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Contested Racial Imaginings of the Serbian Self and the Romani Other in Serbia's Guča Trumpet Festival

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Abstract: In this article, I will address issues of race using the "Romani question" in Serbia's Guča trumpet festival as a case study. I will specifically consider a selection of Guča-related themes pertinent to the question of race, while simultaneously discussing the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of this complicated concept vis-à-vis issues of national identity representation in post-Milošević Serbia. Informed by previous critical studies of race and popular music culture in South/Eastern Europe within the larger postcolonial paradigm of Balkanism, this work will seek to illustrate the ambiguous ways in which the racialization of the Serbian Self and the Romani Other is occurring in the Guča Festival alongside the country's and region's persistent denial of race. Using the above approaches, I will conduct a critical cultural analysis of selected racial issues in the festival with reference to eclectic sources, including more recent critical debates about race and racism in South/Eastern Europe within the broader context of postsocialist transition, EU integration, and globalization. My final argument will be that, despite strong evidence that a critical cultural analysis of the "Romani question" in Serbia's Guča Festival calls for a transnational perspective, earlier Balkanist discourse on Serbia's indeterminate position between West and East seems to remain analytically most helpful in pointing to the uncontested hegemony of Western/European white privilege and supremacy.

Keywords: race; national identity; Guča Trumpet Festival; post-Milošević Serbia; Balkanism; Balkan transnationalism; critical cultural studies

1. Introduction

In this article, I will explore the racial foundations of Serbian national identity in times of the country's post-Milošević transition. I will do so by focusing on the "Romani question" in Serbia's Guča trumpet festival as a case study. More specifically, I will critically consider a selection of Guča-related themes pertinent to the question of race, while simultaneously discussing the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of this complicated concept vis-à-vis issues of Serbia's national identity representation. The themes under study will be: the racialized and ethnicized overtones in Serbian public discussions on two main folk music genres of the Guča brass band competition—*kolo* and *čoček*; the racial implications of the perceived Americanization of Romani *čočeks* and the Serbian brass in general; ambiguities in national political agendas and attitudes to which Romani festival participants are subjected by various local stakeholders, be they distinguished members of Serbian political and culture elites, festival producers, or local and international audiences alike; the equally ambiguous relationship of Guča's Romani musicians to various institutions of power—political, cultural, and otherwise—as well as to racial stereotypes ascribed to their community as a whole.

The subtleties and ambiguities of Serbo-Romani race relations in the Guča Festival will mainly be analyzed through the lens of postcolonial theory—or to put it more accurately, its translation to the Southeast European region, commonly known in academia as *Balkanism*. In brief, Balkanism is a field of study that both differs from and overlaps with Orientalism. Common to both Orientalism and Balkanism is the asymmetrical relationship between the two poles of the West–East equation,

which only attests to the positional superiority of Western discourse throughout the modern era and its power to (re)produce a corresponding system of knowledge about the Orient/Balkans. The main difference between the two fields is that Orientalism constructs the Orient as Europe's imputed Otherness (Todorova 1997, p. 17), or as "the Other without" (Buchanan 2007, p. xviii). Balkanism is, by contrast, a relational discourse that feeds off the "imputed ambiguity" of the region's interstitial location (Todorova 1997, p. 17) and thus conceives it as "the Other within" (Buchanan 2007, p. xviii).[1]

Even if challenged on racial grounds by prominent figures of the field (e.g., Baker 2018; Bjelić 2018a, 2018b; Todorova 2006), Balkanism is still, I argue, the most suitable theoretical model and conceptual tool for the analysis at hand. First, it is specifically designed to address and shed light on the historical and geopolitical specificities of the Balkan region, including the post-2000 sociopolitical realities in Serbia. Second, it emphasizes the undiminished role of "Europe", in all variety of its incarnations, as the region's/Serbia's most significant Other, in relation to whom members of the Balkan/Serb population variously position in their efforts to deal with what Goffman (1968) calls the *tribal stigma* and *spoiled identity*.[2] A firm understanding of this power dynamic will be, indeed, of central importance when considering possible ambiguities in racial projections of the Serbian Self and the Romani Other in the analysis below. Last but not least, in some interpretations, Balkanism itself operates as a form of racialization. Longinović (2000), for example, posits that the notion of racial difference among Balkan peoples is mainly grounded in the long-established hierarchy of geopolitical relations, both material and symbolic, drawn along the fault line of the region's former imperial powers. "These identifications", as Longinović specifies further, "are largely based on territorializations of one's religious confession: Croats [and Slovenes] see themselves as part of the culture based on Roman Catholicism, Serbs as part of Eastern Orthodox culture stemming from Byzantium, while Bosniak identity is defined by their conversion to Islam during five centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans" (ibid., p. 630). As will be showcased below, the same recursive logic of *nesting Orientalisms* (Bakić-Hayden 1995) is applicable to Serbia's racial imaginings of the Self and Other in Guča, at whose core remains the presumed cultural superiority of Western/European whiteness (cf. Baker 2018; Imre 2005, 2006, 2009).

It perhaps goes without saying that this is just one among many approaches to race—a notion whose complexity comes to the fore especially in discussions of the "Romani question" in South/Eastern Europe. There are arguably two main reasons that account for this. First, the Romanies continue to perform the role of the quintessential internal Other across the entire continent of Europe (not only in its south/eastern parts) by way of expression of their phenotypical and cultural difference. Second, there is a commonly held view among South/Eastern Europeans that their region somehow stands outside of race, because its history is exempted from discourses of race, coloniality, and imperialism—they are white Europeans with no experience of colonization (Baker 2018; Bjelić 2018a, 2018b; Imre 2005, 2006, 2009; Todorova 2006).

The subsequent analysis of the treatment and (self-)perception of Romani participants in the Guča Festival vis-à-vis issues of Serbian national identity representation is significant precisely because it will raise broader theoretical questions about race. It will specifically point to the elusiveness of the category;

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[1] While acknowledging this and other differences between the two academic fields (see Fleming 2000; Todorova 1997), it should be made crystal clear that in this work, Balkanism is considered a Southeast European variant of postcolonial theory. There are at least three reasons for such an approach. First, Balkanism pursues the questions of how difference/Otherness is represented, by whom, and to what ends. Second, it is analytically sensitive to both intra- and transnational hierarchies of geopolitical images and relations between the First and Third World, between West and East, colonizer and colonized, center and periphery, Us and Them. Third and last, just like Orientalism, it is "a style of thought" and a discourse that is based on differentiating, both ontologically and epistemologically, between "the Occident/Europe" and "the Orient/Balkans" (cf. Said [1978] 2003, pp. 2–3).

[2] *Tribal stigma* is the "stigma of race, nation, and religion (...) that can be transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family." In Serbia's case, the Balkan stigma, which pertains to racialized notions of cultural difference, is clearly constituted in relation to Westerners as "normals", that is, as "those who do not depart negatively from the particular expectations at issue" (Goffman 1968, p. 15).

it will reveal that race and racism have always been present in the region in one form or another; and it will capture the transnational character of Balkanist discourse, that is, its translatability to present political conditions in the "West"/"Europe proper", not only vice versa. The urgency for reflecting on the latter proposal arises exactly from the transnational scope of the "Romani question", which manifests itself in all major domains of life: (1) political—as exemplified in the policies for national Romani integration strategies shared across the "New Europe"[3] within the administrative framework of the European Union (EU) (Banić-Grubišić 2010; European Commission n.d., "Roma integration in the EU"); (2) socioeconomic—as displayed in the transnationally shared experience of growing precariousness and racial prejudice, discrimination, and violence among Romani communities across the New Europe (Astier 2014; Imre 2006, 2009; Miladinović 2008; Phillips and Chrisafis 2011); and (3) cultural—as evident in the incorporation of Balkan/Eastern European Romanies into transnational networks of the entertainment and music industries since the fall of the Berlin Wall (Imre 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009; Rucker-Chang 2018; Silverman 2012). In any event, all the themes and issues outlined above will be addressed and discussed throughout this article, notably with reference to recent critical debates about race and racism in South/Eastern Europe within the broader context of postsocialist transition, EU integration, and globalization. The critical contributions made in this regard by Baker (2018), Bjelić (2018a, 2018b), and Imre (2005, 2006, 2009) will be particularly pertinent to the discussion at hand.

In short, then, using the above theoretical approaches, I will conduct a critical cultural analysis of selected racial issues in the Guča Festival with regard to such eclectic sources as interview transcripts produced between 2012 and 2014, as well as a great variety of media-generated data on Guča, specifically, popular publications, documentaries, media reports, blogs, and online forums. However, before I attend to the analytical task at hand, I should provide some background information about the Guča Trumpet Festival—its historical development, ideological premises, and musical program—as well as about the revivalist and ethnomusicological discourse of authenticity that complicates further the considerations of racial issues in this festival. As will be demonstrated below, the reason for the latter is that Guča-related discourses on cultural heritage preservation cut across conventional ideological divides in that they draw on the same essentialist quest for authenticity, albeit with different aesthetic–ideological motivations and outcomes (cf. Koziol 2008).

2. The Guča Trumpet Festival in Historical Perspective: From Local to Global, between Traditional and Modern

The Guča trumpet festival was established in 1961 in the village of Guča in the Dragačevo region of western Serbia with the aim of reviving the vanishing Serbian brass band tradition. Its main focus and appeal reside in the brass band competition part of the program, which includes a range of awards with the First Trumpet, First Band, and Golden Trumpet being the most prestigious ones. Since its modest beginning with four competing local brass bands (in 1961), the festival has grown rapidly to represent the regional diversity of what can be dubbed the Serbian brass band tradition. Already at the Guča Festival of 1963, the brass band competition was expanded to include three distinctive and territory-bound musical styles: (1) Zlatibor–Dragačevo style (in the southwestern region); (2) Vlach style (in the northeastern region); and (3) Vranje style (in the southeastern region) (see e.g., Dević 2000, in Milovanović and Babić 2003, pp. 229–231). Moreover, since 2010, the competition has also been joined by brass bands coming from Serbia's northern province, Vojvodina (Otašević 2015; Tadić et al. 2010, p. 85).

Underlying this heterogeneity in Serbian brass band practice are certain basic traits of village musicianship that had already been in place before the advent of socialism. As Buchanan (2006) explains in the comparable case of Bulgarian music folklore, "[u]nder socialism, these traits were

[3] The neologism "New Europe" is used here to denote and highlight the political, socioeconomic, and cultural reconfiguration of the entire European continent embodied in the ongoing project of unification of two Europes, including the Balkans, after the collapse of socialism in 1989 (see e.g., Lehning and Weale 1997).

reinterpreted and romanticized as the *izvor* [literally, the 'wellspring'] ... of tradition ... and authenticity (...). All post-1944 folkloric activities, including ensembles, were conceptualized as evolving from this construct and measured in reference to its properties, which were perceived as timeless and universal attributes of Bulgarian identity" (ibid., pp. 81–82). The *izvor* of Yugoslav/Serbian tradition likewise amounted to such traits as "purity of language and artistic expression, noble simplicity and wisdom" (Vidić Rasmussen 2002, n.p.). In addition to that, the adherence to regional distinctions was and still is largely decisive in assessing whether one's folk music-making and performance are to be considered traditional and authentic (cf. Buchanan 2006). The same criteria apply to the aesthetic evaluation and ranking of Serbian brass bands competing at the Guča Festival (see e.g., an interview with ethnomusicologist and member of the Guča brass band competition's expert jury Mirjana Zakić, conducted by Kaplarević 2007, in Tadić et al. 2010, p. 356).

Historically, the roots of the Serbian brass band tradition are most often traced back to the 19th century, even though evidence for its continuity as a traditional musical practice is, in some instance, looked for as far back as the 7th century (Tadić et al. 2010, p. 34). At any rate, in the writings of domestic ethnomusicologists (Dević 2000, in Milovanović and Babić 2003, p. 229; Golemović 1997; Zakić and Mihajlović 2012) and Guča Festival publicists alike (Bogovac 2007; Tadić et al. 2010), the story about *Knjaževsko–serbska banda* is commonly cited as the mythical birthplace of this tradition. As the story goes, it was in 1831, during the rule of Prince Miloš Obrenović, that *Knjaževsko–serbska banda* was formed as the first Serbian brass band that adopted the Western tonal tradition and served various purposes, military and otherwise.[4] Another consensus view is that the "folklorization" of the imported brass band idiom took place in Serbian villages at the turn of the 20th century. What happened then was that the military trumpets brought from battlefields by returning Serbian soldiers became gradually integrated into vernacular musical practices of rural communities (Babić 2004; Stojić et al. 2000; Tadić et al. 2010; Zakić and Mihajlović 2012).

Despite a number of documented oral testimonies of old brass band players confirming that this musical practice used to flourish in Serbian villages in the first half of the 20th century (Dević 1986; Lajić Mihajlović and Zakić 2012), especially during the interwar years, 1919–1938 (Golemović 1997; Marinković 2002), the fact remains that its continuity was largely broken with the outbreak of the Second World War. For this reason, I tend to align with those academic writers, such as Lukić-Krstanović (2006) and partly Dević (1986; 2000, in Milovanović and Babić 2003, p. 231) and Golemović (1997), who take the Guča Festival itself as the most certain factor behind the installation of this folk tradition as we know it today. If so, the ideas of what constitutes the *izvor* of the Serbian brass band tradition and its historical roots seem to have been mainly shaped through Guča-related discourses. In this sense, Serbian brass band music can be understood as an "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm [1983] 2000), all the more so when two additional facts are brought into play. The first is that the notion of the tradition's *izvor* became, in the course of the festival development, infused with rituals and symbols of Yugoslav socialist ideology (especially from the 1970s to the late 1980s) and Serbian nationalist ideology, respectively (cf. Timotijević 2005). The second fact is that the reinvention of the Serbian brass band tradition has always been carefully designed and supervised by various members of the Yugoslav/Serbian cultural elite—military trumpet tutors, music teachers, ethnomusicologists, composers, conductors, and the like (Bogovac 2007; Golemović 2002, in Milovanović and Babić 2003, p. 238; Marinković 2002; Tadić et al. 2010).

When it comes to Guča's success story, a good starting point for telling it is to review the archived media reports on the festival. They show that a more aggressive promotion of the Guča Festival across the former Yugoslav member states began as late as the mid-1980s (Tadić et al. 2010; Timotijević 2005). The further development of the festival could be described as insular due to the

[4] Up until that point in time, the development of Serbian instrumental practice was shaped under the oriental Ottoman influence and put in the service of Ottoman panjandrums living in Serbian towns. Similar types of musical ensembles were initially hired at the court of Prince Miloš, as well.

explosion of nationalism in the region and its dire isolating effects on the country. However, precisely because of the emerging preoccupation of the ruling elite with the rediscovery and restitution of Serbian ethnicity in culture, including the Serbian brass band tradition, Guča's popularity grew steadily among many sections of Serbian society. However, it was not until the great international success of several movies made in the 1990s by Serbian film director Emir Kusturica and featuring Serbia's Romani brass, that the profile of the festival began to raise more decisively both nationally and internationally.

Coinciding with Kusturica's far-reaching acclaim was the rise of the world music (WM) phenomenon, whose transnational music network was already in place. Received as a great commercial novelty, Serbian brass bands were accommodated eagerly by the ever-expanding global music market. The first acts to penetrate into this market niche and capitalize on the Balkan brass craze were *Emir Kusturica & The No Smoking Orchestra*, *Goran Bregović & Wedding and Funeral Band*, and *Boban Marković Orchestra*. As the winner of multiple awards at Guča's brass band competition, Marković can be said to represent the only genuine offspring of the Serbian brass band tradition and the best-known trademark of the festival.

The next key factor that contributed substantially to the global visibility of the Guča Trumpet Festival was the shift in Serbia's political leadership following the overthrow of Milošević in 2000. Advocating the politics of EU integration, the country opened up to the Western world and began to recover economically with its financial support. The government could accordingly secure more funds for the national and international promotion of Serbian tourism, with a special emphasis on music events such as the Exit and Guča Trumpet Festivals (Čerović, PR representative for the Tourist Organization of Serbia [TOS]: 10 August 2011 interview). As a result, the increasing trends towards the internalization and rejuvenalization of the festival were already evident in the early 2000s along with the changing demographic structure of the festival audience. As Timotijević (2005) documents, Guča 2003 witnessed, for the first time, large groups of foreign visitors, and at the Guča Festival of 2002, the overwhelming majority of the present crowd was made up of younger festivalgoers. Nowadays, the Guča Festival draws around half a million visitors every year, and from 2010 onwards, when the category of international competition was introduced into the festival program, organizers immodestly called it "the trumpet capital of the world" (Tadić et al. 2010).

It was arguably the confluence of all these factors that gave the Guča Festival program a new profile in the post-Milošević era. Specifically, a split between old and new with all its derivatives (traditional–modern, local–global, and so on) lost to some degree its differentiating power in the 1990s due to a general deregulation of the national music market occurring at the time. However, all such binaries came to be restored during the 2000s and made their way into the festival program (interview with Zakić by Kaplarević 2007, in Tadić et al. 2010, p. 356). Specifically, in the early 2000s, the authority of the festival rulebook was successfully recovered and fully reapplied to the competing part of the festival program. Designed in cooperation with various music experts, the festival rulebook sets up a general framework for the brass band contest, outlining "the repertoire, aesthetic–artistic and technical norms in this field of folk music production" (Tadić et al. 2010, p. 438). The strict adherence to the rulebook reflects, therefore, the aspiration of festival organizers and supervisors to keep the *izvor* of the Serbian brass band tradition unsullied and alive.[5]

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[5] Note that the Guča Assembly Board was equally committed to the preservation of the tradition's *izvor* under socialism. For instance, at the Guča Festival of 1966, an entry to the competition was allowed only to amateur folk brass bands. The board at the same time warned competing brass bands to play traditional songs and dances rather than numbers made by contemporary authors (Timotijević 2005, p. 40). At the Guča Fesival of 1974, the Assembly Board likewise decided to remove from the official program everything that resembled trash and kitsch (ibid., p. 56). At the Guča Festival of 1985, Nani Ajdinović Orchestra was disqualified from further competition because its repertoire incorporated parts of the opening theme from the then-popular American TV series *Dynasty* (ibid., p. 76). At the Guča Festival of 1989, the Assembly Board unanimously rejected a request from Serbian rock band *Galija* to stage a concert at the Guča stadium with renowned trumpet player Fejat Sejdić (ibid., p. 91).

At the same time, it was in the post-Milošević era that contemporary commercial acts began to enter the Guča official stage. While this conceptual change seemed to be without precedent in the history of the festival programming, it was in fact anticipated by the earlier introduction of the so-called *Midnight Concert* (in 2001), comprising brass band performances of a free-choice and largely pop-oriented repertoire. Moreover, at the Guča Festival of 2003, the *Midnight Concert* was already decorated and staged in a way to replicate the lighting effects and atmosphere of rock spectacles (Timotijević 2005, p. 137). However, Boban Marković was arguably the first to inspire more substantial changes in the festival's overall conceptualization. Not only was his vocal repudiation of the festival rulebook tolerated by organizers and jury members at the Guča brass band contest in 2001,[6] more importantly, a timely shift in his music-making and performance style towards what can be dubbed *Balkan Brass Beat* paved his road to international success and recognition. Marković's worldwide fame made, in turn, a permanent impact on the way in which the Serbian brass band tradition was, and still is, perceived and evaluated nationally. This also explains why the Guča Festival organizers have granted Boban and his son Marko the privilege of holding individual concerts since 2004[7], which is another event without historical precedent in the festival programming.

It appears, then, that it was the Markovićs who smoothed the way for other popular acts from the commercial worlds of ethno and world music (WM)/world beat (WB) to be invited as festival participants in the years to come. Among local artists from this group, the Guča Festival has hosted, for example, *Biljana Krstić i Bistrik* (2005, 2019), *Sanja Ilić i Balkanika* (2010, 2015), *Hypnotized* (2013), *Orkestar Crno–beli svet Dejana Pejovića* (Dejan Pejović Black and White World Orchestra) (2013), and, let us include in this category, Goran Bregović (2007, 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017) as well, because his musical collaborations are mainly Belgrade based. As for international WM/WB acts who have graced the Guča stadium's stage, the list includes German DJ and producer *Shantel & Bucovina Club Orkestar* (2010, 2012), Slovenian singer *Magnifico* (2010, 2014), and Polish folk-rock group *Golec uOrkiestra* (2010). Put in the festival limelight since 2011 have also been other Serbian brass bands following in the Markovićs' footsteps, notably *Dejan Petrović Big Band* (from 2011 to 2019) and *Dejan Lazarević Orchestra* (2013, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019). However, the commercialization and "estradization"[8] of the Guča Festival program reached its culmination point in 2010, on the occasion of the festival's 50th anniversary. Since then, the festival program has expanded to include Serbian neo-folk (NF)/turbo-folk (TF)[9] singers, often in some sort of fusion with selected brass bands. Two big names from the Serbian *estrada* especially stood out in the Guča context: (1) Miroslav Ilić (2010, 2011, 2014, 2016), a long-lasting representative of the "old school" neo-folk style; and (2) Svetlana Ražnatović aka Ceca (2012, 2014, 2016), the notorious Serbian TF diva, whose title *Ceca Nationale* attests to her status in the country as the symbolic "mother of the nation".

The bifurcation of the Guča Festival's musical offerings into traditional vs. modern points to a fundamental dilemma encountered by all cultural revivals. As Reynolds (2011, p. 211) illuminates, unreserved commitment to music styles that are remote in time, space, or both, "inevitably condemns the devotee to inauthenticity. Either he strives to be a faithful copyist, reproducing the music's surface features as closely as possible, risking hollowness and redundancy; or he can attempt to bring

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[6] Even if disqualified as "unsuitable" prior to the competition finals, Marković's cover version of the main theme from the cult Serbian TV series *Otpisani* [The Written Off] brought him the most coveted First Trumpet award on that occasion.

[7] *Boban & Marko Marković Orchestra* put on gigs too at the Guča Festivals of 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019.

[8] "Estradization" is a derivative from the originally Russian term *estrada* (literally, "small stage") denoting various musical forms of Soviet light/pop entertainment. As Mišina (2013, p. 65 [footnote 10]), following Kremer (1988), explains, estradization in the Yugoslav (and later, Serbian) sociocultural context refers to "the process of 'catering to mass audience and mass media [with] simultaneous polishing of the form and emptying of the content'—in simple terms, the dumbing down of cultural expression for the purpose of wide commercial appeal."

[9] Turbo-folk is a Serbian hybrid music genre that combines techno rhythms and nasal oriental singing. Its emergence at the beginning of the 1990s coincided with the rising wave of militant nationalism in the country, which made it a controversial target of criticism (largely over its oriental elements) by different social groups on both ends of the political spectrum.

something expressive and personal to it, or to work in contemporary influences and local musical flavours, which then risks bastardising the style." In the Guča case, the current old–new split is only a logical continuation and intensification of similar music-stylistic dilemmas faced in the earlier uses of tradition. As many documented stories of the earlier Guča Festival trumpet winners illustrate (see e.g., Babić 2004; Bogovac 2007; Timotijević 2005), negotiating and finding the right measure between traditional and modern elements in their musical output was a challenging task in the past as well. This became all the more difficult as the Serbian brass band tradition reintegrated with people's everyday lives shortly after its revival in the Guča Festival. Apparently, the greater the popularity of Serbian brass, the wider the schism between old and new songs in the festival repertoire. To paraphrase popular Serbian trumpet player Dejan Lazarević (in Petrović 2013, p. 8), unlike the festival crowd of the 1990s, modern-day Guča-goers respond more passionately to cover versions of rock hits than to old Serbian tunes, so trumpet players have no other choice but to adapt to the changing trends on the musical market.

Despite the widely recognized complexity of a new–old dynamic involved in the development and perception of traditional music,[10] the Guča Festival continues to cultivate the Serbian brass band tradition in a way that leaves it torn between its commitment to the *izvor*'s "authenticity" and living practice, that is, between the processes of this tradition's "recreation" (i.e., staying faithful to *izvor*) and its "transformation/innovation" (Zakić and Mihajlović 2012). It is precisely the unchanged conceptual framework of the festival—which is to live up to some imagined normative ideal of Serbian (brass band) tradition—that renders the remaining tension between old and new inherently problematic and impossible to settle. In the analysis below, I explore these and similar unresolved contradictions surrounding the Guča Festival's production, seeing that they are of central importance for understanding the equally complex and contested ways in which race and Serbian national identity, respectively, are being constituted in local Guča-related discourses.

3. The Racialization of Guča's *Kolo–Čoček* Debate

In Serbian public debates, the *izvor* of the national brass band tradition is typically called into question whenever "foreign" or "external" musical elements and influences are acknowledged to be "contaminating" traditional trumpet music. Importantly, the origins of the "corrupting" factors in question are sought at either end of the West–East axis, or in the combination of both concurrently. Of special interest to the discussion at hand are claims that various Oriental elements and influences discerned on the ground pose one such "foreign" threat to the Guča Festival's *izvor*. What is at stake in much of this discussion is often Balkanist discourse and its attendant spatial imaginary of Serbian society as internally divided into "civilized" and "barbarian" parts. There are specifically two major music-based axes around which the Guča Festival's "Oriental controversy" is constructed. One involves condemnatory reflections on the abundant presence of belly dancing in the Guča Festival's festive spaces, while the other is critical of certain Oriental musical elements in the music repertoire of brass bands (see Gligorijević 2019). The *kolo–čoček* debate on which I focus in the analysis below obviously belongs to the latter group of Orientalist critique.

The said binary opposition follows closely the pattern of regional differentiation in Serbia's brass band tradition, specifically between the Šumadija (i.e., Central Serbian) *kolo* dance with its distinctive *dvojka* rhythm (2/4; 4/4),and the Vranje (i.e., Southeast Serbian) *čoček* dance with its lively, Oriental-sounding tunes.[11] Indeed, as Lajić Mihajlović and Zakić (2012) note, the major

[10] Indeed, as Radano and Bohlman (2000, p. 31) teach us, music's "placeness and fixity must always be seen as a momentary pause extending from prior intersections and shifts. (...) That each new center reveals a prior past is never enough to cease the process of centering and naming, for these truth claims remain central to the musical constitution of identities." For similar viewpoints, see also (Brah 1996, pp. 234–235; Buchanan 2006, p. 425; or Silverman 2012, pp. 4, 55, 274).

[11] The other two Serbian brass band idioms—namely, the Vlach (i.e., [north]eastern Serbian) and Vojvodina (i.e., northern Serbian) styles—are left out of the Guča Festival's Oriental dispute, partly because one is in decline (Vlach),

musical difference between *kolos* and *čočeks* lies in their respective metro-rhythmic organization. While *kolos* follow regular rhythmic patterns in simple duple or quadruple time signatures, *čočeks* are either associated with irregular meters and so-called *aksak* rhythms (literally, "limping", "crippled", or "flawed" when translated from Turkish) comprising mainly such combinations of binary and ternary rhythmic units as in 2–2–2–3 or 3–2–2 or with idiomatically syncopated rhythms in regular meters (Silverman 2012, pp. 28–29). Other differences between *kolos* and *čočeks* that Lajić Mihajlović and Zakić discuss in their joint study on the Guča Festival are those pertaining to the following:

1. Corresponding dance styles—*kolo* is a collective dance performed in a circle according to predefined movement patterns, whereas *čoček* refers to the improvisatory type of solo (less often line) dance that "lies in a continuum (. . .) [between its historical Ottoman inflections and] contemporary forms of belly dance" (Silverman 2012, p. 107).
2. Type of musical texture—in *kolos*, the leading melody moves alongside the accompanying brass band sections in streams of close-packed sound, whilst *čočeks* typically combine precomposed parts with highly improvisatory ones (called *taksim* or *mane*), in which a selected soloist, usually the first trumpeter, showcases his creativity and virtuosity over a metric ostinato played by the rest.
3. Structure of melodic lines—*kolos* belong to the category of narrow-range melodies with gradual movements and smaller leaps, based in major–minor tonality, whereas *čočeks* consist of heavily embellished and stretchy tunes that make use of both Western- and Turkish-derived scales.
4. Respective sonic prototypes—a typical *kolo* performance evokes the softer, gently rustling sonority of Serbia's traditional *frula* [flute], which is a trumpet precursor in the *kolo* dance accompaniment, whereas the pungent piercing sonority of *čočeks* resembles that of *zurla*, a Serbian traditional woodwind instrument of Oriental origin, to which *čočeks* were initially danced (see also Silverman 2012).

Bearing all this in mind, it should come as no surprise that in Serbian public discourse *kolo* is often considered the only true and authentic form of the Serbian brass band tradition. Moreover, to prioritize *kolos* over *čočeks* in the festival spaces of representation apparently amounts to securing the nation's salvation, as one online commentator under the indicative alias, *Serbian Lion*, suggests:

> I want the trumpet as it used to be. I want the SERBIAN *DVOJKA*. I want much more the *dvojka*-style trumpet, and much less the *čoček*-style trumpet. My wish is to see people coming, as before, to the trumpet [festival] because of the [brass band] contest and trumpet listening, and not because of the [festival] guest-performers partaking in the evening programs with the instruments for which there is no place in the festival. And I DON'T WANT to see belly dancing in Guča because there is no place for it in the festival either. I WANT SERBIAN *kolos* to be danced!!! Think about it, my SERB FELLOWS... Let's preserve our country SERBIA!!! (SrpskiLav/SerbianLion, in Bojović 2013 [comments]; capital letters in original)

Two observations need to be noted here. Firstly, the *kolo–čoček* debate clearly continues to reproduce the everlasting tension between Serbia's two major regional brass band idioms, whereby the latter typically occupies lower ground owing to its Oriental/Eastern/Islamic associations. Secondly, the *kolo–čoček* opposition also arises from the division of Serbian brass bands along ethnic–racial lines, with the ethnic Serbs playing *kolos* and the Romani playing *čočeks*.[12] The Guča Festival is therefore often talked about as a contest between "white" (ethnic Serbian) and "black" (Serbian Romani) brass bands.

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while the other is in the process of being shaped (Vojvodinian), and partly because their respective music-ethnic "impurity" precludes them from fitting into the conceptual framework of this debate. To be accurate, the Vlach brass band idiom encompasses a Serbian–Vlach–Romani juncture, whereas the Vojvodina style typically involves a Serbian–Hungarian–Slovakian–Croatian mix.

[12] Indeed, *čoček* is a Romani-specific musical genre in the Balkans. Since the post-1989 change, it has become a shared genre across much of Eastern Europe, but also has migrated to the West along with the Romani diaspora or through the distribution channels of the transnational music industry (see Silverman 2012).

That the latter are often dismissed in right-wing vernacular discourses as non–Serbian and aesthetically less worthy when compared to "white" players can be inferred from the following online quote:

> Boban Marković is by no means a representative of the Serbian trumpet but of the Oriental one. If anything is an established fact about the Trumpet Festival, it is that Gypsy bands play *čočeks*, and the Serbian ones *kolos*, and that the two do not intermingle. Dejan Lazarević Orchestra[13] is, for example, a genuine Serbian brass band. Also, anyone who has ever visited Guča knows all too well that Gypsy bands only induce ennui, whereas the Serbian ones receive ovations. (Jovan, *Blic* 2010a)

This comment is important to grasp two additional points about race: first, that discourses of "organic" Serbianhood surrounding the Guča Festival—i.e., those that view the Serb nation as a static, invariable, and ancient entity with a basis in blood kinship and ethnic purity—are implicitly rooted in the idea of whiteness; and second, that aesthetic judgments that favor "white" over "black" brass bands have wider social ramifications. As Vidić Rasmussen (2006, p. 109) explains, the depreciation of "musical styles variously associated with the local notions of ['Oriental,'] 'Eastern,' 'Islamic,' 'ethnic,' and 'foreign'" within the hierarchically organized system of national culture representation, is tightly linked to the marginal status of sociocultural groups that produce them. By the same token, dismissive and diminishing comments on the Vranje brass band idiom, made within the ideological framework of the Serbian right, go often hand in hand with corresponding views of its exponents—Serbia's Romani minority.

At the same time, the fact that the said tension between Guča's "white" and "black" brass bands and their respective music idioms occurs on multiple grounds (racial, national, ethnic, religious, and cultural) causes us to pause here and reflect on the theoretical basis and ideological implications of race and racism, both in general and in the postsocialist context of South/Eastern Europe. As has become clear by now, the Romanies turn into a "race" along two axes simultaneously: physical and cultural. In the former case, race is clearly defined in a more conventional way, that is, as "the shifting matrix of ideological constructions of difference associated with body type and color that have emerged as part of the discourse network of modernity" (Radano and Bohlman 2000, p. 5). What is at stake here is obviously the enduring hegemony of colonial racial discourse, which also came to be incorporated in geographical locations not tainted by the colonial legacy, including South/Eastern Europe. Within this discursive framework, whiteness is equated with civilization, modernity, knowledge, power, privilege, and superiority, whereas blackness not only places one in the inferior position of an object to be observed and studied, but also is associated with sin and some inner depravity by images of darkness (Hancock 2007; Rucker-Chang 2018). On the other hand, the racialization of Romanies along cultural lines of difference is typically framed by the widely shared perception of their "unyielding unassimilability" to the established social and cultural norms of major populations (Rucker-Chang 2018, p. 855). The Romani lifestyle and culture are specifically associated with various negatively connoted phenomena, such as nomadism, vagrancy, poverty, idleness, fortune telling, trickery, foreign cultural customs, and "the Islamic takeover of parts of the Christian world" (Hancock 2007, pp. 3–4; see also Silverman 2012, p. 9).

However, either phenotypical or cultural, constructions of Romani difference in local Guča-related discourses (and elsewhere) illustrate that the category of race tends to conflate with such cultural markers as ethnicity (Romanies are Serbia's ethnic minority), religion (the association of Romanies with Islam), and music culture (*čoček* is an expression of Balkan Romani music culture). It is precisely this elusiveness of race that has led critical cultural theorists to think of it as a category whose forms and meanings constantly shift across time and space (Bohlman 2000; King 2009; Mills 1997;

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[13] Dejan Lazarević from Požega (a town located in West Serbia) is a Guča Master of Trumpet (a title of honor bestowed upon at least triple winners of the festival competition in several most prestigious categories) and a distinguished representative of the Šumadija brass band style.

Roediger 2001). Racism likewise takes multiple forms that can range from the pseudoscientific and biological construction of racial difference on the basis of skin color and blood type to the emergence of a new brand of racism designated in academic literature by many names, such as *the clash of civilizations* (Huntington 1996), *cultural racism* (Hesmondhalgh 2014), *differentialist racism* (Taguieff [1987] 2001), or the "intra–European" type of racism (Dix 2015; Longinović 2000; Marković 2002). According to Sardelić (2014), Yugoslav/post-Yugoslav *antiziganism*—that is, a type of racism directed specifically at Romani people—should be understood precisely as consistent with forms of transnational European "cultural racism" against those minorities whose difference is apparently insurmountable.

However, to fully grasp the underlying workings of race and its close cousin—racialization—and then make them useful as analytic categories, one should bring the idea of power relations into play. Or, as Pistotnik and Brown (2018, p. 834) put it, "[race and racialization] are social and relational categories of power and domination" (see also King 2009). In the context of the Balkans, Bjelić (2018b) draws on Foucault's radically revisited concept of race in order to provide a corrective to the existing (mis)interpretations of race within the Balkanist paradigm. Instead of denying the very existence of race relations between "Europe" and "the Balkans" (as in Todorova's version of Balkanism) or explaining them in terms of stereotypes (as in Bakić-Hayden's "nesting Orientalisms"), Bjelić (2018a, p. 758) approaches race as "a function of discourse on war over ethnic space", or put more elaborately, as the systematic process of regulating an "Other" group, hitherto set apart as an "enemy" or an "internal race", in matters that concern life and death. Bjelić (2018b, p. 911) regards the Balkan race concept accordingly "as a political *event* of ethnic self–racialization *vis-à-vis* ethnic minorities as spatial–political enemies" (emphases in original).

The understanding of race "as an effect of 'governmentality'" (ibid., p. 908) is fully relevant and applicable to the case of the New European/post-Yugoslav Romani population. Their long-lasting status as internal outsiders provides strong evidence that the perception of "Romani difference" continues to be an integral part of institutional racism and structural discrimination against this ethnic group (Sardelić 2014; Todorova 2006). With that said, it is worth emphasizing that the precarious conditions of Romani life in South/Eastern Europe have only deteriorated with the passage of time "as a result of de-industrialisation, decollectivisation and the outburst of purifying Eurocentric nationalisms" (Imre 2006, p. 660; see also Rucker-Chang 2018; Silverman 2012).

Given the life-threatening undertones of the race concept as outlined above, it is hardly surprising that the most hostile treatment of Guča's Romani brass band musicians emerged during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. The story of the late Serbian Romani trumpet player and Guča's Master of Trumpet, Ekrem Mamutović (1942–2008) from Vranje, is indeed very telling in that regard. Because his birth name carried Islamic/Eastern associations, Ekrem Mamutović changed it in 1996 to the more Serbian-sounding name Milan Mladenović. Having faced severe harassment and death threats immediately after a gig in the Republika Srpska because of his Islamic name, Ekrem was advised to change it by then-infamous Serbian paramilitary commander and husband of Serbian TF diva Ceca, Željko Ražnatović, who apparently used his authority to talk Ekrem's way out of danger (Otašević 2013).

Notwithstanding the aforesaid, it is worth stressing that the *kolo–čoček* debate has, of course, its flip side, represented by those Serbian voices that speak approvingly of "Oriental" musical qualities in the Guča Festival (and beyond). This assertion can be corroborated by the two following quotes:

> Frankly speaking, who'd bother with listening to the mind–numbing *dvojka* of Zlatibor [brass band] players, which is anyway a product of the German rhythm set to the Dinaric *ojkanje* singing.[14] The real [Serbian] trumpet is [represented by] the *melos* of the South, which is also the *melos* of Serbia, because Serbia is not only Šumadija. (Jola, *B92* 2012)

[14] This is a reference to a peculiar ancient style of Dinaric singing in western Šumadija, based on two-part, unison heterophonic "singing melisma with a sharp and prolonged shaking of the voice on the syllables *oj* or *hoj*" (Randel 2003, p. 227).

> I am a Serb, but I prefer *čoček*! *Čoček* is full of energy and rhythm! Jovan [see the quote above], it looks like you're jealous of Gypsies!? Gypsies make a much better atmosphere than Serbs! (Acafaca, *Blic* 2010a)

I will come back later in this article to the ideological implications of these and similar statements with respect to the attitudes of the major (Serb) population towards Romanies; with respect to the coding of familiar racial stereotypes about Romanies and Balkan/Serbian people, respectively; and in consequence, with respect to the racial framework of contemporary Serbian national identity. However, for now I will concentrate on examining those racial aspects of Serbia's postsocialist nationalism in the Guča Trumpet Festival that have come to the fore in local public discussions about the perceived threat of Americanization to the traditional sound of the Romani *čočeks* and the Serbian brass in general.

4. The Racial Implications of the Perceived Americanization of Romani *Čočeks*

Local anxieties about the "contamination" of the Vranje *čočeks*, and the Guča *izvor* in general, are indeed often triggered by the influences of Americanization and other related phenomena such as modernization, Westernization, and globalization. Changes in the festival regarding, for example, the repertoires played, performance styles and techniques, and professed emotional impacts of brass music listening, are specifically traced to the Guča Festival's adoption of values and aesthetics associated with the world of Western(ized) popular music and, in particular, with the American jazz tradition. A good illustration of such concerns can be found in the two quotes below—one from the official public arena and the other from the unofficial.

Using the authority of ethnomusicological expertise, the president of the Guča Festival expert jury, Mirjana Zakić (in Ilić 2010) speaks disapprovingly of jazz influences: "As in previous years, we've heard once again jazz elements in *čočeks*, which is something that doesn't belong to Serbian music and doesn't sit well with the jury." This point of view is hardly surprising if one remembers that the essentialist quest for the *izvor*'s purity is inherently linked to the revivalist and ethnomusicological discourse. The main assumptions upon which a folk aesthetic rests—namely, that folk music is a music created and consumed "live" by indigenous community members, a music uncorrupted by modern influences, orally transmitted, and thus canonized through a process of self-selection by the "people" themselves (Carlin 2004)—are entangled with Herder's romantic notion of the *Volk* and the idea that folk music brings out the pristine cultural core of a people, still unspoiled by "society". Because of this ideological background, the revivalist and ethnomusicological discourse can obviously, albeit unintentionally, serve nationalist ends. According to that line of reasoning, the Serbian brass band tradition represents an incarnation of the Serb people's "soul", and consequently, "the salvation of the folk's soul" depends upon the preservation of the tradition (Naumović 2009). The preservationist discourse clearly reflects here wider concerns with the homogeneity and purity of the Serbian national core and, as such, is conservative in its nature—or perhaps not so much "'backward-looking' [as] it is looking backwards to a past that never was" (cf. Massey 2005, p. 65). Either way, nostalgic and anxious narratives about the "spoilt" tradition in the Guča Festival evoke "the image of ethno–national uniqueness (...) of early to high modernity, when the invention of national traditions and imagining of nations were characterized by a quest for essentialism and purism" (Regev 2007, p. 125).

The second quote comes from an online commentator under the alias *Surovi*/"The Brutal", and it likewise reflects anti-American sentiment combined with nostalgia and resentment:

> This modern–day Guča reminds me rather of a jazz festival than of the earlier Serbian music contests dating back to the days of Bakija Bakić [the founder of the Vranje–style trumpet playing], Fejat Sejdić and other wonderful trumpeters that Serbia has yielded. Back in those days, by listening to music, you felt how it was lifting you from the ground, how your heart was jumping with joy; but nowadays everyone is trying to become a trumpet virtuoso, everyone would like to emulate those stupid Americans. Why? We have our wonderful

> music and our wonderful people and customs, so why not let them return and help us preserve our tradition. (*Blic* 2011)

One way to explain the racial implications of anti-American sentiment in both examples above is to connect them to the idiosyncrasies of postsocialist national ideology. Namely, after the collapse of socialism, the new ruling elites in South/Eastern European countries were quick to fall back on nationalism as the primary ideological source of identification (Graham et al. 2000, p. 69). They focused specifically on the critical tasks of revising national histories and rediscovering ethnicity in culture, but in a way that was ostensibly consistent with the idea of "returning to Europe" and with the attendant political processes of "Europeanization" and EU accession. However, as Imre (2005, p. 84) pointed out in her critical study of race and racism in Eastern Europe (EE), by adopting "the models of European national and imperial development", EE countries uncritically adopted their underlying racial hierarchies, too. What thus lies at the core of EE national discourse, as she explains further, is the assumption of (European) whiteness, which remains unquestioned through the process of "self–colonization"—that is, through the internalization of Western/European epistemological paradigms and cultural values, including nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, and institutionalized forms of racism (ibid., p. 82).

Because of its implicit attachments to the ideas of imperial and white Europe, EE/Serbian nationalism, in some perverted twist, sees the threat of colonization as coming from somewhere beyond Europe's cultural boundaries. More specifically, EE/Serbian nationalism articulates its resistance to colonialism into a purge directed against various "Eastern invaders" (as illustrated in the above examples of the Guča Festival's *Oriental controversy* and *antiziganism*) and, more recently, against the United States. To refer to Imre once again, in EE/Serbian national discourse, the idea of

> the West [is not rejected] as a whole. Rather, the binary logic of nationalism has dictated that the West be split in two: authentic and false; old and new; sophisticated and mass–oriented. Influences deemed "harmful" for the nation are associated with the United States, in opposition to good old "authentic" European values. (Ibid., pp. 81–82)

It is thus through such values as consumerism, global media, and cultural pluralism—in short, through various outlets of American "cultural and media imperialism"—that the US has come to be demonized and perceived as a threat to the "traditional" elements and values of South/Eastern European cultures. In the case of Serbia, the suspicion and animosity towards Americans run arguably deeper—which is perhaps echoed in the resentful tone of the phrase "those stupid Americans" in the Brutal's comment above—due to recent political and historical events, above all, the 1999 NATO bombing and the Kosovo question. On a broader level, this may also explain the fierce opposition of postsocialist Serbian nationalism to different forms of Western liberal democracy (e.g., rights of sexualized/gendered/racialized minorities), which is justified through its anti-global, anti-neocolonial, and, at times, anti-capitalist struggle (cf. Bjelić and Cole 2005; Žižek 2015).

In any event, the racialization of issues surrounding the perceived Americanization of Romani *čočeks* in the Guča Festival is very telling in that it points to the contradictory and undecisive positioning of the festival's national-minded supporters and Serbia's nationalists alike. On the one hand, all the examples above, be they pertinent to the Oriental dispute or to anti-American sentiment which forms part of national discourse in postsocialist EE/Serbia, unanimously demonstrate that "nationalism in [South/] Eastern Europe [tends to function] as a form of racism" (Imre 2005, p. 84). On the other hand, this tendency of conflating nationalism with cultural racism/antiziganism in the Guča Festival apparently falls short of explaining how the Romani trumpet players, such as "Bakija Bakić, Fejat Sejdić and other wonderful trumpeters that Serbia has yielded" (see the quote above), have come to be considered genuine representatives of the Serbian national brass idiom despite their racial difference (see Zakić's and the Brutal's comments above).

There are two possible explanations for this contradiction. The first is that such a contradiction reflects the ideological ambiguity of local preservationist concerns with the Guča Festival's *izvor*. Whether they be expressed by revivalists, ethnomusicologists, cosmopolitans, or nationalists, all of them agree that there is an intrinsic value in the Serbian brass band tradition as well as in the festival that safeguards it. However, despite their shared point of departure (which is clearly essentialist), Guča Festival observers on each side of the political spectrum use the preservationist discourse to articulate and pursue different aesthetic–ideological agendas. The preservationist agenda that presumes a correlation between the *izvor*'s purity and the nation's survival generates the exclusivist view of (Serbian) national identity. Such an approach not only fosters a sense of ethnonational exceptionality, but it also excludes all those identity groups that are deemed disruptive to the desired national image. Indeed, as illustrated in some of the examples above, various suggestions to purge the Guča Festival's *izvor* of "foreign" and especially Oriental influences reveal a hostile attitude towards the nation's multiple Others, whether they be labeled Romanies/Muslims/Turks/Asians/Americans/Westerners, and the like. In contrast to this, the Guča Festival's global-minded supporters refute the Romantic idea that the national essence is to be found in the Serbian or Šumadija brass band tradition or that either represents the only true and universally shared expression of national culture. The preservationist discourse of the Guča Festival's cosmopolitans propagates thus the universalist framework of (Serbian) national identity. The image of Serbia constructed accordingly is one of a culturally diverse nation that endorses policies of inclusion and civil rights and that freely interacts both with the world outside and with the Other within, notably the Romanies (cf. Koziol 2008).

The Guča Festival's colorblind ideology is arguably the second possible explanation for the incongruous racial formation of Serbian national identity, whereby the incorporation of Romanies into the national self-imagery vacillates between recognition and denial. Generally speaking, colorblindness can be defined as a racial ideology that glosses over the enduring role of white privilege and racial difference in the (re)production of structural inequalities and marginalization of minority groups in today's society. This is also an ideology informed by the intertwined neoliberal discourses of post-racism, post-identity, meritocracy, hard work, and resourcefulness and employed to undermine the existing hardships and structural discrimination against racialized minority groups in question (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Gallagher 2003). When applied to the case of Serbian Romanies in the Guča Festival, colorblind ideology seems to be utilized by the Serbian ruling elites selectively, that is, whenever it benefits them in advancing their political agenda and commercial interests. The Guča Festival's colorblindness can also be partly traced to some of the attitudes that the major (Serb) population displays towards Romani festival participants. It is these and similar racial incongruities underpinning Serbia's self-narration that are the subject of inquiry below.

5. The Racial Imaginations of Romani Festival Participants

The racialization of Romanies as a traditionally scapegoated racial-ethnic group in Serbia and elsewhere sparks indeed the biggest controversy over issues of race and national identity in the Guča Festival. That the Romani minority calls attention to the exclusionary practices of the Serbian nation state and major population, as well as to the "white" and monoethnic assumptions of what is considered to be the genuine Serbian cultural heritage, has already been demonstrated in the *kolo–čoček* debate surrounding this festival. Discussed next are the political motivations and the controversial ways in which the Serbian authorities and Guča Festival producers support Romani people and their musical culture in the festival.

The official endorsement of the Guča Festival's Romani brass bands should of course be seen in the light of the global popularity of Balkan Romani Brass and Balkan Romani music in general. However, besides purely financial gains, at stake are also political interests, specifically a desire of Serbian national elites to demonstrate their "Europeanness" by adopting discourses of human rights and multiculturalism vis-à-vis the Romani minority. Thus, the apparently equal treatment and display of Romani musicians in the Guča Trumpet Festival can be regarded as instrumental in the process

of Serbia's accession to the EU. It is meant to help the country's ruling classes achieve their political goals and gain credibility in both the local and international political arenas. It is through these lenses that affirmative public statements about the "European" character of the Guča Festival should be understood. What immediately comes to mind is the assertion by Serbian conservative politician Mrkonjić (in Tadić et al. 2010, p. 359) that "[Guča] is a European festival". Another example includes a suggestion made by Vranje mayor Antić (in Živanović 2012, p. 8) that "[t]he present Festival should showcase loud and clear the extent to which the Serbian tradition incorporates a multicultural European dimension."

However, as Silverman (2012, p. 165) rightly notes, "that the state recognizes Romani art does not automatically mean progress in human rights; the state often recognizes a few talented Romani artists as tokens while ignoring the rest." Or in Imre (2009, p. 123) words, "embracing selected Roma musicians has long been a strategy employed by the state and the moral majority to hand–pick and isolate from their communities 'model' representatives of the minority, most of whom will remain all the more excluded from the national community." In the case of the Guča Festival, the segregation of Romanies from the rest of society is evident in the limited social roles available to them at the festival. Ethnographic evidence confirms that they typically appear in the capacity of entertainment workers (musicians and dancers) or beggars. Moreover, Romani and Serbian festival participants do not seem to mix, not even members of brass bands, as also noticed by two festival documentary makers from Germany (Stojanović 2007, p. 17). Although instances of unfair treatment, exploitation, and corruption are reported by trumpet players from both "white" and "black" camps (see e.g., Ignjić, in Kovačević 2011, p. 13; Lazarević, in Petrović 2012a, p. 5; Stanković 2013), there is a widespread perception that Romani musicians suffer more in these respects. For example, Arsenijević (2012), Lukić-Krstanović (2006), and Lajić Mihajlović and Zakić (2012) write about ethnic discrimination against "black" brass bands in the Guča Festival, as well as about their underrepresentation in festival music programs and internet presentations. Đorđević (10 September 2014 interview), for his part, accuses festival organizers of having a condescending attitude towards Romani musicians, with the exception of Boban and Marko Marković.

Indeed, among a large number of successful Romani trumpet players competing and winning at the Guča Festival, Boban Marković is an absolute star of the festival who appeals equally to both local and international audiences for the reasons explained above. Numerous honors that he has received from the Guča Festival authorities can be said to speak volumes of his status as a role model for the rest of the Serbian Romani community. Not only have festival organizers granted Boban and his son Marko the privilege of holding individual concerts since 2004; at the Guča Festival of 2007, Boban was also appointed the World Ambassador of the Guča Festival by the president of the festival board Slobodan Jolović, while the Guča Local Community Council proclaimed him an honorary citizen of the Trumpet Republic[15] (Tadić et al. 2010, p. 350). Moreover, to add a trivial detail to the list, in one of Guča's hotels, a luxury hotel apartment was named after Boban Marković and decorated with items related to his musical career (*Blic* 2010b). However, in reality, as already pointed out, the Romanies continue to occupy the position of the usual suspects both because their racial difference prevents them from ever becoming true representatives of the nation and because their transnational kin relationships and music success are too closely linked to the dreaded forces of globalization and cultural commodification (see Imre 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009).

The opposite story of Serbian trumpet player Dejan Petrović is very illustrative in this respect. According to Đorđević (10 September 2014 interview), Petrović is far better treated than any other trumpet player, including Boban Marković. This is arguably because of his Serbian lineage, but also because of his strong connections with powerful political figures in Serbia (in particular with Ivica

[15] The label "Trumpet Republic" has long been used in various media and popular discourses as a metaphorical description of the Guča Trumpet Festival or the Dragačevo region to which Guča belongs.

Dačić, the former PM and leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia), which he inherited from his late father, renowned trumpet player Mićo Petrović (Petrović 2012b). It therefore comes as no surprise that it is Dejan (and not Boban) who is regarded as a true representative of the nation—hence his title as the Ambassador of the Serbian Trumpet (Guca Festival 2010, "Winner Guca 2010")—and who is usually selected to represent Serbia at various international fairs, festivals, sports, and cultural events. For instance, he was invited by the Serbian Government to participate in the mini-concert *Senses of Serbia* held at the European Parliament in 2011. In the same year, Petrović also represented Serbia at the Thessaloniki International Fair as well as at Tourism Fairs in Brussels and Milan respectively (Milojković 2011).

According to James Scott (1990, in (Silverman 2012, p. 228), Romanies tend to flatter national elites publicly but express their grievances behind the scenes. That this generalization may also apply to Boban Marković became crystal clear during the first international brass band competition at the Guča Festival of 2010, when it was decided that Dejan Petrović and Ekrem Mamutović would compete on behalf of Serbia for the World's First Trumpet and First Band awards. It is true that Boban did not hide from the public his disappointment with the decision of the festival organizers to invite neither him nor his son, Marko, to represent Serbia in the competition (Novaković 2010; Petrović 2010, p. 1). However, it was his fellow musician Ignjić (in Kovačević 2011, p. 13) who disclosed to a local newspaper how Marković really felt about this. To quote him verbatim:

> Ask Boban Marković why his son Marko didn't want to compete for the First Trumpet of the World last year? You know what he told me—I wouldn't let them diminish my son, as it was known in advance that Dejan Petrović would receive the World's First Trumpet award. That was Boban's answer. For the last ten years, all [major] awards swing back and forth between Dejan Petrović and Dejan Lazarević. They're great guys, but that's the way it goes. (Ibid.)

The main reason Boban Marković and other Romani artists rarely ever speak publicly about their grievances is that raising political issues is not generally considered to be a wise career move. Or, as Silverman (2012, p. 254) put it, "Roma know that they are paid to entertain, not educate, so they learn not to raise political issues on stage." The other important reason for political apathy among the Romanies may lie in their longstanding distrust and fear of the authorities. According to Đorđević (10 September 2014 interview), Romani artists, including the Markovićs, rather opt to adopt a servile and opportunistic attitude towards the major population in order to avoid harassment and pursue their own advantage. It is from this perspective that one should read Boban's choice of "Marš na Drinu" [March to the Drina][16] as an opening song at his concerts in Guča. The same applies to some of his media statements, such as the two following examples:

> Wherever in the world I played, I'd always point out and feel proud that I come from Serbia. The most interesting event in my career was a stage appearance in New York,[17] where I made the Americans applaud me and shout out "Serbia! Serbia!" while standing before them draped in the Serbian flag. (Milojković 2010)

> I'm proud when [foreign brass band musicians] say that Serbian music is the best in the world. (Milojković and Bojović 2012)

However, behind the scenes, as Boban's ex-manager Đorđević testifies (10 September 2014 interview), Marković does not deny a sense of national pride and belonging to Serbia but ranks it as

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[16] "March to the Drina [River]" is a Serbian patriotic song, composed by Stanislav Binički during the First World War, which symbolizes national resistance to the Great Powers.

[17] The Markovićs' former manager Bojan Đorđević (10 September 2014 interview) claims that the said event took place in Chicago.

secondary to his primary identification as an ethnic Romani. Either way, by rousing his local audience with patriotic songs and public statements alike, Marković, similar to many other Romani artists, not only agrees to fashion a "whitewashed and nationalized" image of himself (cf. Imre 2009, p. 124), but he also becomes implicated in the reproduction of Serbian national ideology in Guča and elsewhere. If we add to this the political arguments discussed above, then it is plausible to view the Guča Festival's Romani stars, notably the Markovićs, as performing a double ideological function for the Serbian ruling elites. As Silverman (2012, p. 174) succinctly put it, "they [either] (. . .) reinforce nationalism, or they (. . .) display the nation's commitment to diversity."

However, it is not only Serbia's ruling classes that profit from the economic, political, and cultural capital that the Romani musicians in the Guča Festival embody. The latter group is also widely exploited by people from the music and entertainment industry. In fact, the label "Gypsy music" has become such a powerful trademark in itself, both commercially and symbolically, that it no longer requires any references to actual Romani music, nor any involvement of actual Romani musicians (Marković 2013; Silverman 2012). Those capitalizing most on the type of Romani music promoted in the Guča Festival are, of course, Emir Kusturica and Goran Bregović. Both men are much debated and highly controversial figures, particularly within the former Yugoslav region where they are admired and loathed at the same time. Both are, for example, applauded for international success in their respective fields of artistry but simultaneously denounced "for promoting a version of the Balkans that corroborates centuries–old stereotypes" (Marković 2013, pp. 8–9). Relatedly, both men are praised as the artists who have helped revive widespread interest in the rich music–cultural heritage of the region. However, at the same time, they are accused of adjusting it to a decidedly Western sensibility and thus of trivializing it for their personal advantage, economic and otherwise. Kusturica and Bregović are additionally thanked for having opened the door to numerous musicians from the Balkans, above all to Serbia's Romani brass bands. Then again, there is simultaneously a gnawing sense that the latter are left with little space for creative maneuvering due to the audience's already formed expectations about Balkan images and sounds (see Marković 2013).[18]

Furthermore, some of Goran Bregović's greatest hits, namely, "Kalašnjikov" [Kalashnikov] and "Mesečina" [Moonlight], are appropriated tunes from such Serbian Romani musicians as Boban Marković, Slobodan Salijević, and Šaban Bajramović (Babić 2004, pp. 239–41; Marković 2013, pp. 146–51). According to their testimonies, the cooperation with Bregović left them with a bitter taste in their mouth (see also Đorđević: 10 September 2014 interview; Silverman 2012, pp. 275–76). As noted by Marković (2013, p. 147), a specialist in Bregović's music, "[e]ven if they were acknowledged as authors or paid a one-off fee for collaborating on the CD production (as is standard practice in recording business), some artists felt deceived, as they were never paid royalties for the countless live performances subsequently given by Bregović." However, there is surely more to the grievances of Romani musicians than the simple sense of economic injustice. As Romani trumpet player Slobodan Salijević (in Babić 2004, p. 240) stated once, "[a]t the end of the day, it is Goran Bregović that travels [and plays] around the world, [while] the Salijevićs are nowhere. There is no single mention of them." Clearly, matters such as popularity, artistic prestige, and credibility seem to carry just as much weight in these disputes.

More broadly speaking, it is important to emphasize that "there is no problem with creative trading of cultures, but rather we must investigate the terms of the trade" (Hutnyk 2000, in Silverman 2012, p. 43). It is in light of this critical reminder that many collaborative WM

[18] Note that similar contradictions appear in academic discussions of WM practices in general. This music market niche has indeed proved very helpful in increasing the visibility and revenue of marginal peoples (including the Romanies), while simultaneously keeping the structures of inequality in place. Following Imre (2006) and Feld (2000), Silverman (2012) notes that the incorporation of ethnic–racial difference into various outlets of the global entertainment industry is a double-edged process: "it can be seen as liberating and democratic, empowering minorities whose voices would otherwise be missing or stereotyped. At the same time, it implies the appropriation of such voices and images by corporate multiculturalism (. . .) which retrivializes racial difference on a commercial basis" and "reproduces the institutions of patronage" (ibid., pp. 293, 276).

projects, such as Paul Simon's *Graceland* or Ry Cooder's *Buena Vista Social Club*, are criticized for sustaining or even reinforcing the hegemony of neocolonial power relations within the global music industry (Gligorijević 2014). Note, however, that the appropriation of the Serbian Romani brass by Kusturica and Bregović is somewhat exceptional in this regard. The way in which both artists repeatedly gloss over issues of ownership and appropriation is by assuming the "double role of the curator [and] the 'authentic' Balkan native"—that is, of someone positioning himself both inside and outside the commercialized transnational film/WM markets (Marković 2013, p. 8).

In defense against public charges of Romani exploitation, Bregović presents himself and behaves as if he is one of them or at least as if he is on their side. As Marković (ibid., p. 230) observes, "his identification with Gypsies (. . .) span[s] from joyful camaraderie to overt physical transformation into a prototypical dark–skinned Gypsy." Moreover, Bregović deploys the Gypsy voice and image for many purposes—to justify his ethically dubious compositional techniques (recycling and collage), to explain his multi-sited "nomadic" living caused by the recent Yugoslav wars, and to claim authenticity in the presentation of his Balkan Beat production and his stage persona (ibid.). Kusturica (in Živanović 2011) defends himself in a similar manner, by declaring the Romani world to be an integral part of his childhood experience as well as of who he is today. In his own words: "And where else am I supposed to draw energy and disperse [my creative] doubts but in a world that I know and love!? I grew up alongside a Romani settlement, became friends with Gypsies, and already as a kid, got to know their music. I was living out the life from my movies" (ibid., p. 6).

The blurred lines between the Balkan nations and the region's Romani minority in Bregović's and Kusturica's artistic work seem to correspond with the ambivalent feelings with which Romani people are received by the Serb population in general. Just as elsewhere in Europe and the world beyond, Serbia's Romanies occupy a continuum between extreme disparaging and romanticizing (Hancock 2007; Silverman 2012; Živković 2001). The label "Gypsy" accordingly carries contradictory meanings. Within the Yugoslav/post-Yugoslav context, the term is often used pejoratively and in a recursive manner (similar to the term "Balkan"), operating thereby "as a metonymic signifier for everything that is considered to be a weaker, debased item in dichotomies" (Živković 2001, p. 89; see also van de Port 1999). This is the reason why a substantial segment of the Serbian public blames Kusturica and Bregović for creating abroad an apparently misleading image of Serbs as Gypsies (cf. Imre 2005; Jansen 2001). Disclosed here is nothing less than scorn for the Romani minority, whose status as racialized Others in Serbian society has been duly noted and already discussed in terms of the ever-present polarization between the Guča Festival's "white" and "black" brass bands.

With that said, in the larger framework of everyday life, there appears to be an ambiguous self-characterization of Serbs as Gypsies and non-Gypsies at the same time (see Jansen 2001). Such an approach arguably performs two major functions. One is to re-establish a sense of superiority within the wider geographical hierarchy of power relations. As Goffman (1968, pp. 130–31) clarifies, this is the mechanism by which one social group (e.g., the Serbs) renders itself "normal" and thus superior when compared to those (e.g., the Romanies) whose stigmatized status is displayed even more dramatically (cf. also Imre 2005, p. 91). In the second-case scenario, the national self-identification with Gypsies seems to function as a form of scrutiny, the outcomes of which vacillate between *self-deprecation* (i.e., self-critical discursive strategies that reaffirm negative views of the Serbs/Balkan nations) and *self-exoticization* (i.e., self-praising narratives resulting from the inversion of the Serbian/Balkan stigma) (for the latter, see the online comment above by *Jola*, in "South Serbia . . . ,'" *B92* [comments], 2012; cf. also Goffman 1968; Živković 2001).

It should be noted, however, that it is not only the Serbs who relate ambiguously to Gypsy stereotypes. Some Balkan Romani musicians, too, find Kusturica's and Bregović's representations of Romani people problematic (Đorđević: 10 September 2014 interview). Unlike their fellow Romani musicians of Fanfare Ciocârlia, the Markovićs, for instance, refuse to play into the stereotypes about Balkan Gypsy musicians when it comes to appearance, attitude, and behavior on and off stage, as well as to the repertoire played. As their former manager, Bojan Đorđević, reveals in an interview

(10 September 2014), they strongly oppose playing in the streets or *kafanas*[19] for money, mingling with the audience during the gig, or inviting foreign journalists to their native Vladičin Han—knowing that the latter are searching for the stereotypical poverty-stricken but romanticized images of Romani life. Additionally, when on tours abroad, the Markovićs are apparently not willing to compromise their artistic integrity either. Judging by Đorđević's testimony, they refuse to play Serbian traditional or patriotic/Chetnik[20] tunes to the Serbian diaspora across the world, because they see themselves primarily as a modern brass band, both visually and sonically. The Markovićs have, in his words, "always sounded too jazzy, too modern for the Serbian diaspora." However, when that suits their goals, as Silverman (2012, p. 7) reminds us, "some Romani performers [the Markovićs included] strategically employ aspects of self–stereotypification to monopolize various musical niches. Labels such as *exotic*, *passionate*, *genetically talented*, and *soulful*, for example, are (. . .) also sometimes defended by Romani performers" (emphases in original).

The following passage describing Marko Marković's inherent musical ability due to his Romani origins illustrates well that this sort of labeling is indeed more than welcome when it serves the economic and self-promotional purposes of Romani musicians. As Bolton (2012) notes:

> Marko has been playing since the age of three. 'It's normal where I'm from. From the moment you get up in the morning, you can hear children practising their instruments. Yet it has to be in your blood—you can't learn to play like a Roma. It's like God designed the Roma to play music.'

The widespread myth about natural born music virtuosi among Romanies is clearly predicated upon another underlying set of Gypsy stereotypes. Specifically, they are considered to be free from the shackles of modern life and thus somehow closer to nature, which in turn adds to the perceived authenticity of their music production (see Marković 2013). In short, then, the story of Boban and Marko Marković is truly illuminating. It teaches us that acts of resistance to the imposed stereotype usually go hand in hand with catering to the expectations of audiences and state authorities (in the Guča Festival case represented by Serbian festival organizers). The same conclusion has been reached by Silverman (2012, p. 145), who maintains, following Ortner (1995), "that resistance is neither singular nor pure; (...) it is always paired with collaboration."

Let me finally re-emphasize that the ambivalent attitude towards Serbia's Romanies in the Guča Festival and elsewhere, constantly shifting between the poles of fascination and loathing, is equally shared by both local and international festival audiences. Romanies are indeed ubiquitous fantasy figures, "feared as deviance, idealized as autonomy" (Trumpener 1992, in Silverman 2012, p. 9) or, in another definition, "paradoxically revered as musicians and reviled as people" (Silverman 2012, p. 3).[21] The positive coding of Romani stereotypes can be found, for example, in the Guča Festival documentary *The Brass Music Oscar* (Hielscher and Heeder 2002). Here, the reasons for the peaceful atmosphere of the festival are sought in the non-violent history of Romani people, as opposed to the implicitly presumed warmongering impulses in the host population. In the words of (German)

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[19] The *kafana* is a Balkan type of male-dominated bistro of Ottoman Turkish origins, serving grilled meat, alcoholic beverages, and "Turkish coffee", occasionally to a soundtrack of local folk music. In Dvorniković's *Characterology of the Yugoslavs* (1939, in Longinović 2000, p. 629), the *kafana* is portrayed "as an 'orientalized' site where men gather to vent their individual and communal frustrations by drinking plum brandy, occasionally smashing glasses on the floor to relieve their 'burden' while listening to and sometimes participating in the performance of the folk song."

[20] The Chetnik is a prototype of the Serb soldier whose origins can be traced back to Serbian nationalist and monarchist paramilitary organizations from the first half of the 20th century. They were formed as resistance movements against the Ottoman occupation in 1904 and continued to participate in two Balkan and two World Wars. Importantly, during the Second World War, the Chetniks gained a notorious reputation for tactical collaborations with the Nazis, as well as for their project of a Greater Serbia, ethnically cleansed of Muslims and Croats. It is no wonder, then, that some of the Serbian paramilitary organizations founded in the wake of Yugoslavia's bloody disintegration took for themselves the name "Chetniks", considering themselves the only true successors of the Chetnik tradition.

[21] For the roots of negative stereotypes about Romanies, see (Hancock 2007, pp. 3–4; or Silverman 2012, p. 9). For the positive associations of Romani Otherness with nostalgia and Orientalized images, see (Marković 2013; Silverman 2012).

documentary director and commentator Matthias Heeder (ibid.), "[m]aybe this is due to the spirit of the Roma who in their history never went to war; and maybe it is this spirit which is passed on to the listeners of their music."

Otherwise, the way in which virtually all Guča-goers respond to the Romani brass is usually in a combination of *sevdah* (a Balkan version of trance experience), high-energy outbursts (through jumping), and enhanced eroticism (through belly dancing). The quintessential Otherness of Gypsies in this and similar contexts apparently helps non-Romani festivalgoers to "exteriorize their state of soul" and experience themselves in a new light (Block 1936, in van de Port 1999, p. 291; see also the online comment above by *Acafaca*, in "Boban Marković … ", *Blic* [comments], 2010). Specifically, as van de Port (1999) convincingly argues, masquerading as a Gypsy (or as a Balkanite for that matter)—by assuming the qualities s/he is typically associated with, such as freedom, mercurial temperament, and unbridled passion—is a way to allow the repressed Other within the Self to take the stage (cf. also Beissinger 2007). From this psychoanalytic point of view, to quote van de Port (1999, p. 306) once again, "the wish to re-inject the Self with [Balkan Gypsy] Otherness—for exploratory or liberating purposes—is as common … [as e]stablishing a notion of Self by way of projecting unwanted parts of the Self onto significant Others."

6. Concluding Remarks

The previous analysis showed that the racialization of the Serbian Self and the Romani Other in the Guča Festival is fraught with ambiguities and contradictions. This gives us all the more reason to present a summary of the insights that this analysis has yielded through the lens of Balkanist discourse on Serbia's national identity schisms. Then, the next step will be to add race to previously made conclusions by "mapping the constitutive hierarchical binary of whiteness and blackness on to what the [Balkanist paradigm] (…) holds to be the foundational binary of south–east European identity construction: 'Europe' and 'the Balkans'" (Baker 2018, pp. 167–168). In closing, I will briefly enter into a dialogue with Bjelić (2018a, 2018b) proposal of a new paradigm (*Balkan transnationalism*) in place of the former one (*Balkanism*) by using the "Romani question" as a case in point.

As the Balkanist paradigm would have it, the Balkan Peninsula, Serbia included, is primarily thought of as "a place of specific liminality", a place neither Western nor Eastern but something in between (Jansen 2005, p. 99). The racial imaginings of Serbian national identity in the Guča Festival are likewise marked by the West–East clash of codes from within, as well as by many other antagonisms. This holds true especially for the "Romani question" in the festival, as corroborated by a number of discussions above, covering such topics as the *kolo–čoček* controversy; the ideological ambiguity of local preservationist concerns with the *izvor* of Romani *čočeks* and the Serbian brass in general; ambiguous national political agendas and attitudes concerning Romani festival participants; and the contradictory relationship of the Guča Festival's Romani musicians to the expectations imposed upon them by Serbian national elites or by Gypsy stereotypes.

To sum up, then, the previous analysis of the "Romani question" in the Guča Trumpet Festival did demonstrate that the attitude of the Serb population towards its Romani minority is one of alternation between fascination and fear, admiration and contempt, trust and suspicion. The relationship of Romanies to various institutions of power—local and otherwise—is likewise fraught with contradictions. The latter, furthermore, appear to be based on instances of both collaboration and resistance or on instances of playing both into and outside Gypsy stereotypes. In addition to documented tensions between Serbia's "white" and "black" festival participants on the ground, as well as to their extension in Serbia's *kolo–čoček* debate (itself forming part of the larger "Oriental controversy"), this study also established that Serbian Romanies are subject to shifting political agendas. The position of the Serbian/Guča authorities towards Romani festival participants moves indeed between the politics of diversity and the politics of nationalism or, alternatively, between the politics of endorsement (that is, handpicking the talented few) and the politics of exclusion (that is, evermore alienating the rest). Using the case studies of the Guča Festival's best-known "white" and "black" trumpet players,

Dejan Petrović and Boban Marković, respectively, I argued that Serbian Romanies ultimately have no real prospect of ever becoming the "true" representatives of the Serb nation.

A brief review of the influence of Bregović's and Kusturica's artistic work on the Guča Festival similarly revealed the deeply ambiguous self-perception of Serbs as Gypsies and non-Gypsies at the same time. In the affirmative scenario, the Serbs arguably identify with Romani people either for the sake of self-criticism—which is one way of dealing with the tribal stigma known as *self-deprecation* (Goffman 1968; Živković 2001). Or, just as many other international recipients of Romani art and culture, the Serbs do so for self-exploring purposes—which amounts to the strategy of identity construction called *self-exoticization* (ibid.). Conversely, the resistance and insult that the Serbs feel when being confused with the Gypsies discloses yet another way of compensating for tribal stigma—which is to exercise power over those (Romanies) whose stigma is even more apparent.

Let me finally add that these two models of Serbia's self-representational strategies in the Guča Trumpet Festival (namely, self-deprecation and self-exoticization) can be explained in terms of a collision between "identity-from-above" and "identity-from-below" (Ditchev 2005, p. 245). At times, these representational models do stand in relations of sharp opposition—as shown in the analysis of the Guča Festival's ongoing tensions between the "authentic" Romani *čočeks* and their Americanized/commercialized counterparts. However, at times, they seem to fulfill the ideal of peaceful co-existence, largely owing to fact that "the standards imposed by [the] foreign gaze are changeable" (ibid.). This is arguably how the Guča Festival sutures over the apparent contradictions in its reproduction. It is the porous line between two different cultural paradigms that enables local Guča Festival supporters to shift freely between discourses of early nation-building projects—pertaining to Serbia's neotraditionalist concerns with national homogeneity, purity, and authenticity—and those of information society, globalization, consumption, and multiculturalism that not only endorse but also privilege Serbia's cultural difference over more "universal" and "impersonal" cultural products of global modernity. Either way, my final argument is that the representations of Serbia's national identity schisms in the Guča Festival ultimately point to "the incapacity to conceive of oneself in other terms than from the point of view of the dominating other" (Močnik 2005, p. 95). The underlying principle driving these fractured cultural self-projections should be therefore understood and interpreted in the light of Serbia's attempts at coping with the tribal stigma and spoiled identity (Goffman 1968).

Now, when brought to the forefront of the Balkanist analysis above, race was considered from two different angles. On the one hand, Balkanism itself was approached as a form of racialization and then illustrated with two examples surrounding the Romani-specific music genre played at the Guča Festival, the *čoček*: namely, the "Oriental" and the "anti-American controversy", respectively. In both cases, various suggestions to purge the Guča Festival's *izvor* of Oriental and jazz influences reveal an antagonistic attitude towards Serbia's multiple Others, whether they be labeled Romanies, Muslims, Americans, or Westerners. This only confirms Imre (2005) assertion that the racialization of various minority groups represents a commonplace in the ideology of nationalism in postsocialist South/Eastern Europe. More to the point, what seems to drive both anti-Oriental and anti-American expressions of Serbian nationalism in the examples above are "the forces of Eurocentricity at its peripheries" (Vidić Rasmussen 2006, p. 108). In the first case, the putative Oriental elements apparently bear witness to multifaceted music–cultural traces of the Ottoman past, variously associated with Islamic or Turkish influences (Todorova 1997). The reason such traces are commonly treated as instances of ultimate Otherness in all domains of Balkan life, not least in music, lies in the consensus view among Balkan historians that the Ottoman legacy represents "a religiously, socially, institutionally, and even racially alien imposition on [the] autochthonous Christian" and European "white" core of Balkan societies (cf. Todorova 1997, p. 162). Thus, the fact that Orientalist discourses still underpin much of music-inspired discussion across the Balkans speaks volumes about the region's internal schism between the "shameful" Ottoman past and the wishful (white) European present and future.

That said, it should be emphasized that the discursive practice of conflating nationalism with cultural racism and antiziganism is applicable to the case of the Guča Festival only to some extent.

As exemplified above, the Romani *čočeks* and Romani trumpet players alike are in some local discourses regarded as the genuine representatives of the Serbian brass band tradition, but often at the expense of an American Other who stands here for the "evil" forces of globalization and commodification of Serbian ethnonational uniqueness/cultural difference. I suggested two possible explanations for Serbia's clearly ambivalent positioning towards Romanies in this and similar examples: one is the ideological ambiguity of (Serbian) preservationist discourse that cuts across the conventional Left–Right divisions; and the other is the Guča Festival's colorblind ideology, which is used selectively according to the needs of both Serbian ruling classes and members of the majority population.

Speaking of the latter, analogies that are occasionally drawn between Serbs and Romanies in local Guča-related discourses are perhaps indicative of one additional way in which race can be incorporated into the framework of Balkanism—namely, by equating the perception of the Balkans/Serbia with blackness itself (cf. Baker 2018, p. 168). Looking from that perspective, the motivations behind the Serbian identifications with the "blackness" of Romani people might be sought in the experience of loss associated with a sense of exceptionality, stability, security, and progress that the previous (socialist) state was believed to have afforded and the current (postsocialist) state is perceived to have taken away from people. As pointed out above, this is a discursive strategy that seems to occur somewhere on an unfolding continuum between self-deprecation and self-exoticization.

However, once again, either megalomaniac (through hyperbolic expressions of national pride) or self-exoticizing (through the positive revaluation of the Serbian/Balkan stigma), the articulations of Serbian national identity in the Guča Festival invariably suggest "the melting and disappearance of the national subjectivity before the gaze of the 'Significant Other'" (cf. Kiossev 2005, p. 182) and thus Serbia's ultimate identifications with white privilege and supremacy that this significant other embodies. Or, as Baker (2018, p. 175) succinctly puts it in her critical study of race in the former Yugoslav region:

> Whiteness, still, is woven into identity narratives throughout the Yugoslav region—whether unavowed, underneath symbolic geographies contrasting "Europe" with an Other space, or openly, in antiziganisms or anti–blackness combining ethnicised entitlement to regulate minorities' settlement on national territory with culturally and/or biologically essentialised rationales for why these racialised Others could never assimilate into the nation.

One final point should be made concerning the main conceptual framework of this article: *Balkanism*. Indeed, given the transnational character of the "Romani question", it seems necessary to point to the limits of Balkan exceptionalism that the Balkanist paradigm implies. To begin with, the ongoing global craze for everything Gypsy sheds light on the very logic of the transnational cultural industry that obviously feeds off cultural diversity. There is no doubt that the Guča Festival capitalizes on the same (Orientalized, exoticized, romanticized, eroticized, etc.) type of racialization of Balkan/Serbian/Romani difference, which simultaneously thrills and terrifies both the foreign and the local imagination. Partly because of this success in the transnational cultural markets, partly because of their transnational identity itineraries, and partly because of their everlasting status as "the strangers within" (van de Port 1999), the Romanies furthermore call into question the very racial foundations of national identities across the entire European continent, not only in the Balkans. I specifically argue that, just as in the case of Serbia, the presence and cultural production of the Romani minority in the rest of New Europe bring to the fore similar national identity schisms occurring between two poles of the ideological spectrum—for example, between Old Europe and New Europe; between a search for the purity and authenticity of traditional cultures and the endorsement of transnational, postmodern, hybrid, and mass-oriented cultural forms; or between the exclusivist and the universalist projections of national identity. Add to this the high level of hypocrisy that highlights a glaring gap between the EU-prescribed policies about the Romani social integration and the critical situation on the ground, and it becomes clear that the Romani question, along with Europe's ongoing "refugee crises" and growing anti-immigrant sentiment, is apparently part of the wider process of reconfiguring race within the overarching EU framework. As Bjelić (2018b) notes, the emergent forms of Europe's

racism, triggered by the rise of authoritarian populism and "an administrative war on immigrants", both from within and without, seem to be increasingly articulated through the anachronistic language of nationalism. They are accordingly accompanied by "a return to the old administrative method of the racial ordering of European space", which once again puts a premium on white privilege and supremacy (ibid., p. 926).

I fully concur with Bjelić (2018a; 2018b) assessment that the new historical and political developments in the Balkans, Europe, and elsewhere require a move away from the hegemony of the Balkanist paradigm in Balkan historiography and cultural analyses alike towards a more transnational perspective. This new paradigm, dubbed *Balkan transnationalism*, by definition operates in two ways. On the one hand, it underlines the fact that today's Balkans are transformed into the site of neocolonial exploitation within the global capitalist system and that the attendant racialization of the region's peoples along economic lines is something that clearly goes beyond the region's borders. On the other hand, Balkan transnationalism can be linked to the disintegrating and populist tendencies in contemporary Europe, as attested by occurrences such as "Brexit" and political polarization surrounding the Syrian refugee crisis. Balkan transnationalism, in Bjelić (2018a, p. 754) words, shows "that Europe provincializes itself in and through a process of self–Balkanization as the 'boomerang effect' of Europe's orientalism."

Even though the "Romani question" in Serbia's Guča Festival both highlights and fits into the political trends outlined above, it is still, I argue, best scrutinized and understood when using the available theoretical concepts from the Balkanist paradigm (such as, e.g., the tribal/Balkan stigma or national identity schisms along the West–East axis). Balkan transnationalism furthermore runs the risk of downplaying the current geopolitical power relations, whereby the existing political and economic relationships, epistemological frameworks, and cultural values of the region are still most tightly linked to, and dependent upon, "Europe". Following this logic, it appears safe to conclude that the everchanging hegemonic narratives of Serbian national identity throughout the country's socialist and postsocialist history—from non-alignment to the narrative of Two Serbias to national branding—along with the corresponding repositioning of discourses and practices surrounding the Guča Trumpet Festival, do not seem to abolish the power of Balkanist discourse. Rather, the existing points of convergence that foreground national identity in this Serbian festival come to be recast into the new ones, in accordance with the historical, political, and socioeconomic changes in Serbia and the world beyond. This ultimately explains why Balkanist discourse on Serbia's indeterminate position between West and East remains uncontested as well as the hegemony of Western/European white privilege and supremacy.

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