the show. He said to me, "look at these people, there are no Bulgarians there, they are all Gypsies."

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[85] Romanians and Bulgarians tend to disqualify the European quality of each other by pointing to the prevalence of Roma in these two countries. Romanian society is bigger and so it has more Roma in absolute numbers (over 500,000 vs. less than 400,000 in Bulgaria). On the other hand Roma are greater in Bulgaria in relative numbers (around 5% vs. 2.5% in Romania). For data on Bulgaria, see the 2001 population census held by the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute ("CENSUS 2001 - FINAL RESULTS," The Republic of Bulgaria, National Statistics Institute, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.nsi.bg/Census_e/Census_e.htm). For data on Romania, see the 2002 population census held by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics ("Romania Demographics Profile 2013," Index Mundi, last modified August 24, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.indexmundi.com/romania/demographics_profile.html).

[86] This comment alludes ironically to the discourse of blackness in Italian self-imagination; that is, the clash between the "white" "civilized" "European" North vs. the "black" "barbarian" "African" South. On one occasion I heard a joke from an Italian friend whose family roots were in the south but who currently lived in the north. He told me that Garibaldi did a very bad thing; he divided Africa.

I heard also on different occasions that popfolk stars are proud when they perform to Bulgarian audiences abroad except when such performances take place in front of Romani immigrants. In my view, the difference comes from the fact that after Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007 many Bulgarians no longer live in Europe as poor guest workers as they used to have in the early years after the 1989 fall of socialism. Immigrating to Europe is now associated with EU citizenship, that is, mobility and opportunity to be part of richer Western Europe (although Bulgarians are still second class EU citizens, since Bulgaria [together with Romania which joined the EU in 2007 as well] is still not part of the Schengen agreement[87]). Roma are still taken at best as poor refugees and at worst as a grave social problem.[88]

Second anxiety: Gypsification

This anxiety appears in Vesko's reaction as well as in the protest of parents in Stara Zagora against Gencho Gaitandzhiev's textbook for kindergarten, which included a lullaby in Romani and Bulgarian sang by the Romani popfolk singer Sofi Marinova. This appearance of a song in Romani language allegedly countered the national goal that Roma should quit their ethnic ghettos by assimilating in the Bulgarian majority, and so the parents were cited restating expectations of ethnic Bulgarian hegemony while asking rhetorically, "are Gypsy children expected to integrate in the Bulgarian society or the opposite?" The anxiety of gypsification

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[87] For the EU's official Schengen web page, see "Schengen, Borders & Visas," European Commission, last modified January 15, accessed October 25, 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/policies/borders/borders_schengen_en.htm. Bulgaria and Romania were scheduled to access the Schengen area in 2011, however this deadline is currently postponed indefinitely, see "France: Bulgaria, Romania Schengen Entry May Take Years," novinite.com, February 6, 2011, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=124970.

[88] The incident in 2010, in which the French President, Nicola Sarkozy, ordered the expulsion of Bulgarian and Romanian Roma immigrants back to their home countries indicates this difference, see, see for instance, "Sarkozy Toughens on Illegal Roma," nytimes.com, July 29, 2010, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/30/world/europe/30france.html.

affirms also Lemon's (1995, 2000, 2002a, 2002b) argument that Gypsies and Gypsiness function as shifters of race, class, and domestication in European national imaginations. Meaning, being Gypsy does not imply necessarily having Gypsy blood, but rather maintaining "Gypsy lifestyle" whose actual articulation varies from one society to another. Bulgarians tend to speak about the "dangers" of "gypsification" in terms of "Gypsy mentality" and "Gypsy psychology." These terms denote people living "like animals," with no original culture, no social consciousness, and no norms of public deliberation. According to this meaning, Gypsies contaminate nation-state Bulgaria by maintaining ethnic Balkan social lifestyle, from which ethnic Bulgarians have evolved (or which, at least, they have accustomed to deny in speech).

The root *tsigan* is a basis of some of the harshest words in colloquial Bulgarian, most commonly *tsiganiia* (transgressive mess), *tsiganska rabota* (bad job or Gypsy affairs), *tsiganizatsia* (degradation), and *tsiganori* (a Gypsy-style gang). When people want to be really crude, they replace "*tsigan*" with the highly racist root "*mangal*" (as I showed the previous chapter).[89] It is the most blatant shifter of blackness as it refers to Gypsies' stereotype of having dark skin—the "natural" (i.e. racial) evidence that they are not organic part of the Bulgarian people (*narod*) but oriental others, i.e. they are not white but black. Metaphorically the marker *mangal* dehumanizes Roma who are black because they are like meat grill (in colloquial Bulgarian in some parts of the country as well as in Turkish *mangal* is also the word for barbeque grill). Among the popular inclinations of this root are *mangasar* and *mango* (even lower synonyms of *mangal*), *mangalska rabota* (see, *tsiganska rabota*),

[89] The analogy between Gyspiness and blackness works well also in this semantic level. Roma is the politically correct equivalent of the identity marker of African-American. *Tsigan* maintains a vague meaning of value, similarly to Black. *Mangal* is equivalent to Nigger, though it is still less tabooed in public than the N word in the US.

mangali (see, *tsiganori*), *mangalsko* (see, *tsiganiia*), and *bai Mangal* (Brother Gypsy, the non self-ironic equivalent of Bai Ganio).

Both *tsigan* and *mangal* invoke the stereotype of Gypsies as marginal people living in a poor *mahala*, eating low quality *kebapche* (minced meat balls), drinking cheap homemade *rakiia*, and dancing to *kiuchek* tunes. Instead of cars they drive carriages pulled by beaten down horses and live either from street cleaning, illegal fruit and vegetable vending, selling of items collected from garbage cans, or, in the worst case, from smalltime stealing, cheating, prostitution, etc. Bulgarians claim that Gypsies are anti-social because in addition to not paying taxes and bills, they do not send their children to school, and do not maintain basic private or public hygiene. Their life expectancy is low, women get married extremely young and give birth often. Children continue the line of misery by growing up neglected.[90] Politically, Bulgarians express fears of gypsification when criticizing the social reality of post-socialist democracy and capitalism. Invoking stereotypical images of Gypsies, people complain that EU-style multi-ethnicity would widen rather than minimize Bulgaria's gap with Europe.

The image of Roma women surrounded with many children is a common signifier of gypsification anxieties, which keys ethnonational identity to demographic fear. The growth rate among ethnic Bulgarians has been continuously negative (-0.781% is the total national estimation for 2011).[91] Ordinary Bulgarian families

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[90] Bulgarians have become increasingly cautious about using the politically correct marker of Roma in public. However, utterances in which people mock, derogate, and stigmatize people from this ethnic group are still fairly common. See, for instance, a stills collection "Picture collection of Mr. Gypsy" that circulates in the Bulgarian public domain: "Колекция От Снимки На Бай," vbox7.com, accessed October 25, 2014, http://ww.vbox7.com/play:4eee016e. The musical track of the clip is the hit "Bai Mangal" of "the Mangasarian Brothers." This is a comic-musical trio of actors, who comment on Bulgarian social life through images of three stereotypical Gypsies called Ziumbiul, Kuliu, and Srebroto.

[91] "Bulgaria Population growth rate," Index Mundi, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.indexmundi.com/bulgaria/population_growth_rate.html. The population growth rate among

consist of one to two children only. Coupled with the emigration of over a million Bulgarians since 1989 and an aging population, the negative birth rate is gradually changing the ratio between the three main ethnic groups. Meanwhile, the birth rate of Roma and Turks rises. In tirades of frustration about the democratic changes, informants often concluded that in a few decades there would remain no Bulgarians in Bulgaria; the country would turn into a big Gypsy *mahala*.[92]

Gypsification links Roma with social practices of opportunism: bribery, corruption, and stealing (as implied in Emel Etem's opening epigraph). These practices are allegedly not limited to Gypsies; people in Bulgaria perceive them as regular modes of action in local social life. However, people in Bulgaria refer them to Gypsies when criticizing the European ideology of multi-ethnicity, which presumably supports elements that undermine modern European values. Bulgarians from different ethnic groups, including Roma, accuse Gypsies of expecting the state's welfare system to support their big families. According to such claims, Gypsies can live peacefully as social parasites because politicians protect them from being disconnected from services in order not to lose the Gypsy electorate. A common knowledge in Bulgaria is that the voting turnout in Romani neighborhoods is notoriously high, because all the political parties allocate money in their budgets to buying Gypsy votes. The responsibility for this practice falls both on Roma and Bulgarian politicians. Gypsies are blamed for being ready to be bought for *zhŭlti*

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ethnic Bulgarians is probably much lower and is balanced by the positive growth rate of Roma and Turks.

[92] Bulgarian demographers forecast that in 2050 ethnic Bulgarians will become a minority in Bulgaria. The majority will be Roma and the second group Turks (see, "Scientists Raise Alarm over Apocalyptic Scenario for Bulgarian Ethnicity," novinite.com, November 22, 2010, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=122441). Coincidentally or not, the target year of 2050 appears also in US demographic studies that forecasts the same fate to non-Hispanic white Americans (see "Whites to become minority in U.S. by 2050," rueters.com, February 12, 2008, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/02/12/us-usa-population-immigration-idUSN1110177520080212**).**

stotinki (i.e. "pennies") without taking any responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Politicians are blamed for cultivating Gypsy short-term opportunism for their own capital.

The following picture is a stereotypical illustration of the two meanings—"the Balkans to Europe as Gypsies to us" and "gypsification:"

This Picture circulated widely over the Bulgarian media toward the end of my research alongside negative reports about Roma.[93] It depicts stereotypical young Gypsies (such as dark complexion, wide-open mouth laughter, *mahala* landscape of rundown one story houses), posing to the camera (to the wrong direction, though) with beer and *kebapche*s while wearing T-shirts of the Center-Right party "the Blue Coalition." The script on the T-shirts is ironic and central to the two anxieties of Balkan ethnicity Gypsies signify. It carries the party's slogan for the 2009 parliamentary election: "Bulgaria, This Is You," which alludes to the widespread fear that under the cover of caring about national (i.e. ethnic Bulgarians) interests, all local parties buy Romani votes with food, music, and petty cash. This practice is so

[93] This digital copy is taken from, Блогаът на Атанасов, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.ayanev.com/bulgaria-towa-si-ti-558/.

widespread that it includes even parties, such as "the Blue Coalition" that champions civil society according to Western European standards. One can link this fear to Vesco's objection to the inclusion of Sofi Marinova in Gaitandzhiev's textbook (chapter 2). His personal experience has taught him that all Bulgarians are prone to degrading into Gypsies—the shifters of Balkan ethnic recursivity.

Assimilation—language mechanism of erasure

Veselin Karchinksi (chapter 3) was my first guide to the language ideology of assimilation when employing Gypsies and *kiuchek* as shifters of ethnic recursivity. Referring to all Roma—integrated *tsigani* and non-integrated *mangali* alike—as referential indexes (Silverstein 1976) of ethnic backwardness (in distinction from authentic peasantry), he negotiated integration in the city by associating formal urban speech with nationhood while tying (Gypsy-type) ethnicity with the liminal realm of *folk* intimacy above all Gypsy *kiuchek*. Throughout my fieldwork I encountered many other cases, in which Roma and non-Roma reflected on their social life by associating ethnic Gypsiness with *kiuchek*. My observations of such associations confirm what Lemon (1995) argues regarding Russian Roma and Levy claims (2005) regarding Bulgarian Roma. That is, the "Gypsy" shifter is an ethnic modification of a larger shifter in Western self-imagination: blackness, as an icon of racial recursivity to Western imagination of whiteness.

Neuberger (2004) argues that, since the 19th century and throughout all the different political phases, both officially and unofficially, Bulgarian nation builders identified ethnic heterogeneity as a major social problem inherited from the Ottoman past, which they had to resolve in order to modernize, i.e. to become a European nation-state. The socialist regime was the first to propose as a policy of resolving this problem by assimilating ethnic minorities in the Bulgarian majority. This policy

replaced pre-socialist mechanisms of national homogenization, which mostly worked to marginalize ethnic minorities by linking civil and political rights with special minority regulations that ostensibly protected religious and linguistic liberties. Emigration was the other mechanism of creating a "pure" nation.[94] On the language level, the objective of ethnic homogenization prompted the formation of standard national Bulgarian language by replacing words from languages spoken in the Ottoman Empire (mainly Turkish and Greek) with Slavic equivalents. The canonized standard Bulgarian is based on the dialect of Gabrovo (central Bulgaria) (Crampton 2005) and aggregates a few pre-national dialects spoken by Bulgarian intellectuals with emphasis on the literati milieu of Veliko Turnovo, the historical medieval capital that symbolizes the era of national purity (Videnov 1999).

The socialist regime operated the language mechanism of ethnic assimilation particularly regarding Muslim ethnicities (above all Turks and Roma). Most famous are the campaigns of compulsory name change (*vŭzroditelen protses*, literally the "process of revival"), during which Muslim citizens were required under the point of the gun to drop Turco-Arabic names and adopt Slavic Bulgarian ones (Neuberger 2004). The Muslim minority of Pomaks represents an opposite language mechanism of de-assimilation. Due to the fact that they are Bulgarian language speakers, the regime listed "rescuing" these presumably ethnic Bulgarians from their former forced assimilation in Ottoman Islam among its modernization duties.

Roma informants who lived during socialism related to me memories of how the authorities supported the language ideology of assimilation with social policies.

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[94] For aspects about the emergence of national majority-minority relations in Bulgaria, see, for instance, Dragostinova (2011), Genov (1928-1929), Ivanova (2002), Nazŭrska (1999), Stoyanov (1998).

For instance, the state dismantled Romani neighborhoods and camps, relocated Roma in apartment buildings together with Bulgarians, enforced national Bulgarian education on Romani children, and sent Roma to work in state factories and farms. Transformation of their social life was supposed to help Roma to forget their ethnic language and speak only Bulgarian. People remembered these moments with contradictory feelings. On many occasions, Roma and non-Roma informants talked with great fondness about the opportunities the regime opened for Roma to modernize, i.e. to become Bulgarians. Non-Roma perceived it as the most rational and most effective way to bring this minority to the modern era. Roma used to add that forced assimilation opened for them a channel of changing the "Gypsy fate" of marginality and poverty.

Roma could presumably become Bulgarians from Romani origins since Bulgarian nationhood (*narodnost*) was officially formulated in terms of class rather than of ethnos (although the categories of language and religion were implicated in the concept of modern Bulgarian nationhood). This channel of assimilation was supported with valuable resources traditionally out of Roma reach: formal education, modern housing, and organized employment. Of course, people admitted that the social reality of socialist Bulgaria was much more complex. Many Roma lived in ghettos and suffered racism also under socialism. On the cultural level, Romani traditions were never included in the canon of Bulgarian national folklore. Especially Romani music was classified as *chalgiia*, which indexes the ethnically heterogeneous soundscape of the pre-national Ottoman society (e.g. Buchanan 2006).

Informants explained the failure of the assimilation policy to integrate Roma completely partly due to the overall failure of the regime to materialize socialism, and partly due to the "natural" backwardness of Gypsies who failed to integrate even

when it was forced on them. I learned that the fond memory of forced assimilation is what has prompted Roma to be an electoral powerbase of the Bulgarian Socialist (former Communist) Party.

Intellectuals were those who took the role of implementing the language mechanism of assimilation in national public discourse. Within this project, musicologists coded folklore, pop, and rock as the musical meeting points between assimilation and more abstract modern values of rationality, purity, and deliberation. Carol Silverman (1996: 238) illuminates the manner of ethnic cleansing inherent in musical assimilation. She reports that in 1985 the Bulgarian authorities forbade musicians to perform with *zurna* (a "Gypsy" keyless oboe) in the annual Pirin Folk music festival (southwestern Bulgaria, a region in which Romani *zurna* is an important component of local vernacular dances). As a result, Romani instrumentalists in the festival were forced to perform on stage with *svirki* (Bulgarian shepherd flutes). They dropped *svirki* and played again with *zurna* after the show, when the players played offstage in a meadow above the festival. Finally the police came, chased them away, and restored public order. The chalga boom of the transition era (and songs which emphasize *kiuchek*) indicates the crisis of musical assimilation: cultural performance of ethnicity has become highly popular whereas political performance of ethnicity is still tightly controlled. One can enjoy Gypsy *kiuchek* in public, however in order to earn political legitimacy one needs to denounce its modern value. Silverman (ibid) concludes that this conflict encapsulates the paradox of Roma in the Balkans; their musical prominence fosters their political invisibility.

The realm of parliamentary politics is reminiscent of the language ideology of assimilation in the official national life of EU-member Bulgaria. The 1991 constitution forbids Bulgarian parties to run under an explicit ethnic banner. The law

requires all political organizations to tailor their platform to the general national electorate. Minister Etem, for instance, was a member of "the Movement for Rights and Freedoms" (*Dvizhenie za prava i svobodi*). Officially, the party addresses the public in Bulgarian language and gears its platform to general national issues. However, the political arena in Bulgaria takes this party as the unofficial representative of the ethnic Turkish minority with aspiration to represent all Muslim ethnicities in Bulgaria. Ahmet Dogan, the founder of MRF, used to challenge "the Bulgarian ethnic model" by pointing with hints to the mechanisms of constitutional nationalism and ethnocracy—coding ethnic Bulgarian hegemony in the ideological formulation of Bulgarian nation. I witnessed him commenting once in TV interviews that his party was ethnic Turkish in the same manner that Boiko Borisov's "Citizens for European Development in Bulgaria" (*Grazhdani za Evropeisko razvitie v Bŭlgaria*) was an ethnic Bulgarian party, because its center-right platform attracted the ethnic Bulgarian electorate.

Poetics of Gypsy speech

Proficiency either in standard Bulgarian or in regional (rather than ethnic) dialects is a prominent non-official index of erasing the Gypsy shifter of recursivity with the mechanism of assimilation. Roma distance themselves from Gypsy stereotypes by showing ability to use Slavic instead of Turkish-derived vocabulary and emphasize frontal instead of back throat pronunciation (both features index modern Europe vs. the Muslim Orient). Teaching Bulgarian language to Romani children is a national enterprise that aims at releasing children from the ethnic ghettos and their perceived culture of backwardness. Let me expand briefly on this last point with a brief example of Andrey, a Romani singer whom I met in *Romfest 2008.*

Andrey lived in a small town in Western Bulgaria nearby the Serbian border. He was my roommate during the festival days, which provided me with an opportunity to hear his impressions about playing the role of Gypsy *kiuchek* musician. He told me that he had very little opportunities to speak his ethnic language as a child. There were only four Romani families in his native town. His parents also raised him to be a Bulgarian rather than a Romani. As a result, Romani was for him only a singing language. He could understand it but could not really speak it. It felt completely artificial for him.

Andrey mocked Roma who claimed being assimilated, but made the effort to speak Romani with each other. They looked pathetic to him. He claimed that there was no need to preserve this language, because he and all the other Roma at the festival were Bulgarian citizens living in a Bulgarian speaking society. He expressed pride that he and his wife built a Bulgarian-style family. They had only one child, not many children like "Gypsies from the ghetto" (*mahlenski tsigani*). He expressed pride also that he managed to cut his daughter off Romani language altogether. She also did not live among Roma, had an engineering degree, was married to a Bulgarian-Turk and lived with her family in a modern neighborhood in a town on the Black Sea coast. Andrey took it as a matter of fact that ethnic Turks were more modern than Roma, because (in his mind) they were related to another ethno-nation: the Turkish Republic. He admitted that at the beginning of their relationship, the family of his daughter's husband did not receive positively her Gypsy background. However, the fact that she had formal education and spoke Bulgarian as her only native tongue prompted the husband's family to embrace her.

The tie between Gypsiness and blackness came up a few times in our conversations. Andrey was proud that his daughter did not look Gypsy at all because

she had very light skin. He testified that many people did not believe him that he was not ethnic Bulgarian because he had lighter complexion than ordinary Gypsies. He admitted that he also had dark skin, but claimed that his complexion was moderately dark, not the very dark one that, in his words, was uniquely Gypsy.

On one occasion, Andrey linked darkness with "Gypsy speech" when pointing to a young big dark skinned Romani man, who came to the festival with a big assembly including his wife and children. This guy was for him, as the Bulgarian proverb goes, "like a thorn in the eyes" (*kato trŭn v ochite*). He especially was repulsed by "the heavy Gypsy accent" with which that guy spoke Bulgarian. For him, that guy spoke Bulgarian like in the *mahala*. Ghetto Gypsies, he said with disgust, cannot say *hliab* (bread). They say instead *hleb.*[95] Also he said that the most common consonant in their speech was *x* (like in Spanish *X*avier). What he meant was that stereotypical Gypsies pronounced *x* from the throat unlike the standard Bulgarian *x* which is closer to the English "h;" it is produced by a blow of air between the back of the tongue that is positioned in close proximity with the soft palate. To demonstrate how ugly this consonant was, Andrey grimaced and yelled with a hoarse voice "*x, x, x, x*." Above all he hated what he called "gypsy laughter." It sounded to him like an explosion of *x*, "*xa, xa, xa, xa, xa*."

Andrey performed modern face by describing himself not as a Gypsy assimilated in Bulgaria but as a Bulgarian assimilated in Europe. He boasted that his CDs were recorded in the same studios in which the Bulgarian Estrada star Silvia Katsarova recorded her albums. This ethnic Turkish singer is an emblem of socialist assimilation. She was born as Silver Nuri and changed it to a Bulgarian name during

[95] Replacement of the standard vowel *ia* (я) with *e* is actually very common in western Bulgarian dialects close to the border with Serbia and FYR Macedonia. Especially old people in these dialectical regions (including in the capital of Sofia) tend to say also *presen* rather than *priasen* (fresh), *nema* rather than *niama* (there is not, or, I will not), and *mleko* rather than *mliako* (milk).

the "process of revival." On many occasions she expresses her negative opinion of *kiuchek* and chalga. Andrey shared with me a point of superiority over Silvia Katsarova. He stressed that his CDs were not distributed to the Bulgarian market at all; they were sold only in Western Europe. On one occasion he pointed to the hotel's ceiling to show me a mark of a shoe sole. He said with disgust that Bulgarians derogate Gypsies, but they themselves are equally *prostatsi* (simpleminded, brute). They cannot be in a public space without vandalizing it.

Andrey was particularly proud in his regional western Bulgarian dialect, which, in his mind, was closer to the eastern Serbian dialect than to standard Bulgarian. He saw his dialect as an indication that his cultural influence came from Serbia, the western neighbor Bulgarians hold as more modern European than their country (Mishkova 2006). Reiterating the local dialect taxonomy, he identified the "hard" accent of western Bulgarian/eastern Serbian as more sophisticated and cosmopolitan than the "soft" accent of eastern Bulgarian dialects, which are considered provincial. He also saw greater sophistication in the Serbian accentuation of words mutual to both languages. This accentuation oftentimes falls one syllable before the accentuation of standard Bulgarian—*g̲o̲dina vs. godi̲na* (year), *v̲o̲da* vs. *voda̲* (water), *z̲a̲shto* vs. *zashto̲* (why) etc.

Formal multi-ethnicity vs. informal assimilation

As I mentioned above, EU-member Bulgaria has abandoned assimilation and adopted the language ideology of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity (titled locally as "the Bulgarian ethnic model"). That said, utterances of assimilation have not disappeared but have become more implicit and limited to informal settings in which people could feel safe to digress from the language etiquette of political correctness. Identity markers of "Roma" and "Gypsies" are prominent manners of switching

between the official language ideology of multi-ethnicity and the informal one of assimilation (i.e. constitutional nationalism and ethnonation). For instance, when talking about this minority group with my ethnic Bulgarian informants, I sensed that people took the license to switch to referring to Gypsies (*Tsigani*) rather than to Roma in a similar manner to the unwritten rule of switching from *Vie* to *ti* (formal vs. informal second person, equivalent to the German *Sie* and *du*). People were usually careful to talk about Roma (*Romi,* the plural form) at the beginning of the conversation when we still addressed each other with *Vie*. The transition usually took place with an apology that that the etiquette of relating to "Roma" felt artificial to them. In this context, "Roma" indexes recognition in the collective identity of this ethnic group; "Gypsies" indexed denigration of this minority that would prefer to lead, as I was oftentimes told, "rather miserable life with their ethnic kin in the ghetto to assimilating in the modern society."

I encountered many instances during the festival in which ethnic Roma switched between references to "Roma" and "Gypsies." Just as my roommate Andrey, people identified themselves as "Roma" in official communications, in which they attempted to perform assimilation within the Bulgarian ethnonation. They called themselves "Gypsies," on the other hand, in intimate communications, when relating to each other as ethnic kin. I even once witnessed Andrey doing so, when he was in a very chilled out mood and sat by the table surrounded by other assimilated Roma from his generation. Romani informants shifted back and forth to the ethnic Bulgarian manner of code switching. They used "Gypsies" to distance themselves from their own minority identity and take the point of view of national Bulgarians, who either perform assimilation in manners they see as modern European or retreat to *folk* intimacy. Meanwhile participants in *Romfest* related to themselves as "Roma" to fit

with the multi-ethnic politically correctness code of EU-member citizens. Let me present a few examples.

"Are you an author or a Tsiganka (Gypsy woman)?"

The festival's official guests stayed in a hotel that was located at a mineral baths resort on one of the hills outside the city. The resort was fairly empty at that time. The hotel also seemed to have no other guests except us. Spending the time before the evening concerts at the hotel restaurant, people retreated from their official assimilated face to creating informal zone of ethnic intimacy, that is, the Gypsy ghetto. They did so by exchanging utterance of "reappropriation of ethnic epithets, such as the cases of African American 'nigger' (Kennedy 2002) and Asian American 'chink' (Reyes 2007), as a solidarity term under certain interactional conditions" (Reyes 2009: 44). Those utterances of intimacy guided me to the discursive field of recursive ethnicity that gypsy epithets signify.

I heard utterances that affirmed Emel Etem's implied references to Gypsy opportunism and self-indulgence, such as Roma telling to each other "a person is an authentic Gypsy when he lies, steals, and takes but never gives," "a Gypsy who doesn't lie isn't a Gypsy," and "Gypsy and word of honor are a contradiction." People linked such ethical pejoratives to aesthetical indices of recursivity, like values of color combination. When commenting on the printed portfolio of the festival one organizer gave an ironic compliment to the color choice. He said that the cover of the portfolio was "very colorful, very Gypsy." The line of irony alluded to the stereotype of "Gypsy kitsch"—mishmash of noisy colors.[96] The idiomatic term of such mishmash is *shareniia*, which is an antonym of *sharenina*—"tasteful" (i.e. modern) colorfulness.

[96] In chapter 2, I discussed an incident between Gencho Gaitandzhiev's classmate and the art teacher about the combination of green and blue, which are the colors of the Romani flag.

Both words are derived from the same root: *sharen*—mixed, colorful. The different suffixes index the opposite value judgment: *–ina* connotes with the "authentic" Slavic basis of Bulgarian. As I wrote in regard to *folkadzhiia* and *chalgiia* (chapter 1), the suffix *iia* connotes with the "foreign" linguistic presence of Turkish, since this Arabic-derived suffix is prevalent in the Ottoman language. The lexicon of Gypsy pejorative is saturated with *iia* suffixes such as *tsiganiia* (Gpysy-style mess), *kiuchtsiia* (dancing like Gypsy *kiuchek*) and *kebapchiia* (Gypsy-style BBQ meal). The discursive ties between ethnic and peasant backwardness is evident in the usage of this suffix also to village pejoratives, such as *seleniia* (peasant-style practices and landscape), *grozotiia* (peasant-style ugliness) and the harsh derogation of *prostotiia* (peasant simplemindedness).

A group of Romani activists with whom I had lunch accepted me "as one of them" with another Gypsy pejorative about "improper" mixing, this time of alcohols. Before ordering our food we drank *rakiia* as an aperitif (a common practice in Bulgaria). Afterwards I ordered beer with my food. Before we ate, though, one of the people at the table took out a bottle of whiskey and invited everybody to have a toast. When people saw that I could handle the alcohol diversity without a problem, someone mentioned with satisfaction that I had a Gypsy drinking taste.

Another way of communication ethnic intimacy was by dissing playfully each other's assimilated face. For instance, people mocked each other in regard to confusing between crude material and contemplative interests. On one occasion, I sat in the hotel's restaurant at table with a few Roma rights activists. We passed between us a newly published book about contemporary Bulgarian folklore music. Each person at the table took the book, opened it, browsed it quickly, and handed it to the next person. When the copy arrived to one woman at the table, another person told

her, “leave it, it’s not for you, it’s not for eating.” The woman did not seem offended. She replied immediately with a rhetorical question: “can a Gypsy value something that is not for eating?” What attracted my attention to this short teasing exchange was the visual look of that woman, which affirmed the stereotype of a Gypsy woman from the *mahala*. I saw her during the opening day of the festival and thought that she was a cleaning lady at the hotel. She was very dark, short, and fat. Her facial expression signaled to me a common physical outlook of a drained middle aged poor woman. Only later I learned that this woman was actually a well-known literary author. Admittedly, I was ashamed of my own racist prejudice when I understood who this person was. Nevertheless, the first time I learned about this woman’s status was when one of the Romani-activists teased her by asking “are you an author or *tsiganka* (gypsy woman)?”

With your stones, at your garden (s tvoite kamani, po tvoiata gradina)

Addressing epithets of ethnic recursivity back at offenders (according to the Bulgarian proverb at the title of the section) was another way by which Roma participants in the festival reclaimed their modern (assimilated) face. A few weeks before the opening of the event, the organizing body of the festival held a press conference, during which he took the opportunity to protest against the decision of Minister Etem to deprive the festival from state funding. In his speech, Kracholov related to another version of Etem’s comments in which she also associated the festival with the *kebapche* (minced meat ball)—the stereotypical culinary icon of Gypsiness. His announcement to the journalists disclaimed Etem’s assimilated face by provoking nationalistic anti-Turkish sentiments: “and we have information that Emel Etem dances *kiuchek* and eats *kebapcheta* (the plural of *kebapche*, *e.l*) during the

Festival of Sacrifice (in Bulgarian and Turkish, *Koç bayram e.l.*),[97] but we do not comment on her behavior."

Kracholov's rhetoric threw back at Etem also the implicit line of opportunism, which she addressed at the organizers of the festival. Portraying this minister as if she was celebrating her Muslim religion in secret in the same oriental ethnic manner (i.e with *kiuchek* and *kebapche*) invoked claims by nationalist Bulgarians that "Movement of Right and Freedoms" (Etem's party) and particularly its patriarchal leader Ahmet Dogan were making political capital by expressing loyalty to Bulgaria while seeking patronage from their "real" ethnonation: Turkey.

I encountered Christian Roma who performed assimilated face by directing anti-Turkish nationalist prejudices against Muslim Roma at the festival, who spoke Turkish rather than Bulgarian or Romani. In one case, one of the organizers approached a group of young Muslim Roma who sat outside the hotel and talked between themselves in Turkish. He demanded (in Bulgarian) that in the premises of *Romfest* they should make the effort at least to speak *Tsiganski* (in Bulgarian, the Romani language). Then he turned to the table at which I sat and complained that Turkish has become an acute problem in the Stara Zagora region. Too many Roma prefered to communicate in the language of the major ethnic minority (Turks) rather than in Romani or Bulgarian.

His complaint resonated with other cases in which Roma activists told me with anger that in many places in Bulgaria Muslim Roma were betraying their own ethnic group by identifying themselves as Turks in order to enjoy the patronage of MRF. I wondered in front of one Romani activist why doing that was so bad. Allying with this party was pragmatically a smart move, because, unlike Romani parties that

[97] In Arabic *'Idu l-'Adha*, in Turkish *Kurban bayramı*.

have been completely insignificant, MRF was the third political power in the Bulgarian parliament and a frequent member in both rightwing and leftwing coalitions (MRF was in the opposition only during Boiko Borisov's government, 2009-2013). This informant replied that an alliance with MRF affirmed the bad image of Roma in Bulgaria: being ready to surrender opportunistically to whoever pays them more, even to the Turks.

The oxymoron of modern Romani ethnicity

Kracholov and the ethnic Romani organizing partners could not escape the fact that Emel Etem was actually right. The festival stage performance indeed consisted of *kiuchek* and a cloud of smoke from *kebapche* BBQ stands indeed surrounded the open-air amphitheater. In their mind, there was no choice; that was the only way they could attract large audience to the festival. Lozanka Peicheva, a leading ethnomusicologist and advocate of Bulgarian Romani music, reacted to Emel Etem's blames with frustration, "why can't we just finally accept that *kiuchek* and *kebapche* are a legitimate part of our national culture?" But her question received no reply. I sensed that, unlike Peicheva who is ethnic Bulgarian, the Romani organizers had no other way of changing the meaning-bearing function (Urban 1993) of the Gypsy discourse. No one around could imagine the cultural ethnic trademark of Roma free of associations of Balkan recursivity. That was one of the strongest moments in which I realized that, despite the official rhetoric of multi-ethnicity, Roma had no other way of imagining themselves as equal to Bulgarians except through the cultural function of ethnicity in the national discourse: ghettoization (recursivity) or assimilation (erasure).

One middleaged Romani intellectual whom I met at the festival explained to me the problem of trying to perform modern Romani identity alternative to

assimilation. He himself testified that he was divided between what he saw as his ethnic and modern identities. He remembered how as a child, during the socialist era, he had to walk everyday a very long way from his home in a big urban *mahala* to the nearby school. For him, the physical distance symbolized eminently the cultural distance he had to travel. He managed to minimize both distances as an adult by coming back to organize educational and cultural activities in his *mahala*. He saw his role as a cultural mediator of the Bulgarian nation-state to his fellow Roma. He also represented Roma issues vis-à-vis the Bulgarian nation-state. His goal was to unite these two social spheres by building a modern Romani public within the Bulgarian nation. He admitted though that this goal was impractical. Nobody around could understand what Romani public really meant. He kept pursing this goal for his own peace of mind, in order not to give up either his ethnic or intellectual footings.

To explain further why he took this choice, this activist related to me a story about one of his Romani classmates, who, like him, took the challenge of travelling the road from the *mahala* to school. This friend did not manage to resolve the division between his Romani ethnicity and Bulgarian nationality. As an adult, he left the *mahala*, married a Bulgarian woman and moved to live an assimilated life. At the same time, he also tried to hold to his Romani identity, but tried to combine the two social environments. He ended up in an awkward situation. People kept relating to him as a Gypsy in his Bulgarian environment. At the same time, people did not recognize him any more as one of them in his Romani environment. They looked at him as if he had abandoned his roots. Consequently, this former classmate felt dissonance both from his Bulgarian and Romani contexts. He closed down within himself and lived emotionally as if he was on a lonely island. Reflecting on his and his former classmate's life experience, this Roma-rights activist concluded that Roma

were so strongly connoted in Bulgaria with ethnic segregation that neither ethnic Bulgarians nor Roma could imagine the latter being a positive component within the Bulgarian public. For Bulgarians and Roma alike, he concluded, Gypsies and public are an oxymoron.

High vs. low kiuchek

Kracholov and his Romani partners proposed a generic framing of the festival, which, for me, resonated with the distinction Veselin Karchinski made in the previous chapter between integrated *tsigani* and ghettoized *mangali*. In the same manner of utterning distinction between *sharenina* and *shareniia*, the organizers insisted that the festival was intended to give stage only to "high" *kiuchek*, which they perceived as artistic, elegant and pure, not "low" *kiuchek*, which they saw as a crude and dirty musical mishmash. Tracing specific elaborations on this distinction, I understood that in "high" *kiuchek* people heard ethnic sound that sounded just like socialist modernized folklore (*obrabotka,* see chapter 2). This music could be played on the national radio and television without invoking stereotypes of *tsiganiia*. People pointed to Andzhelo Malikov, the late Romani composer and musician, as the emblematic representative of "high" *kiuchek*. His tunes combined ethnic Romani and Bulgarian folklore musical idioms as well as classical music harmonization; they were hence ready for homogenization in the canon of Bulgarian modern music.[98]

While people expressed reverence to Malikov, who was a senior member of *Romfest*'s musical jury, none of the performers on stage played the sort of *kiuchek* he advocated. Interestingly, an authoritative musical figure (from ethnic Bulgarian origins) and a close friend of Malikov, complained to me once that his music was too

[98] See for instance, "Anjelo Malikov - Romska muzika," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITyWDq2Pjj8; "Анжело Маликов Ансамбъл - Снощи Минах Покрай Вас (Angelo Malikov Ensemble - Snosti Minah Pokray Vas)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AdtvBuxUhQ.

removed from the "real" or "authentic" (i.e. Balkan-oriental) *kiuchek*. Malikov's attempts to cleanse Romani music from its ethnic sounds resembled to this informant the failed project of the Turkish government in the 1970s to produce a high form of *arabesk* music. In Turkey this project was called "arabesk with no pain" (*acısız arabesk,* e.g. Stokes 1993) to denote that this music had some affinity with oriental sounds but, at the same time, was modern. This engineered form was free of the groove of pain which Turks associate stereotypically with non-modern defeatism and fatalism. His critique resonated to me with the title Lozanka Peicheva (1999) gave to her monograph about Romani musicians in Bulgaria: "The soul is crying, a song is coming out" (*Dushata plache, pesen izliza*). Maybe this lack of pain grooves is also the reason why Malikov's high *kiuchek* never gained wide popularity in Bulgaria.

Andrey described the high quality his performance of *kiuchek* with more pragmatic terms. He stressed that people in his hometown regarded him as a cultivated and acclaimed singer because he did not sing for whomever threw some money at him. He worked as the house singer of an establishment, which was a decent restaurant, not a place of *tsiganiia*. Gypsies were not even allowed to enter this restaurant, he stated with pride. I took Andrey's invitation and visited once the restaurant where he performed. It was really a very elegant place, locally known for having "Serbian BBQ" (*Srŭbska skara*)—a meat menu Bulgarians consider higher quality compared to the Bulgarian grilling menu. Andrey performed in the restaurant traditional Romani songs in addition to a repertoire of Bulgarian popfolk and Serbian turbo-folk hits. He introduced us to his colleagues at the restaurant as his special friends from Sofia.

During the preparation meetings of the festival, I encountered similar attempts to frame the stage performance as high *kiuchek* with indices of assimilation that

revolved around economy and style. People in the organizing group—all of them middle-aged Roma who considered themselves assimilated —spoke about music as a cultural medium for national dialogue in which Roma could equally experience themselves as modern Europeans. To accomplish this goal they agreed that the festival should celebrate Romani music and dance respectfully without digressing into a manifestation of *kiuchetsiia*. At the formal organizational meeting of the festival's opening day, Aleksandar Kracholov himself took the opportunity to state that he did not intend *Romfest* to promote commercial Romani bands. His concern came from the fact that *kiuchek* musicians made their living from commissioned gigs in private and communal events. His idea was to create a cultural event that would celebrate what he saw as authentic Romani music and dance tradition. He did not specify what he meant by authentic tradition except making verbal distinction between low and high *kiuchek,* that is, between music that connotes with stereotypes of Gypsiness vs. music that is free of such connotations.

Conflicts between the individual goal function of gathering Roma at the festival with low *kiuchek* and the cultural goal of fitting with the discourse of assimilation (with high *kiuchek*) appeared when the participants in the organizational meeting went over the list of performers. People were asked to justify the rationale behind the predominance of low *kiuchek* performers on the list. One organizer asked why the singer Dzhago was placed lower in the order of singers, while the popfolk star Toni Storaro was placed as the festival's special guest. One of the organizers answered that he himself prefers Dzhago to Toni Storaro. He reminded that Dzhago was after all acclaimed as "the Gypsy Pavarotti" (i.e. a replica or derivative of a Western European model, see chapter 1). But there is nothing to do, he sighed, *mangalite* (plural of *mangal*) "love stupid music;" they prefer commercial popfolk to

high Romani *kiuchek*. All the participants in the room laughed but agreed with this harsh statement. On the other hand, both at that meeting as well as on different occasions, organizers expressed pride that popfolk stars from Romani origins made the initial steps of their career on *Romfest*'s stage, above all, Sofi Marinova whose presence in one of Gaitandziev's textbook stood at the center of parents' protests. Kracholov himself expressed great pride that he managed to bring such a great star like Toni Storaro to perform at *Romfest*. He took care to guard personally the room in which Storaro waited for his turn to perform. He also asked me to take his pictures standing alongside this popfolk star together onstage.

Between the stage and audience

Drawing or eliminating borders between the stage and the audience was another marker through which participants in the festival both aligned with and distanced themselves from the of stereotype of Gypsy ethnicity (i.e. *tsiganiia*). More idiomatically, Roma participants in *Romfest* could not deny that they were Gypsies (*tsigani*); this identity and its associated stereotypes affected the setting of the onstage performance. However, in order to be able to resist this role and its recursive connotations, many performers were cautious not to be caught performing *tsiganiia* offstage. Caution was supposed to signal that despite being Gypsy musicians, performers were still modern Bulgarians.

A long sign hanging along the front edge of the stage provided modern framing. The sign announced with big green letters (green is the traditional color of Roma): "XVI National Festival of Romani Music and Songs Stara Zagora 2008." An additional sign at the back of the stage listed with green letters as well the names of the festival's sponsors: "The City of Stara Zagora, The Ministry of Culture, The ministry of Labor and Welfare, Open Society—Budapest." The formal organization

of the evening concerts did not designate a strict division between the stage and the audience. Nevertheless the physical space suggested this division. The concerts were held in an open-air amphitheater that was built on the slope of a hill. Long rows of seats were located on the upper part of the slope. People sat on rusty metal seat bases; the seats that used to be attached to the bases were torn away. The rustiness on the seat bases and the fact that no seats remained unbroken are typical markers of the public landscape of post-socialist Bulgaria.[99] The stage was located at the bottom of the slope. The amphitheater was surrounded with a high fence. There were three entrance points, at the bottom behind the stage and from the lower two sides of the audience section.

Fig. 5—The lower part of the open-air amphitheater in Stara Zagora, picture: Eran Livni

[99] Oftentimes, when people express nostalgia to socialism and frustration with democracy, they describe how well maintained the public space was back then and how neglected it is now. I often heard how during socialism municipality workers used to clean the street with water and soap every night. "After democracy came" (as the popular refrain goes), streets became filthy, run down, and filled with garbage. The conclusion was that then there was modern order in Bulgaria, now there is only Balkan chaos.

The opening part of the first evening keyed the frame of the festival to assimilation. Meaning, no ethnic markers were presented on stage during the opening ceremony. Official speeches were delivered by Aleksandar Karcholov, the festival's director, Prof. Svetlin Tanchev, the mayor of Stara Zagora, and Rumyan Russinov, a prominent Roma-rights activist, who is an advisor on Roma issues to the Bulgarian president and the vice Director of the Budapest-based Roma Participation Program of the Open Society Institute. The three speakers wore formal suits and ties. In their speeches they praised Roma culture. The three officials went offstage at the end of their speeches and moved to sit alongside with other official guests at an improvised VIP section that was designated with a yellow tape at the upper part of the amphitheater. The festival's VIPs, though, sat on the same rusty metal bases as the rest of the audience. In the following morning (after the opening concerts) a few of the festival's organizers discussed the reason why the city mayor spoke so much in favor of Roma. One person assumed that the mayor addressed the Romani electorate of the city. A second person dismissed this claim insisting that the mayor was a true (but closet) *kiuchek* fan. He claimed that he saw the mayor drumming with his fingers on his legs when listening to the music performed onstage.

The end of the speeches part signaled the shifting of the stage performance to the performance of Gypsiness. The Bulgarian folklorist and ethnomusicologist Ventsislav Dimov has been serving for many years as the festival's host. After the three speakers and all other official guests left the stage, he turned to the audience and shouted excitedly: "do you want more *kiuchetsi* (the plural of *kiuchek e.l.*)?" The audience shouted back "yes!" Dimov introduced the first band, which began to play. People from the audience, in response, got up from their seats and started dancing.

In the absence of strict division between the stage and the audience, people from the audience could go on stage and dance in the middle of musical numbers. People also gathered to observe the performances at the back of the stage. Singers went down from the stage and sang while hugging and taking pictures with people in the audience. There were people who sat and observed the show but many others walked, talked to each other, danced, smoked, drank, and ate. Throughout the concerts there was a continuous flow of people into and out of the amphitheater. There was also no special dress code. People came with festive clothes, others with casual ones, poor people with torn and worn out clothes, and others (particularly the official guests) with formal suits. Young men took off their shirts and remained half naked. There was no characteristic of age or gender. People came with their families, others in groups of peers, from young children to old people. A small group of transgendered women attracted the audience's attention. In a few cases, these women stood on their seats and danced to the music on stage. In such moments, the focus of the performance shifted from the stage to the audience that congregated around these concert spectators who momentarily formed an alternative stage performance.

Due to the absence of dressing rooms and backstage space in the amphitheater, performers sat with the audience before and after their musical numbers. Additionally, performers either changed from casual to stage clothes in front of the audience or came already with stage clothes and remained with them throughout the entire evening. A few of the celebrity singers, who performed in *Romfest*'s third and conclusive night, avoided sitting with the crowd. They either sat slightly away from the stage or came shortly before their number and left immediately afterwards. Only Toni Storaro, the guest popfolk star, had the privilege of having a separate space for himself. The organizers designated for him a small room at the back of the stage,

which had no ventilation, no electricity, and nothing that could offer him the convenience of a star. As the main performer of the closing evening he sat on a simple chair and waited for his number. As I wrote earlier, Mr. Kracholov himself stood at the entrance of the room. Only with his approval people could enter and take pictures with Toni Storaro.

Only once I observed people who drew a strict borderline between performers and the audience. A couple of adults led a children dance ensemble consisting of about twenty girls and a few boys. The age of the children ranged from elementary to middle school. This ensemble, just as many of the amateur musical bands that performed in the three competition evenings, represented a Romani cultural center (*chitalishte*) from an urban Roma neighborhood. Throughout the event the children sat together with the audience, already dressed with their dancing clothes. The boys wore black pants and white shirts. The girls were dressed as harem-style belly dancers; that is, semi-transparent scarves that covered the girls' breasts, hips, and the upper part of the legs. There was no unified design for the scarves; few were more exposing, others covered most of the girls' body. The dominant color was red and black. Other girls also wore pink, purple, turquoise, white, and blue cloths. Most of them tied black bandanas around their hips. The bellies and the upper part of the girls' breasts were exposed. The scarves were knit with golden coins all over.[100] While on stage the children performed gender stereotypes associated with Gypsy *kiuchek* in which dancing girls and young women are objects of male's sexual desires. Offstage the ensemble was guarded not to intermingle with the audience and especially not to dance to the music performed on stage. Whenever children stood up to dance, one of the adults came and commanded them sharply to sit down, to behave properly, that is,

[100] Lemon (2000: 70) writes that in Russia, and more generally, in Europe, wearing money indexes "oriental" lifestyle identified with ethnic clinging to clan life and cultural backwardness.

to not to join the other local Romani children who danced in front of, in the sides of, and on the stage.

A short encounter revealed to me how people in the audience distanced themselves from the performance of *tsiganiia* on stage. While walking and taking pictures of the concert site I observed a woman possibly in her early 30s and a girl at elementary school age. The girl stood by a tree and danced *kiuchek*. The physical appearance of both the woman and the girl indexed stereotypical Slavic whiteness rather than Gypsy blackness, that is, light hair and fair complexion. They were just the two of them alone, unlike the ordinary companies of Romani big families or peers (as I explained earlier, having a family of one child is a marker of ethnic Bulgarians and assimilated minorities; families of many children index, above all, ethnic Gypsies as well as lower class Turks).[101] The woman smiled as she paid attention that I was looking at her. I approached them. The woman pointed to my camera and asked whether I was a journalist. I presented myself and said that I was an ethnographer and also the official photographer of the festival. She recognized my foreign accent and asked where I was from. She told me that she herself was not "purely" (*chista*) Bulgarian. Her family origins were in northern Greece; her ancestors fled to Stara Zagora during the Balkan Wars (1912-1914). She worked as elementary school teacher in a school in Lozenets, the big Romani *mahala* of Stara Zagora. I asked what brought her to the festival. She answered that one of her friends was a policeman stationed in Lozenets. He recommended to her the festival; maybe she would meet her students. In her words, the school in which she taught was completely homogeneous;

[101] An exception in this discourse is the small minority of Vlachs—an indigenous rural Balkan ethnicity from Romanian origins, whose villages in Bulgaria are located mainly in the north and northwest. In many conversations that I held, people blamed Roma for their poverty by pointing to the tendency of these people to bring many children whom they could not support. Vlachs, on the other hand, were touted as a rare example of a minority whose ethnic identity is adaptable to modern lifestyle. For instance, I was told that, traditionally, Vlach couples bring only one child in whom they invest all the family's resources.

all its students were ethnic Roma who spent their entire childhood speaking only Romani. And so, her work was to teach the children the basics of the Bulgarian language. Just as the speakers in the round table that preceded the festival testified, she considered knowing Bulgarian as a key to being able to quit the Gypsy ghetto and integrate in the modern national society. The young girl was her daughter. I complimented her daughter that she danced *kiuchek* very nicely. As I knew from previous experiences (such as my experience with Veselin Karchinski), people in Bulgaria are reluctant to take pride in dancing *kiuchek* in public. To guarantee that my compliment would not be taken wrongly, I told her that my daughter was a good *kiuchek* dancer as well. I said how much she loved dancing to popfolk video clips played on TV. The woman reacted only with a smile. She did not seem very flattered by my compliment to her daughter. However, she admitted that she, as many Bulgarians, really liked this music, despite their attempts to hide it.

Conclusion or Iordan-part 2

Let me now return at the end of the chapter to the clash of photographic gazes I had with Iordan, the Roma-rights activist, over his interest in pictures in which the audience experiences the performance on stage by sitting and observing with crossed hands while expressing an utter disinterest in the pictures I liked the most, those in which people danced *kiuchek* on- and offstage. I will tie this clash with Greg Urban's three functions of discourse: signaling, individual goal and communal culture. A conversation I held with Iordan on the last evening of the festival revealed to me most vividly both the communal risk Roma take when choosing to perform Romani identity via the stigmatic form of Gypsy *kiuchek* as well as the personal risk they take when calibrating this performance to the cultural function of circulating from the ethnic ghetto—the Gypsy *mahala*—to nation-state Bulgaria and transnational Europe.

In that conversation he related to me his political biography as a veteran of "Freedom Bulgaria," the political party of King (*Tsar*) Kiro (one of the original financial supporters of Kracholov's *Romfest* enterprise). Iordan was especially interested in explaining to me why the party repeatedly failed in elections. This failure, he said, prompted him to abandon politics and turn to cultural activity. He opened his speech with a rhetorical question: do you know why Roma are the only people in Europe with no homeland (i.e. nation-state *e.l*)? He answered this question with a tale. Once upon a time, he said, God announced that he was going to distribute all the land in the world. This news made everybody very happy; people celebrated it with music and dance. On the announced day, people rushed to the meeting place to receive their share of land. Everybody went to take land, everybody, expect the forefather of the Gypsies. He remained celebrating. He danced and danced as if the party was still going on. He did not pay attention that he was dancing alone. Only when he got tired and stopped to take some rest, he looked around and asked, "Where has everybody disappeared?" But there was no one to answer his question. When he realized his mistake, it was too late. All the land had already been distributed. Nothing was left for the Gypsy; not even a small piece of land.

Iordan explained to me that this misfortune of not observing the border between celebration and rational behavior still troubles Roma. He said that he and his colleagues in the party used to work so hard to reach their public, alas in vain. They received no reward on the Election Day. No matter how seriously they took the burden of serving Roma's interests, Iordan said, Roma would always vote for those who buy them with some money, food, and music. He mocked those Roma who used to come to him and complain that parliament members never fulfilled the promises

they gave before the elections. He told me that he used to dismiss the grievers by reminding them of their real motives for voting: bribery and entertainment.

Iordan claimed that because crude opportunism rather than rational deliberation were Gypsies' basic mode of social action they constantly fail to get out of their ethnic ghetto. Gypsies, he said, were ready to play any role and go with anyone as long as it gave them immediate material benefits. He dismissed the multicultural agenda of the festival. He stated with a smile that no one in the festival took the idea of multiculturalism seriously. It was only a slogan for earning funding and legitimacy from the state. Such opportunism, he concluded, was not less *tsiganiia* than dancing *kiuchek*. In order to gain political power, Roma had to earn the trust of the Bulgarian majority. Behaving in a modern rational manner would elicit this trust and help Roma develop respectful communal identity.

That said, Iordan did not deny that he himself also had opportunist motives. He switched to supporting Roma cultural activities when he understood that nothing good would come from party politics. He perceived the Romani NGO he formed in his hometown as a venue for political and cultural action, but not less than that, as a business enterprise, just as *Romfest* was, he concluded with a smile.

Iordan's words illuminate to me not only why he was not interested in pictures of dancing Gypsies, but also why Aleksandar Kracholov was so apologetic about Emel Etem's refusal to fund a celebration of *kebapche* and *kiuchek*, why Andrey accepted Romani language for stage singing but absolutely not for everyday communication, why the adult leaders of the children ensemble forbade the children to dance *kiuchek* offstage, why the organizers of the festival wanted to emphasize "high" *kiuchek* and eliminate *kiuchetsiia*, and, more generally, why *Romfest 2008* was an ethnic communal rather than a national Bulgarian or transnational European event.

The organizers, participants, and attendants whom I met at the festival site knew that unlike Bulgarian politicians, intellectuals, foreign ethnographers and other European visitors who can congratulate their own public agency by playing with images of Balkan ethnicity, such as Gyspy *kiuchek*, Roma could not benefit politically from performing their stereotypes of otherness either in nation-state Bulgaria or transnational Europe. Indeed, the cultural climate of Bulgaria has become more tolerant to such performances of Balkan ethnicity. This tolerance denotes to some Bulgarians that democratic freedom means that popular culture is a realm in which people can find refuge from the burdens of performing assimilation in the national realm. To others, such tolerance denotes that culture, just as other realms of the modern Bulgarian nation, still suffers from the deep crisis of the post-socialist transition. My long-term ethnographic experience suggests that in the absence of a strong central authority people feel free to vandalise the local culture with Gypsy *kiuchek* just as drivers feel free to break the traffic law, residents of apartment buildings feel free to throw garbage from their windows to the street, and politicians feel free to buy Gypsy votes.

By no means does the cultural tolerance to Gypsy *kiuchek* denote political tolerance to Romani ethnicity. Ethnicity is a prime category of Balkan recursivity in democratic Bulgaria as it was during socialism. The MRF and small Romani parties indeed address the electorate of ethnic minorities. However, at least declaratively these parties deny ethnic identity and advocate full assimilation in the Bulgarian national public (which is culturally still established on Bulgarian ethnicity). As during socialism, political representation is currently formulated by assimilation—the language mechanism of homogenization that underlies the mechanisms of constitutional nationalism and ethnonation. Roma can quit the ghetto and participate

in the social life of modern Bulgaria only by turning politically and socially into Bulgarians. Assimilation is the only framework within which Roma can perform ethnic cultural identity without losing face. The reason is that, just as during socialism (and before), cultural forms identified with Roma, above all *kiuchek*, still function as the prime signals of Balkan stigmatic deviation to modernity: backward ethnicity.

When attempting to promote a Romani communal identity, the Roma-rights activists I met at the festival had to negotiate with the conflict between the culturally tolerated ethnic pluralism and its political taboo. They had to enact the most prominent cultural marker of Romani ethnicity—Gypsy *kiuchek*—in order to create a viable cultural site for Romani integration within the Bulgarian nation. Cognizant of the strong political and social anxieties Gypsy *kiuchek* invokes, these activists distanced themselves in their official communications from this marker. As assimilated Roma, they had to take the responsibility of keeping the festival distant from the Bulgarian nation. Pragmatically, they simultaneously embraced and rejected the stereotypes of Gpysiness in the way they related to the icon of Gypsy *kiuchek*, as their own traditional culture or as a way to gather a Gypsy crowd.

Locating the festival in distance from the Bulgarian nation had another function. The organizers of *Romfest 2008* claimed political integration by acting in what Bulgarians would perceive as a deliberative manner (rather than in the infamous opportunistic Gypsy manner). They did not use the popularity of *Romfest* among whom they regarded as ghettoized Gypsies for gaining political benefits; that is, they did not try to translate the cultural power of Gypsy *kiuchek* into electoral power. Iordan's shift from politics to cultural activism revealed the practical motives of this deliberative stipulation. His words also resolved to me the paradox of the Gypsy *kiuchek* shifter, which simultaneously empowers and disempowers Roma. Iordan

showed that assimilation still holds currency of signifying rationality. For him, claiming assimilation is not only deliberatively right, but also useful for attaining practical goals. It opens new opportunities for gaining material benefits in the contemporary capitalist market. Having Romani identity has the power to earn NGO funding. It is also very attractive when organizing stage performances of Gypsiness.

Neither Iordan nor any of my other Bulgarian informants perceived this channel of market opportunism as contradicting deliberation. Such opportunism was not crude or backward, because it was based on the rationale of Bulgaria's integration in transnational Europe. Creed (2002: 124) formulates this rationale in the following way: "if you can't consume, then you must be consumed." The ethnographic context of his formulation is post-socialist villagers who turned their villages into sites of folkloric tourism. This formula is what prompted me to offer Mr. Kracholov to develop a web site for Romfest, which would potentially attract foreign tourists and World Music fans. Mr. Kracholov did not pursue this idea and preferred to maintain *Romfest* in its fairly marginal format. Did he choose this course of action because he wanted to maintain his image of an assimilated Roma or because as a good businessman he identified Romani assimilation in nation-state Bulgaria the safer and most efficient channel of circulating Gypsy *kiuchek* both in Bulgaria and abroad?

Conclusions

Democracy or the Return of Paternalistic Populism?

Bravo, Zhivkov, Bravo Zhivkov,	*Evala, Zhivkov, evala, Zhivkov*
We remember you with fondness.	*Spomniame si s kef.*
How we lived under you	*Kak zhiveehme pri tebe,*
Only with a few Lev.	*Samo s niakoi lev.*
With your comrades,	*S tvoite drugari,*
You held firmly,	*zdravo dŭrzhahte,*
the reins of power.	*Hvanali vlasta.*
No one was hungry, no one was thirsty	*Niamashe gladni, niamashe zhadni,*
In our country.	*v nashata strana.*
refrain: Bravo, bravo, bravo yo' Zhivkov.	*Evala, evala, evala, be Zhivkov,*
You were the best,	*beshe nai-velik*
Both as a great leader,	*i kato goliam ypravnik,*
And as a comedian	*i kato komik.*
There was no UDF,[102] there was no Dogan,	*Niamashe go SDS-to, niamashe Dogan,*[103]
To show off in front of the people	da pokazvat pred naroda,
Whose is bigger?	koi e s po-goliam?
There was only BCP[104] in our country	*Beshe samo BKP-to v nashata strana,*
And alongside it MOI[105] kept order.	*A do neia MVR-to pazeshe reda.*
Slavi Trifonov the showman was not there.	*Niamashe go shoumena Slavi Trifonov.*
Boiko Borisov the superman was not there.	*Niamashe fo supermena Boiko Borisov.*
And the king[106] was out of sight abroad.	*A pŭk tsaria vŭv chushbina beshe se pokril*.
Far away hidden from the people.	*Tam daleche of naroda toi se beshe skirl.*
There are no chitchats anymore.	*Niama veche muhabeti*.
There are also no banquets anymore.	*Niama veche i banketi.*
There are no sweet *sofras*[107]	*Niama veche sladkite sofri.*
With the best musicians.	S muzikanti nai-dobri.

[102] UDF-Union of Democratic Forces, a center-right party and the first post-socialist opposition.

[103] Ahmet Dogan-the founder and former leader of The Movement of Rights and Freedoms, the unofficial representative of the Turkish and Muslims minorities, see chapter 4.

[104] BCP-The Bulgarian Communist Party.

[105] MOI-Ministry of Interior that operated the infamous internal secret service.

[106] Simeon Borisov Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (or King Semion II) was born in 1937 and came to the throne as a child-king during WWII (1943). He was forced to give up his kingdom in 1946 after a rigged referendum by the new communist regime. He managed to flee the country to Spain where he lived as an exile monarch until 1996. He had to give up his claims to kingdom in order to enter to Bulgarian parliamentary politics as the head of a leader-centered party called *National Movement Semion the Second.* Rumors say that he returned to Bulgaria only to restitute his royal property that was confiscated by the communists. *NMSS* won the 2001 general election and Semion II served one term as a Prime Minister. The party came second in the following 2005 election and entered in a coalition led by the Bulgarian Socialist Party. NMSS was defeated and disappeared from the political realm after the 2009 general election and Semion II retired from politics and public life.

[107] A Turkish-derived cultural idiom of socializing by a dining table.

The good time was over,	*Svŭrshi hubavoto vreme,*
And we didn't even get it.	*Bez dori da razbereme.*
Everything cheap went away.	*Vsichko evtino zamina*,
Like export for abroad.	*Kato iznos za chushbina.*
And what is left for us?	*A za nas kakvo ostana?*
THE HANDLE, HANDLE of the frying pan	*DRŬZHKATA, DRŬZHKATA na tigana*
THE HANDLE, THE HANDLE	*DRŬZHKATA, DRŬZHKATA*
THE HANDLE, THE HANDLE	*DRŬZHKATA, DRŬZHKATA*
THE HNALDE of the frying pan	*DRŬZHKATA na tigana.*

Bravo, Zhivkov (*Evala, Zhivkov*)—Panko, 2000[108]

My dissertation explored how chalga functions not as a name of defined music genre but as a self-reflexive voice of conflict regarding the post-1989 recontextualziation of Balkanism—the metadiscourse of European modernity in the Balkans—in liberal democracy. On one hand, the music represents the *zeitgeist* of post-socialist democracy: aesthetical and social heterogeneity as well as commercial mass media. On the other hand, chalga does not resonate with the metadiscursive path of the Bulgarian nation building: *navaksvane*—catching up—with modern Europe. The four ethnographic chapters of the dissertation narrated manners by which Bulgarians negotiate this conflict and the four subject positions that emerge from this negotiation, particularly *shef*s and their clients, intellectual legislators and/or interpreters, urbanized peasants, and ethnic Roma.

Jacques Attali argues that popular music holds a greater role of social mediation than other media forms. Popular music is a prophecy whose "styles and economic organization are ahead of the rest of society because it explores, much more than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code. It makes audible the new world that will gradually become visible." (Attali 1985: 11) Building on Attali, I showed that Bulgarians can tolerate music performance they connote with

[108] "Panko - Evala Jivkov," accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-Lkq_6whoY.

chalga as long as it is authorized by a paternalist figure, *shef*, who maintains language registers of modernity when performers and audiences digress with too many registers of Balkan liminality to Europe. In the same manner I witnessed throughout my research that ordinary Bulgarians seek a paternalist leader, who can communicate with them on an intimate level but is powerful enough to impose on them norms and practices of European modernity. The expectation of such leader is not exclusive to the post-socialist Bulgarian society. It has defined the local political scene since the foundation of nation-state Bulgaria. What is special to the contemporary era is the cultural formulation of such leadership, which I define as paternalistic populism.

Referring again to Briggs and Bauman's (1992) concept of intertextual gaps let me begin with a historical perspective to this vertical dialectics between grassroots vectors of widening the gap with models of modern Europe and top-down attempts to minimize it. Thereafter I will outline some current style and political economic trends of chalga, which, in my view, adapt this dialectics to the democratic context of contemporary Bulgaria.

Absolutist democracy

A short critical essay by Leon Trotsky, which I encountered while writing my dissertation, points to the Balkanist metadiscourse, in which Bulgarians' expectation of paternal modernizer is grounded. The essay, titled "The enigma of Bulgarian Democracy in a Backward Country," was written in November 1912 as part of Trotsky's larger project of analyzing firsthand how the "Balkan problem" (the struggle between European powers over the post-Ottoman Balkans) exploded into regional nationalistic wars,[109] which gave the Balkans the name of "the powder keg of

[109] "The War Correspondence of Leon Trotsky" ([1912] 1980) spans 1908-1913 and analyze the political, social, and cultural dynamics which prompted, first, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia to ally ("the Balkan League") against the Ottoman Empire (first Balkan War, October 1912-

Europe." Bulgaria participated in the First Balkan War (1912) and served as the cause for the Second Balkan War (1913) was then a constitutional monarchy with an elected legislature. The king, Ferdinand I, belonged to the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha dynastic family, which European empires imported to Bulgaria from Germany in 1878. Trotsky characterizes Bulgarian politics as an exception within Europe's liberal model—that is, an absolutist democracy.

Trotsky describes a system of government whose power comes from bottom-up struggle coupled with top-down rule. He writes that "[I]t is worth visiting Bulgaria if only to be shown the relativity of our political concepts. Formally democracy reigns here. Sovereignty belongs to the people, the people elect parliament on the basis of universal suffrage, the ministry is responsible to the parliament for everything it does. If, however, we examine the governmental mechanism of Bulgarian democracy, we discover in it without difficulty some significant features of absolutism" ([1912] 1980: 47). What Trotsky found was that general elections determined the distribution of seats in the parliament and the monarch (who constitutionally reigned but did not rule) gave to the party that won the elections the mandate to form the government. However, in fact, the entire process was rigged. The parliament held a procedure of general elections, but the monarch used to determine the election results in advance, in order to put in power the party that he favored at a particular moment. Was this a real democratic system or just an electoral theater? Trotsky maintains that it was the latter, though he notes (with irony perhaps, though I can't be sure considering Russia's own grappling with backwardness) that Bulgarian monarchists (the political mainstream) advocated this vertical system by claiming that the monarch only anticipated the people's will and directed his policy in advance of events. Even

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May 1913) and, then, Serbia, Romania, Greece, Montenegro, and the Ottoman Empire to ally against Bulgaria (Second Balkan Wars, June-August 1913).

though my research took place a century later, I could see the local rationale behind this argument, which relates to the bifurcation between the perceived barbarous masses and the Europeanized elite. The masses could provide the quantity of votes (oftentimes with the incentives of chalga, see chapters 1 and 4), however only the elite could synthesize them "qualitatively" into a general "public interest."

Trotsky's cultural explanation for this exceptional marriage of democracy and absolutism is similar to the way Bulgarians relate to chalga in the current democratic debate. He defines two interconnected reasons that both go beyond Bulgaria's political structure. In his mind, the democratic process in Bulgaria was directed from above because of "the lag in Bulgaria's historical development and the low level of social differentiation…Like all other backward countries, Bulgaria is incapable of creating new political and cultural forms through a free struggle of its internal forces: it is obliged to assimilate the ready-made cultural products that European civilization has developed in the course of its history." (ibid: 49) Trotsky points to Bulgarian literature—a prime form of modern European literacy, particularly a national Russian pride—in order to show how his observations become manifest in the local cultural sphere. His view holds the same positivist approach that underlies the modern Europe and Balkan liminality/recursivity binary. Trotsky writes that Bulgarian literature "lacks tradition, and has not been able to develop its own internal continuity. It has to subordinate its unfermented content to modern and contemporary forms created under different cultural zenith." (ibid). He concludes his analysis allegorically: "[i]n its movement in history, a backward country is to be compared not to a ship that cuts its own way through the waves, but to a barge being towed by a steamship. The captain of the steamship has to show initiative in choosing a course, whereas the man in command of the barge is bound hand and foot." (ibid) Following this allegory Trotsky

suggests that if Bulgarians were to develop "conscious political self-government by the people" (ibid: 54), the local political elite should avoid imposing superstructure of democracy on the "primitive" base. Instead, democracy should develop in this peasant society through complex paths of internal struggle.

Democratic centralism

Needless to say, Trotsky's non-vertical "solution" to the Bulgarian lagging behind Europe never materialized. The Bulgarian Communist Party that came to power in 1944 built a socialist-realist democracy that reflected the political, social, cultural and all other interests of an ideologically engineered Bulgarian *narod*. In the forty-five years of its rule, the regime directed the actual people, the "rabble," to imagine themselves as a homogenous nation, which has rejected its Balkan-Oriental slavery in favor of evolution into a modern European proletariat. Democracy involved general elections, with the Party's assigned candidates on the ballot, who always won with margins of nearly 100%. Thereafter the people went out to celebrate the electoral ritual with folklore music and dances, designed and delivered by official state bands. Music was a central media to realize the evolutionary program of socialist democracy. The regime attempted to eliminate the pre-national popular music form of *chalgiia* while designing and promoting (since the mid 1960s) the modern popular music form of *Estrada*. So, while there was a small minority of people in socialist Bulgaria, who indeed envisioned democracy from below (such as Gencho Gaitandzhiev, the main protagonist of chapter 2), the regime held monopoly over all political participation, which was intended to perform support in the socialist regime (Kaneff 2006). Grassroots democracy existed de jure in the utopian promise of proletarian dictatorship. On the ground level, democracy existed in a vertical interplay of "domestication" (Creed 1997)—the state imposed its "democratic" forms and

practices from above and the people integrated them in their lives from below through acts of compliance coupled with sabotage.

Liberal democracy

After 1989 Bulgarians were directed by the West to restructure the local political landscape according to a model of democracy marked by multiparty parliament, commercial market, and separation of state powers. In this newly emerging democratic society popular music became a commercial rather political field of cultural production. The initiative for this process came from the EU, US, and IMF, which aimed at energizing grassroots forces that would foster democracy from below. On the macro level, the country has adapted to Western democracy successfully. Bulgaria has a functioning electoral system, the economy corresponds with the IMF (since 1997), the army is part of NATO (as a partner since 1994 and as full member since 2004), and following a long process of negotiations with the EU, Bulgaria finally attained membership in 2007. On the cultural level, the chalga boom of the late 1980s, which forecasted the end of socialist democracy, reveals a much more ambivalent adaptation to Western democracy. On one hand, the imaginative hybridity of music associated with chalga opened new-old cultural horizons beyond the doctrine of modernist national homogeneity. The music opens a unique venue of pursuing musical career (chapter 1), imagining grassroots pluralism (chapter 2), negotiating social mobility (chapter 3), and contesting the taboo of ethnic politics (chapter 4). On the other hand, the ethnic connotations particularly of *kiuchek* as well as its association with lowbrow elements resurfaced the intimate sense of Bulgaria lagging behind the rest of Europe. The post-socialist debate surrounding chalga confronted Bulgarians with the familiar notion that the local social base was just too "primitive" to distinguish between liberty (*svoboda*) and self-indulgence (*slobodiia*).

And so, if no one comes to rescue Bulgarians from themselves, democracy was doomed to fall into crazyocracy (*ludokratsiia,* Buchanan 2006: 430) or just to turn into an absurd transition with no end (Creed 1997: 1-2).

The EU-membership era: paternal populism?

So what poetics of world-making (Warner 2002) of Bulgarian democratic nation does chalga mediate? In the closing pages I will outline a few style and political economic aspects of chalga, which, in my mind, reflect the emergence of a new form of vertical democracy, which I call: paternalistic populism.

Style—labeling, aesthetics, and reception

Chalga and popfolk were almost synonymous when I began this ethnographic project in 2004. Popfolk was simply a less provocative signifier than chalga to label commercial hybridity of Bulgarian folklore, Romani and Turkish *chalgiia*, and Balkan pop. A decade later, the register of chalga has increasingly become obsolete in public. It resonates either with post-socialist nostalgia or with the Turkish and Romani sounds, which are present but less prominent in the mediated commercial music scene, i.e. popfolk. The growing gap between the two labels has an historical significance. Chalga reminds Bulgarians of the turbulent years of the post-socialist transition; they perceive popfolk, on the other hand, as a contemporary path back to normality. It allows them to imagine again evolution from the backward folk (the noise of the "rabble") to modern pop. Producers and singers see evolution in the more available sophisticated technical equipment and professional personnel. They also see it in the greater circulation of money and tougher market competition. On the side of the audience, people see evolution in the advent of digital media, which brings to Bulgaria contemporary pop trends from different parts of the world.

In terms of aesthetics, I get the impression that the horizons of popfolk have become much more conversant with non-Balkan musics than they used to be when I began my research. For instance, there are growingly more original songs that combine local sounds with Latin American Reggaeton, Mariachi, and Cumbia rhythms.[110] One can also find hip-hop and popfolk duets.[111] Video clip creators draw ideas from foreign clips circulating worldwide over YouTube and many different social media venues. Singers also watch global pop to imitate fashionable visualities. The regional horizons of popfolk music have expanded as well. Cover songs mainly of Greek and Serbian hits are still popular in Bulgaria. However, one can find them played over the media alongside the original songs. Musicians and producers from neighboring countries find the musical openness of Bulgaria attractive for collaborative projects with popfolk singers.[112] *Balkanika TV*, a regional music channel owned by *Ara Music* and *Diapason Records,* aims at making Bulgaria a trans-national musical crossroad thereby developing new opportunities for popular music circulation.

While welcoming the idea of cultural openness, many of my informants complained that popfolk has lost the edge or authenticity of chalga. One strand of

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[110] For instance, Desislava—"Reggaeton and a Little Bit of Chalga," 2007: "Desislava - Reggaeton i malko chalga / Десислава - Регетон и малко чалга," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UN9Vt_58fc.
Ilian—"Chikita," 2011 (clip shot in Las Vegas): "ILIYAN – CHIKITA," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crsynw38xsw.

[111] For instance, Sofi Marinova and Ustata—"Storm in my Heart" 2006: "Sofi Marinova feat Ustata Buriata v sarceto mi," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ea3ZLed32-A.

[112] For instance, among many, Emanuela and Serdar Ortaç (Turkey)—"I Ask You Finally" 2011: "Emanuela & Serdar Ortac-Pitam te posledno," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_Vj_Ri4hL4.
Adrea and Costi Yunona (Romania)—"Used," 2010: "ANDREA & COSTI (SAHARA) - UPOTREBENA (Halele) - Balkan HIT OFFICIAL VIDEO produced by COSTI 2010," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBHv0pO94JQ.
Tzvetelina Yaneva and Rada al-Abdullah (Iraq)—"Count Me", 2011: "Цветелина и DJ Ники Генов - Чалга до дупка / Tsvetelina & Niki Genov - Chalga... (Офиц. видео)," accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bLwGgQu0gE.
Alicia and Sarit Haddad (Israel)—"When You Noticed Me," 2011, accessed October 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rn9x7vkryAQ.

critique is that popfolk has become both sonically and visually a mere imitation of Western pop. I also encountered a second strand of critique that popfolk, just as chalga before, has no Bulgarian identity, i.e. it only exploits local ethnic and regional genres. A third more minor strand expresses nostalgia to the post-socialist era by valorizing chalga as local avant-garde and denigrating popfolk as a standardized global pop. Interestingly, I heard such complaints both from chalga advocates and detractors, who from opposite positions expressed a Balkanist cultural intimacy of democratic Bulgaria. They articulated their "community of flawed" with fears that Bulgaria is too backward to survive as an open society. The first two opinions reiterate the common perception that without imposed order like in real European societies, Bulgaria is doomed to lose its national identity—it will either be swallowed by the West or become a lawless country with Oriental (i.e. Gypsy and Turkish) majority. The third critique mourns Bulgarians' failure to maintain grassroots independence without seeking submission to greater powers (just as the image of a sheep on the semi-parodic national symbol list in the introduction).

The cosmopolitan and high-tech style of popfolk music might reflect the Westernization of Bulgarian urban landscape. In the decade since I began visiting the capital of Sofia I witnessed an architectural turn from homogenously rectangle apartment buildings to heterogeneity of geometrical shapes. Many cafés, restaurants, designer stores, and nightclubs offer greater options of consumer leisure. Newly constructed malls bring to Bulgaria the most famous world brands and fashions. The city hosts international festivals and is a frequent stop on the global tours of music bands, orchestras, and stage performance troupes. The evolutionary path of popfolk toward global visual and sound images (with some exotic Balkan twist) in addition to the monopolistic economy of the genre might also reflect the vertical nature of the

current Westernization process. Malls open at the expense of small street stores, chain stores take over neighborhood stores, vendors and booths gradually get pushed from the streets, and the metro system expands replacing the old-fashioned tramway. The growth of Sofia comes at the expense of provincial towns and villages, which still suffer depopulation. I recently heard that the municipality of Plovdiv, the second largest city in Bulgaria, decided to forbid Romani peddlers from driving carriages pushed by horses in the city premises. These trends do not mean that rural features have disappeared from Bulgaria but rather that the social landscape has become more segregated. Just as the gap between chalga and popfolk suggests, there is a growing gap in Bulgaria between being in Europe and being in the Balkans. This gap works well for the thin crust of rich and middle class people, who can imagine integration in modern Europe. This gap does not benefit the majority of urban and rural poor (e.g. Veselin Karchinski of chapter 3) or ethnic minorities (the participants in *Romfest*, the Romani music festival of chapter 4), who struggle to survive this system.

Political economy

The poetics of artificiality of popfolk star-singers reveal the two paternalistic political structures of Bulgarian democratic culture: the former socialist state-run monopoly and global capitalist music corporations. The hardship of the popfolk industry to break out of its generic media prompts producers, performers, and broadcasters to work in a closed circle, which depends on a number of authoritarian businessmen. Considering the chronic poverty of most Bulgarians, singers can rarely handle a viable professional career outside the firms. Musicians and producers need to generate profit in order to survive. No one can also take the risk of experiments, inside or outside the firms unless he or she serves the business interests of a richer patron. The life cycle of most singers is the initial five-year contract, in which the

simple rule is to generate profit for the record label boss, find a permanent sponsor, or perish. And, with the advent of digital media, the lifespan of songs becomes shorter and shorter. Singers cannot survive in the business unless they maintain a high rate of productivity and create hit after hit. Commercial success usually does not mean that singers become rich, but that they find a rich sponsor, who would fund their career. Otherwise singers fall in the margins of chalga: tavern singing and wedding bands. In some cases singers can live off performing in the margins of the *folk*, however they have to give up the modern aura of *pop*.

The generic regimentation of chalga in popfolk might reflect a larger world trend in which commercial music is becoming increasingly centralized in a small number of gigantic corporations (e.g. Negus 1999). It might, however, also reflect a local failure of the country to generate a wide middle class whose consumption might engender a diverse music business. More than two decades since "the arrival of democracy," Bulgarian society is still too poor to imagine the growth of modern culture from below. Popfolk seems to develop in the footsteps of socialist *Estrada*. During socialism, the state sponsored the production of popular music with infrastructure and resources; nowadays it is the shady money elite that does this job.

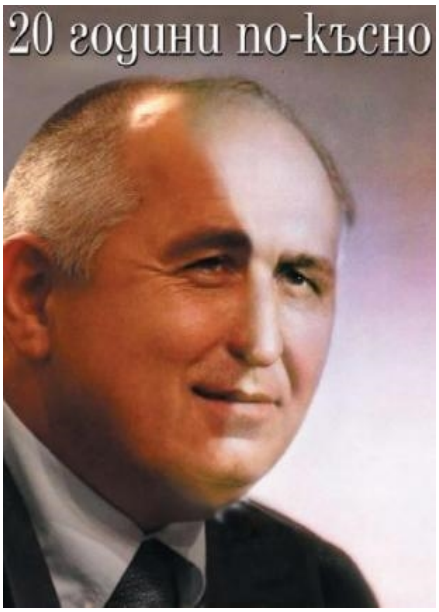

Fig. 1— "20 Years Later"—a photomontage of Todor Zhivkov (right) and Boyko Borisov (left), unknown source.

Fig. 2—Todor Zhivkov (left) turning into Boiko Borisov (right)[113]

The growing gap between the register of chalga and the generic label of popfolk provides Bulgarians with a sense of return to normality from the transitional era. People often recall the 1990s as a time of chaos and near anarchy or as a condition of absurdity in which transition happened for the sake of transition. What reflects the return to normality is that, unlike the transition era, music mediates a clear distinction between European modernity and Balkan(ist) digressions. Now, however,

[113] Стефан Северин, Личен уеб лог, accessed November 1, 2014, http://sseverin.com/защо-бойко-борисов-мрази-бсп.

there is again hierarchy that directs people what they need to do in order to become real Europeans. The hybridity of pop combined with folk (i.e. popfolk) allows people to move on the scale between public modern spaces and intimate liminal ones. Marta, Reni and their colleague singers do that when they tune their performance to the right balance between animating the voice of ordinary Bulgarians and animating the voices of their *shef*s; Vesko used to do that in his communications with his customers; Bulgarian intellectuals shift on this scale when following the protocol of modernity and digressing from it with irony; and the participants in *Romfest 2008* moved on that scale when performing assimilated Roma or ghettoized Gypsies.

Global sounds and visualities circulating in popfolk signal to Bulgarians that they are part of the global beat (and, by implication, of the capitalist world); local ethnic sounds bring people back to the familiar marginal premises of the Balkans. The ongoing hybridity of pop and folk reaffirm to Bulgarians that the country still lags behind the rest of Europe. The self-appointed task of the popfolk music industry to prompt musical evolution provides confidence that there are people at the top who enforce modernity order in Bulgaria, whereas the ability of people to move on the scale between modern pop and backward folk provides people with a sense of personal freedom, i.e. some power to decide whether to comply with the order or to sabotage it.

What is the political implication of this musical normalization? "Bravo, Zhivkov" (*Evala, Zhivkov*) the popfolk song at the conclusions' epigraph, expresses Bulgarians' longing for the lifetime socialist leader Todor Zhivkov (Tato or *bat* [brother] Tosho, as Bulgarians call him with fondness). The bitter irony of the song starts with the colloquial Turkism *evala* (in Turkish *eyvallah* means "thank you" or "goodbye") that hails the person, who imposed totalitarian modernity for 35 years

(1954-1989). Digressive irony comes from the lyrics, which sing Zhivkov's praise with a *kiuchek* melody that was publically forbidden during socialism. The refrain summarizes most vividly the sprit of nostalgia to this leader: "Bravo, bravo, bravo Zhivkov, he was the greatest/Both as a big ruler and as a comedian" (*Evala, evala, evala na Zhivkov, beshe nai-velik/I kato goliam upravnik i kato komik*). Indeed, all the Zhivkov tales I encountered throughout my research idealized him: he was ostensibly both authoritative and egalitarian, both a modern European leader and a Balkan-style people's person (*naroden chovek*). Since his fall in 1989, Bulgarians have been looking for a leader in his image, sometimes voting for a person who could potentially embody Zhivkov sometimes voting for the socialist (former communist) party.[114]

On the way back from a gig, I told Marta that, in my opinion, Boiko Borisov would for sure be the next leader of Bulgaria. It was during the municipal election campaign of 2007, when he ran for a second term as the mayor of Sofia. Marta laughed and asked for an explanation. I pointed to a street billboard with his picture (figure 2) and told her that it is designed like the cover of a popfolk album.

[114] The Bulgarian Socialist (former Communist) Party won the first free general election in 1991. Their government fell after a year and the next election of 1992 was won by the center-right "Union of Democratic Forces." The socialists came back to power in 1994, but lost the next election in 1997 to the charismatic "UDF" leader Ivan Kostov. The winner of the next election in 2001 was the last King of Bulgaria, Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, who came back from exile and formed the "National Movement Simeon II" party. The party led Bulgaria until the 2005 election, which brought the Socialists (BSP) back to power, however only for one term. BSP lost the 2009 election to Boiko Borisov's party "Citizens for European Development in Bulgaria." Borisov's government resigned in February 2013 after protests. An electoral tie between CEDB and its opposition in the 2013 elections brought BSP back to leading a shaky coalition with two ostensibly political foes: the ultra nationalist party ATAKA and "The Movement for Rights and Freedom" (the unofficial representative of the Turkish minority, see chapter 4). The current Prime Minister, Plamen Oresharski, gave his resignation in later July 2014 and at the time of completing this manuscript, the Bulgarian parties are negotiating terms for a new government and/or new elections that will, most probably, bring Boiko Borisov back to national leadership.

Fig. 3—Boyko Borisov's image as it appeared on 2007 election billboards.[115]

I also added that since "Tato," no political leader in Bulgaria has managed to be liked in such a way that people would relate to him only by his first name. I concluded that when I think about "Boiko" I imagine him as a sort of a music star. Marta laughed again, kept silence for a few seconds, and then said, "yes like Konstantin" (a popfolk male singer). Marta did not look surprised by my political prediction. It was known that Boiko Borisov enjoyed wide popularity and was aiming at the national political sphere. What surprised her was the connection that I made with chalga. After all Mr. Borisov has been making an effort to distance himself from everything associated with chalga. During the 2009 general elections in June, he apparently even forbade Mitko Dimitrov, the owner of *Payner Music,* the biggest popfolk record label, to lead the list of Borisov's party CEDB ("Citizens for European Development in Bulgaria" [*Grazhdani za Evropeisko razvitie na Buglaria, GERB*])[116] in the electoral district of Haskovo (southeastern Bulgaria) so as to avoid any chalga

[115] Picture taken from Frognews.bg, accessed November 1, 2014, http://frognews.bg/news_2066/Boiko_Borisov_Sreshtu_men_raboti_stsenarii_na_Kostov_Ovcharov/.

[116] GERB is a center-right populist party, which was founded by Borisov and embodies his paternal leadership in the parliamentary system. Equivalent to this party in Europe are Silvio Berlusconi's "The People of Freedom" (*Il Popolo della Liberta*) in Italy, Vladir Putin's "United Russia" (*Yedínaya Rossíya*), and Recep Tayip Erdoğan's "Justice and Development Party" (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) in Turkey.

associations. On the other hand, this anti-chagla façade did not convince my other interlocutors, who reminded me of his alleged close ties with the popfolk female singer Ivana. I also attended the music awards ceremony of the popfolk music channel *Fen TV* in April 2009, in which Mr. Borisov handed to Dzhina Stoeva the best popfolk female singer award.

None of the people with whom I communicated expressed open support in "Boiko." People used to mock him by quoting his crude and simpleminded utterances (like praising his project as the Mayor of Sofia of constructing new Metro lines: "I made a Metro like sun" [*Napravil sŭm metro kato slŭntse*]). Denying supporting for Boiko was what prompted me to associate him with chalga. In many different occasions I heard that Bulgarians loved him because they considered him to be as simpleminded as they were. My study informs me that people love, fear, and are ashamed of him, because he performs charismatic leadership in a way that resonates with a chalga star-boss. The 2009 parliamentary election, in which Mr. Borisov won with unprecedented majority, and his first term as a prime minister have shown thus far that Boiko indeed knows how to anticipate the popular will, how to ally with bigger forces in order to overcome the marginality and weakness of Bulgaria, and most importantly, he knows how to act with Balkan aggression to put the society in a modern European order. Following over the media the fall of Borisov from power in 2013 and the current (summer 2014) political and economic crisis in Bulgaria, I get the sense that even such a close replica to Todor Zhivkov as Borisov has not managed to change the foundational metanarrative of nation-state Bulgaria which revolves around the gap, liminality, recursivity or incompleteness of the Balkan to modern Europe, the metanarrative that underlies the double voice of national pride countered

with national shame, which gave life to the literary hero Bai Ganio in the late 19th century and to the self-reflexive register of chalga music, a hundred years later.

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Eran Livni—Curriculum Vitae

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EDUCATION

2003-2014 Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Communication and Culture (with minor in Folklore and Ethnomusicology), Indiana University, Bloomington, USA

Dissertation title: "Chalga to the Max! Musical Speech and Speech about Music on the Road between Bulgaria and Modern Europe"
Supervisor: Richard Bauman

2002-2003 Special student, History, Sabancı University, Istanbul, Turkey

2000-2004 Master of Arts, Middle Eastern Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

Thesis Title: "Folk Music as a Socialist Realist Manifesto in Ruhi Su's *Devrimci* (Revolutionary) Music"
Supervisor: Haim Gerber

1999-2000 Preliminary M.A studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

1992-1999 Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy and Classical Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

CERTIFICATES

Summer 2013 AMI—NAMTA Montessori Orientation to Adolescent Studies, Huntsburg, OH

1996-1999 Oriental music-Theory and Practice (Turkish Saz), Center for Oriental Music and Dance, Jerusalem, Israel

1995-1997 Teaching license in Philosophy, School of Education, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

FIELDWORK

2006-2013	Short-term ethnographic trips in Bulgaria
August 2007-January 2009	Dissertation ethnography, Bulgaria
Summer 2005	Pre-dissertation ethnography, Bulgaria
1996-2003	Short-term ethnographic trips in Turkey

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

2008-2009 Dissertation Fieldwork Grant, The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research

2008-2009 Research Fellow, Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Science, Sofia, Bulgaria

2007-2008 Research Fellowship, The American Research Center in Sofia

Fall 2002 Higher Education Authority of the Republic of Turkey Scholarship

Spring 2002 MA thesis grant, Chaim Herzog Center for Middle Eastern Studies and Diplomacy, Ben-Gurion University, Beer-Sheva, Israel

1999-2000 Süleyman Demirel Foundation scholarship, Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, Israel.

1997-1998 Center for Oriental Music and Dance scholarship, Jerusalem, Israel

PUBLICATIONS

"'Tempt and Run:' Artificial Voice, Artificial Personality and the Language Ideology of Bulgarian Communal Capitalism" In *Music and Cultural Memory in Post-1989 Europe: Sounding Contested Past(s),* Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology, University of Chicago Press, forthcoming.

"Why was Iordan not Interested in pictures of dancing Gypsies" In *Audiovisual Media and Identity in Southeastern Europe*. Edited by Eckehard Pistrick, Nicola Scaldaferri and Gretel Schwörer-Kohl. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholarly Publishers, 2011.

March 2011 *Sounds of the Borderland: Popular Music War, and Nationalism in Croatia Since 1991*. By Catherine Baker. Farnham: Ashgate. Book review for the Journal of Folklore Research (online edition).

August 2006 *Performing Democracy: Bulgarian Music and Musicians in Transition*. By Donna A. Buchanan. 2006. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Book review for the Journal of Folklore Research (online edition).

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2010-2013 Adjunct faculty, Department of Communication and Theater Arts, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, USA

- Introduction to Human Communication (COMM200S)
- Introduction to Interpersonal Communication (COMM112R)
- Ethnography of Global Popular Music (COMM340)
- Communication and Culture in the Middle East (COMM405)
- Performance Studies (COMM445)

2005-2007 Associate Instructor, Department of Communication and Culture, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA

- Global Culture and Local Perspectives: the Middle East and the Balkans (C204, a self-designed course),
- Interpersonal Communication (C122)

2004-2005 Associate Instructor, Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA

- Introduction to Folklore (F101),

2003-2005 Associate Instructor, Jewish Studies Program, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA

- Intermediate Hebrew (H200, H250)

1995-2001 Philosophy, Literature, Hebrew grammar, History, Islamic Studies, Study skills and a Home-room teacher, Lifta High school, Jerusalem, Israel

CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS

Nov. 2013	"The Pragmatics of Lip-Synching in Bulgarian Popfolk Music," *The Annual Meeting of the American Society for Slavic, Eastern European and Eurasian Studies,* Boston, MA.
May 2012	"Musical Heterogeneity in Post-Socialist Bulgaria: Between 'Corruptive' Chalga and Culture of Democracy," *Ninth Joint Meeting of North American and Bulgarian Scholars held by the Bulgarian Studies Association and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.
Nov. 2011	"Why a National Festival of Roma Music Failed to Promote Roma Rights in Bulgaria: A Case Study of Romfest 2008," *The Annual Meeting of the Society of Ethnomusicology*, Los Angeles, CA
April 2010	"Why was Iordan not Interested in Pictures of Dancing Gyspies? Bulgarian Popfolk Music in he Discourse of Modern Europe," Audiovisual Media and Identity in Southeastern Europe, *Institute for Music, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg*, Germany
Dec. 2009	"Socialist Creativity and Labor in Post-Socialist Popular Music: The Case of Bulgarian Popfolk," *The Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association*, Philadelphia, PA
July 2009	"Democratization or Balkanization? The Debate about Popfolk's Educational Value in EU-member Bulgaria," *The Biannual Meeting of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music*, University of Liverpool, UK
June 2009	"Hey Put on the Chalga (*Hey, pusni chalgata*): Bulgarian Popular Music as a Site for Contesting Democracy," Beyond East and West: Two Decades of Media Transformation After the Fall of Communism, *Central European University*, Budapest, Hungary
Dec. 2008	*Debati okolo chalgata* ("Debates over *Chalga"*), *60 Godini muzikologiia v BAN* ("60 Years of Musicology in the Bulgarian Academy of Science"), paper delivered in Bulgarian, *Institute of Art Studies (Bulgarian Academy of Science)*, Sofia, Bulgaria
Sep. 2008	"Between Ambivalence and Intimacy: Performing the (anti?)Educational Value of Bulgarian Popfolk Music," *First Symposium of the International Council of Traditional Music (ICTM) Study Group for Music and Dance in Southeastern Europe*, Struga, Republic of Macedonia
July 2007	The Challenges of International Media Technology & Policy Workshop, the *Kokkalis Foundation*, Olympia, Greece
June 2006	Balkan Studies Training Workshop for Junior Scholars, *Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center at the University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign*
April 2005	"Contextualizing Performance in Social Life through Identification Between Hero and Audience – The Case Study of Azis, the 'Gypsy Anti-hero,'" *Rethinking Reception Conference*, Duke University, Durham, NC

Oct. 2004 "Shaping Turkish Modern History through the Commemmoration of the Legendary Rebel Sheyh Bedreddin (1358?-1420)," *The American Folklore Society Annual Meeting*, Salt Lake City, UT

Sep. 2004 "Turkish Folk Music as a Socialist Manifesto in Ruhi Su's *Devrimci* (Revolutionary) *Müzik*," *The Eleventh Annual Central Eurasian Studies Conference*, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

April 2002 "Alevi Identity in Turkish Historiography," *Middle Eastern History and Theory XVII Graduate Conference*, University of Chicago, IL

ACADEMIC SERVICE

2006-2007 Graduate representative, Search Committee: ethnography of media, Department of Communication and Culture, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

LANGUAGE TRAINING

07/07- 09/07 Advanced Bulgarian, *Institut za Chuzhdestranni Studenti* (Institute for Foreign Students), Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia, Bulgaria

06/05-08/05 Beginners and Intermediate Bulgarian, *Tsentur za Chuzhdi Ezitsi* (Center for Foreign Languages), New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria

Spring 2004 Azeri, Central Eurasian Studies Department, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

1999-2002 Literary Arabic, Middle Eastern Studies Department, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

2001-2002 Ottoman Turkish, Middle Eastern Studies Department, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

1999-2001 Modern Turkish, Middle Eastern Studies Department, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

Summer 2000 Modern Turkish, Turkish Language and Culture Program, Bosphorus University, Istanbul, Turkey

Summer 1999 Turkish, Turkish Language and Culture Program, Bosphorus University, Istanbul, Turkey

1992-1999 Classical Greek and Classical Latin, Classical Studies Department, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

LANGUAGE PROFIENCY:

Fluent: Hebrew (native), English, Bulgarian,
Good knowledge: Modern Turkish
Reading knowledge: Ottoman-Turkish, Arabic, Azeri, Macedonian, Classical Greek, Latin