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POP-FOLK MUZIKA: THE PARADOXICAL COEXISTENCE OF ETHNONATIONALISM, GLOBALIZATION, AND QUEERNESS IN SERBIAN POPULAR MUSIC

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POP-FOLK MUZIKA: THE PARADOXICAL COEXISTENCE OF ETHNONATIONALISM, GLOBALIZATION, AND QUEERNESS IN SERBIAN POPULAR MUSIC

A THESIS APPROVED FOR
THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vi
DEDICATION viii
ABSTRACT ix
INTRODUCTION 1
1.1. Background and Motivations for Research 1
1.2 Thesis 3
1.3. Other Theories and Research 7
1.3.1. Ambiguous Terminology 7
1.3.2. Ideology and Popular Culture 9
1.3.3. Queerness and Body Politics 11
1.4. Importance and Relevance: Nationalism, Gender, and Music 14
1.5. Research Methods and Limitations 16
1.7. Chapter Outlines 17
CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL ASPECTS 19
1. Ethno-National Identity 19
1.1 The Yugoslav Problem 21
2. Rural vs. Urban: Enter Neofolk 22
2.1. Gender and Neofolk 24
3. The Influence of Globalization: Novokomponovana Muzika 26
4. The 1990s: Enter Turbo-Folk 29
5. Late 90s and Early 2000s 33
6. The Emergence of Pop-Folk 36
CHAPTER TWO: THE MUSIC 40
1. Introduction 40
2. Influences 41
2.1 Orientalism, Globalization, Ethno-nationalism 42
3. Musical Elements of Turbo-folk and Pop-folk 45
3.1. Instrumentation 46
3.2. Melodies and Harmonies 50

3.3. Rhythms 51
3.4. Lyrics 52
3.4.1. BCS Dialects 53
3.4.2. BCS and Gender 54
3.4.3. Language and Lyrics 57
4. Conclusion 62
CHAPTER THREE: BODY POLITICS AND QUEERNESS 64
1. Introduction 64
2. Female Hypersexuality 66
3. Masculine Gender Fluidity 69
5. Nataša Maza - Transgender Pop-folk Singer 76
6. Towards a “Pan-Balkan” Identity? 78
7. Concluding Thoughts 79
BIBLIOGRAPHY 81

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this document to all my future readers. Thank you!

ABSTRACT

This document investigates the prevalence of ethno-nationalist ideology in the Balkan neo-folk music genres Pop-folk and its predecessor, Turbo-folk, under influences of globalization and queer culture. Turbo-Folk and Pop-folk are deeply embedded in the socio-political and historical structures of the Balkan region. Religion, ethno-nationalism, gender politics, and globalization intertwine within every facet of the music production - music videography, lyrics and language, musical elements such as vocal techniques, instrumentation, melodic structures, and rhythms. Ultimately, Serbian ethno-nationalism is the backbone of both genres, even though it appears on the surface to have become a Pan-Balkan genre through the far-reaching appeal of Pop-folk. Serbian ethno-nationalist ideology uses elements of globalization and queer culture to assert modernity while retaining the socio-historical patriarchal matrices of power of the Serbian Nation-State through subliminal messages hidden in the music.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Motivations for Research

When I first reveal the nature of my area of research to someone, it usually comes as a surprise. That the popular music of the Balkans would be my chosen research topic might be considered to be confusing or downright bizarre considering that I am a clarinetist that hails from a tiny, rural Northern Michigan town where terms such as Balkan, hypersexuality, or orientalism would be nonsense to most residents. However strange it may seem, the world of Balkan popular music and in particular the subject of Turbo-folk and Pop-folk has become quite an obsession of mine for the better part of the past three years.

As a trained classical musician well-versed in the culture of Western Art Music, researching popular music of any kind is - unfortunately - a strange and alien task. Popular music holds a novel position on the outskirts of academia, especially among musicologists. In all my music classes throughout my university education, popular music was rarely discussed, and sometimes not even mentioned, in favor of the "masters" of classical music such as Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, etc. Maybe it is my upbringing in a rural village far away from city centers that encouraged my interest in music outside what is considered "normal" study in Western music academia. It is not that I dislike the classics - it is more that with my childhood brought many fond memories of listening to family rock bands and going to bluegrass and country-folk singer concerts than of attending a concert of orchestral music. And so, my path through music academia has brought me to a place that breeds more familiarity and comfort to me - folk and popular music - than Western Classical Art music.

Not only my childhood, but also my passion for the clarinet has had influence over my decision to pursue Balkan popular music. As I have come to learn over the years, the clarinet is not only popular in wind bands and orchestras prevalent in the Western classical tradition, but its popularity spans the world, most prominently in South-Eastern Europe and Turkey. The clarinet also has strong roots in many musical traditions such as Dixieland jazz and the Ashkenazi Jewish music known as Klezmer, the latter of which is where I first heard the clarinet outside of a classical band setting. Of course, I could not resist attempting to imitate the klezmer clarinetists I came to admire such as Dave Tarras, Naftule Brandwein, and the still living Giora Feidman. This curiosity led me to include Bulgarian wedding music, Turkish classical music, and Roma folk music, all of which frequently use the clarinet. From these explorations, I encountered my current fascination during my first language course in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (or BCS, for short): Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music from the Balkans.

I began this thesis with the intention to focus on the folk music traditions of the Balkans, which have a long, rich history. However, any quick Google search of Turbo-folk will demonstrate that Balkan popular music also has deep, intricate histories well-worth exploring. Turbo-Folk and Pop-folk are deeply embedded in the socio-political and historical structures of the Balkan region. Religion, ethno-nationalism, and globalization intertwine within every facet of the music's production, such as music videography, lyrics and language, and musical elements (vocal techniques, instrumentation, melodic structures, and rhythm).

My main goal in writing this thesis on popular music is to help bring prestige and acceptance to popular music as a viable and worthy subject in music academia. I write from a hybrid of musical and academic backgrounds: musicology, ethnomusicology, music performance, cultural anthropology, political science, and gender studies. It is my hope that my

eclectic background demonstrates the need for more cross-cultural and cross-academic research and study; my focus on a marginalized topic in music academia hopefully further shows the invaluable contributions popular music from around the world has to offer to those in music academia and to those that they teach.

1.2 Thesis

My research focuses on the Serbian popular music genre known as Pop-folk and its predecessor, Turbo-folk. I focus on the prevalence of ethno-nationalist ideology embedded within the socio-political and socio-historical framework that created both genres to argue two interrelated ideas:

1. Although Pop-folk resembles a more globalized music genre far removed from its roots in Serbian folk music, in essence it still espouses strong ethno-nationalist attitudes that make it distinctly Serbian in nature, even while it accumulates elements of a more Pan-Balkan music genre.
2. Pop-folk, and its predecessor Turbo-folk, mold globalization and queer culture into an image that supports the Serbian ethno-nationalist socio-political environment more readily accessible to its citizens, producing kitsch as a cultural icon.

I will explore these two ideas from multiple frames - history, politics, gender, music, sociology - because I think it is necessary in order to understand the intricacies of the two genres. I write from the ethnomusicological assertion that music is culture; it is an amalgamation of cultural expression and identity.

Pop-folk and Turbo-folk must be understood as a part of the social fabric from which they are interwoven. This idea is eloquently expressed by Thomas Turino in his book *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (2008) from which I use to support my arguments and

analysis. In his book, Turino asserts that, "the political uses of music are quite conscious and explicit." (190) Turbo-folk was created and used by Miloševič's nationalist regime in the 1990s.[1] Similar to the use of music in Nazi Germany,[2] Miloševič used Turbo-folk as a political tool and symbol of Serbian nationalism, pushing out other music genres popular at the time, such as rock and jazz. Fast forward to Pop-folk: with its massive popularity across the Balkans, it demonstrates a transition away from explicit political propaganda to become embedded in the Balkan cultural framework as a socialized "truth." I take this idea from Judith Butler's idea of performativity in which she asserts that everything operates within a matrix of power that through a process of repeated acts becomes a natural part of being.[3] Since Pop-folk is the successor of Turbo-folk's explicit political roots, Pop-folk has essentially embodied the socio-historical and political structures from which it was birthed; Pop-folk would not exist without these structures, nor can it shed these layers, because to do so would be to simply erase the genre from existence.

I will evidence these ideas by dissecting all elements of Turbo-folk and relating it to how it has transformed into Pop-folk. Most importantly, I will analyze musical elements such as vocal timbres, rhythms, instrumentation, melodic structures, lyrics (and language), and harmonies in order to bring a much-needed musical analysis to the academic work available on this subject, which hardly mentions or even avoids discussion of the music itself. Turbo-folk and Pop-folk are both very globalized music genres - there is ample evidence of sound borrowing from other global musical genres. However, the matrices of Serbian political power are embedded in the highly socio-political Serbian Neo-folk sound.

[1] This will be explained in depth in Chapter 1: History.
[2] See Turino 2008: 190-210
[3] Butler: 1990

The other main focus of my analysis will delve into the music videography. I will analyze the connection between the ethno-nationalist ideologies shaping the music and the imagery that, while it seems to have no connection, actively supports ethno-nationalism. The most prevalent motif of Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music videos is the hypersexualization of the vocalists, predominantly women, although men are also hypersexualized. The sexualization of the body is an important aspect of these music genres because it serves to highlight the "ideal" Serbian man or woman as well as to assert male virility through sexual arousal of the images.

Zala Volčić and Karmen Erjavec argue that, "nationalism, in the neoliberal context, is no longer a form of political identification but a mode of consumption increasingly oriented toward the sentimental and kitschy aesthetics of commercially produced cultural spectacles."[4] It is in the images of hypersexualized bodies that nationalism is reified and effectively "sold" to the public under the guise of apoliticality. Upon closer look there is evidence to suggest that nationalist political ideology has become so ingrained in mass media/popular culture that it has become normalized. The consumers no longer recognize the matrices of power guiding the music and video production, which ultimately serve to strengthen ethno-nationalism.

What is compelling about these two genres is the confusing and complicated relationship between ethnonationalism and globalization. It is well-documented that the music industry has become globalized, each genre becoming a cosmopolitan exchange of ideas and sounds. Balkan neo-folk music is no exception. However, Pop-folk and its predecessors Turbo-folk and *novokomponovana muzika*, or Newly-Composed Folk Music (NCFM), did not become globalized - they were distinct globalized phenomena, borrowing elements from numerous music genres such as jazz, rock n' roll, Eurodance-pop and others from the very beginning.

[4] Volčić 2011: 44

Another compelling aspect of Pop-folk and Turbo-folk is the historical inclusion of queer culture in its music video imagery. The biggest Turbo-folk/Pop-folk music video director and openly gay Serbian man, Dejan Miličević incorporated queer imagery into his music videos. Coming from a homophobic nation,[5] this fact is surprising, seeing as Turbo-folk played an enormous role in the support of the Serbian nationalist regime and wars of the 1990s.

In my analysis, I explore the convoluted relationship between queer culture, globalization, and ethno-nationalist politics intersecting within Pop-folk and Turbo-folk. Turbo-folk was and still is a symbol of Serbian national pride, despite the effects of globalization on the genre.[6] However, it seems that this remains so because the imagery has been packaged in such a way as to be acceptable to the Serbian and also wider Balkan audiences.[7] It has been argued that the successor Pop-folk may be moving towards a more depoliticized and inclusive space by the inclusion of more Pan-Balkan identities as well as more fluid gender identities.[8] After analysis and conversations with numerous correspondents, I argue that this is not the case.[9] Although Pop-folk and Turbo-folk are both influenced by globalization and queer culture, Pop-folk remains at the core an ethno-nationalist music genre, evidenced by the themes, motifs, imagery, sounds, and lyrics as well as the music industry out of which it arises.[10]

In summation, Pop-Folk and Turbo-Folk are a fascinating case study about the ways in which music plays an active role in society. I strive in my analysis to make some sense out of the confusingly intricate relationships between politics, religion, history, and the push and pull of

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[5] Jovanović 2013
[6] Dumančić and Krolo 2013:158
[7] This idea is discussed in Marija Grujič's 2009 dissertation entitled "Community and the Popular: Women, Nation and Turbo-folk in Post-Yugoslav Serbia."
[8] Dumančić and Krolo 2013:174
[9] I began this document with the intention to find existing links between queer advocacy and queerness in Pop-folk, but further research dissuaded me of that hypothesis.
[10] This will be discussed in-depth in Chapter 3.

globalization and ethno-nationalism in these two musical genres to demonstrate that Pop-Folk continues the legacy of the ethno-nationalist genre Turbo-Folk.

1.3. Other Theories and Research

1.3.1. Ambiguous Terminology

In my quest to research Pop-Folk and Turbo-Folk, it quickly became evident that while there is a plethora of research about Turbo-Folk, there is very little I could find focusing exclusively on Pop-Folk. Much of this frustration has to do with the ambiguousness of terminology. Many recent writings seem to use the term Turbo-Folk in place of Pop-Folk, for reasons unknown to me. As someone new to the Balkan music industry, it is confusing that Pop-Folk is rarely mentioned even though most Balkan pop artists now tend to identify as "Pop-Folk singers" rather than Turbo-Folk singers.

The first mention of the term Pop-Folk I discovered was from a 2017 journal article "Dehexing Postwar West Balkan Masculinities: The Case of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia, 1998 to 2015." So far, this is the only article I have found which differentiates between Pop-Folk and Turbo-Folk as two distinct musical genres. In this article, the authors discuss the transitioning gender norms of Balkan popular music, as evidenced by representation in music and associated media. They argue that national gender norms have become more fluid, allowing for the emergence of a more "depoliticized" Pop-folk music genre. They assert that the inclusion of gendered subjectivities which differ from normative gender roles supports their argument.[11]

It may be that because Balkan popular music seems to be in a state of flux, the interchangeable usage of the terms Turbo-folk and Pop-folk would make sense. I will not argue

[11] Dumančić and Krolo 2017

against the fluidity argument; however, I remain skeptical of the assertion of "depoliticized" music for it is my belief that music is never apolitical. Therefore, because of the current lack of differentiation between Turbo-folk and Pop-folk, in this document I will provide more basis for understanding the two genres as separate (albeit very related) political entities.

Most likely, it is that much available research is older. Since the term Pop-folk is a relatively new phenomenon, it makes sense that the sources I have pulled from do not mention it, rather sticking with the Turbo-folk label. Further, the term "turbo" seems to be equally as problematic because the origin of the term and what it signifies seems to be clouded in mystery. To highlight my frustrations, I offer here two different interpretations of the term "turbo." The first is from a 2002 article "Europe after 1989: Ethnic Wars, The Fascisation of Social Life and Body Politics in Serbia" by the Serbian social anthropologist, Žarana Papić. Papić asserts that, "the prefix "turbo" refers to the specific mixture of politics, culture, "mental powers" and the pauperisation of life in Serbia: the mixture of rural and urban, pre-modern and post-modern, pop culture and heroines, real and virtual, mystical and "normal," etc." (Papić 2002:199). Two years later, Serbian anthropologist and professor Ivana Kronja wrote thus:

> 'Turbo-folk' is a neologism created from two words: the word 'turbo,' which originally comes from the world of automobiles, where it signifies the type of cars whose motors' power had been improved by a special turbine, turbo, turbo-diesel and turbo diesel injection cars, and the word 'folk,' which stands for the popular, people's or folk music. Figuratively, 'turbo' referred to a challenge, speed, fearlessness and participation in the upcoming, fashionable trends, ascribed to turbo-folk artists and audience, while 'folk' signified that 'turbo-folk' represents one of the genres of Serbian popular, folk music.[12]

It is clear that the term "turbo" refers to a mixture of folk and more "modern" elements, although I would be remiss to assume what is meant by "modern" because I have been unable to find a

[12] Kronja 2004:103

source that definitively outlines what "modern" is in the Balkan sense. From my limited research and understanding, I have come to understand "turbo" as a reference to the rural/urban divide; turbo refers to the "improvement" of rural folk music to a much more globalized space with the additions of commercialized electronic dance music elements. Turbo-folk therefore is still rooted in the national identity, hence the "folk," but is packaged and sold as a commercial product.[13]

With this in mind, I argue that the change from "turbo" to "pop" may then signify an attempt to rise above the rural/urban divide to a more localized globalization in which the music is still representative of the Balkan people and nationalism, but at the same time more heavily influenced by globalization.

1.3.2. Ideology and Popular Culture

It is no secret that popular culture is tied to ideology. Thomas Turino argues, "music and dance are key to identity formation because they are often public presentations of the deepest feelings and qualities that make a group unique."[14] I continue to assert that ethno-nationalist ideology is embedded within popular culture through Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music in the Balkans.

Music, no matter the genre, always serves a political purpose; its active role in popular culture makes it an easy medium for propaganda. Political agendas easily seep into popular music, whether through the sounds, lyric content, or common story motifs. And further, the enjoyable aspect of music allows it to become normalized quite quickly, especially when played

[13] For more on the ambiguousness of the term "turbo," see section 2.1. *Problems of Classification and Terminology* from Marija Grujić's 2009 dissertation "Community and the Popular: Women, Nation and Turbo-folk in Post Yugoslav Serbia."
[14] Turino 2008: 2

frequently. Turbo-folk is a clear example of music as propaganda. Zarana Papić discusses the methods by which Turbo-folk producers propagated images of a specific femininity/womanhood of Serbian women combined with music that was reminiscent of "the people" in order to support ethno-nationalism. She writes:

> Examples of the allegedly 'Happy' Serbian Woman's Body, a plump body acting out permanent submission and joy over its sexual accessibility, are furnished by a whole series of so-called 'turbo-folk queens' (singers). They played a mixture of Serb and oriental melodies, at first in oriental and rural settings, with belly-dancers' movements [. . .] This mixture of traditional folk music, oriental influences and women singers 'giving themselves willingly' did not only have the objective to arouse tavern emotions and relax the clientele, but also to inflame and re-affirm pro-Fascist emotions - sending a clear *sexual message* that, in fact, life was beautiful, like music, that these Serbian Women, 'our women', were undoubtedly the most beautiful women in the whole world, and that sex was great and functioning even in these difficult times in Serbia.[15]

In this way, Turbo-folk is a prime example of how music serves a political agenda; its widespread popularity across the Balkans demonstrates ignorance of the powers at work. Turbo-folk music is Serbian music, yet it was and still is popular across the Balkans, even in countries such as Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, which were enemies of the Serbian nation-state in the wars of the 1990s. One explanation of this is that the music is so heavily influenced by globalization that there is a conflation of Western pop idol representations and the use of hypersexual Serbian women. The big question is when are the portrayals of Turbo-folk and Pop-folk "queens," as they are called, merely a product of globalization and when are they considered ethno-nationalist?

The answer is complicated because as Irena Šentevska puts it, "*Turbo-folk* reflects not only the globalization and transculturation of a particular genre of popular music, but the overall

[15] Papić 2002

media infrastructure surrounding its production, distribution, and consumption."[16] It is impossible to separate the elements because the music is not created out of a vacuum - it is a part of the continuation of cultural production. However, one fact is clear: Serbian nationalist politics were hypersexualized in the 1990s. Dr. Jill Irvine, a prominent Balkan scholar, has documented that femininity and womanhood were used by the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) to demonstrate outward displays of modernism to be on par with global producers.[17] Further, Irvine asserts that, "turbo folk culture linked provocative, public sexuality, pornography and pop stardom with the defense of the ruling regime."[18] Turbo-folk was filled with images of hypersexual, modern women as a tactic to assert the stability and virility of Serbian manhood.[19] The modern aspect definitely came from a desire to appear as a modern society - and what better way to demonstrate that than through popular media? Now the mantle has been picked up by Pop-folk, which continues to showcase hypersexual, modern women, because ensuring that Serbian men are still virile and in charge is still a very important aspect of Serbian nationalist politics.

1.3.3. Queerness and Body Politics

One of the most perplexing aspects of Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music video cinematography is a stunning presence of queer imagery. This is quite mystifying given that Serbian ethno-nationalist discourses are staunchly anti-LGBT.[20] Turbo-folk and Pop-folk seem to tip-toe along a precarious battlefield of ethno-nationalist, religious, and heteronormative

[16] Šentevska 2014: 428-429
[17] Irvine 2007: 108
[18] Irvine 2007: 113-114
[19] Irvine 2007: 113
[20] I use the term LGBT here in place of "queer," because ethno-nationalist rhetoric focuses on sexuality while the music focuses on a queer aesthetic.

affirmations with globalist, cosmopolitan, and liberal attitudes towards sexuality and gender. Confusing? Yes.

To start, it is a well-known fact that the most prolific video director of Turbo-folk videos in the 1990s and 2000s was an openly gay Serbian man, Dejan Miličević. He was later interviewed as part of a documentary entitled "Sav Taj Folk" made in 2004, which links Milošević's nationalist regime and the wars of the 1990s with the spread of Turbo-folk popularity. So it would seem that although Turbo-folk is indisputably tied to ethno-nationalism, the contributions of Miličević basically shaped the Turbo-folk (and now Pop-folk) music scene as queer in its imagery. As author Eurovicious puts it in his "Queer as Turbofolk" series, "the still-common view of the genre as nationalist noise for the lower classes doesn't square well with its reality as a homoerotic fantasy land – pioneered in full mainstream view by gay male directors and creatives – where divas call the shots and gorgeous male models are paraded like beef cattle, for audiences to drool over their rippling flesh in various scenarios."[21]

Homophobia in the Balkans has been well documented and has been a topic of furious political and religious debates for the past two decades. In the Balkans, where religion plays a huge role in national identity, opposition to the LGBT population can be explained by the Serbian Orthodox Church's homophobic stance. Further, sociologist Richard Mole argues that ethno-nationalist beliefs assert a dominant heteronormative society in which men and women must inhabit gender roles that will help build the nation.[22] Therefore, men are the warriors who protect and defend, while the women are the mothers who nurture future warriors. Jill Irvine documented this mindset in her paper "Boys Must be Boys: Gender and the Serbian Radical Party, 1991-2000," indicating that the Serbian Radical Party (the nationalists) asserted a strong

[21] Eurovicious. 2014. "Queer as Turbofolk (Part II): Body Politics.
[22] Mole 2016: 9

call to Serbian men: "they must become warriors, they must return to the church, and they must recover their lost virility."[23] Since this strong ethno-nationalist (and religious) stance was about gender and sexuality, it complicated the inclusion of the LGBT community, effectively erasing them from ethno-nationalist discourse. Furthermore, Mole asserts that stereotypes of the LGBT community added to this erasure: "the construction of gay men as weak and effeminate and lesbians as strong and masculine thus confuses the patriarchal gender order and the public and private roles of men and women central to most ethno-national discourses."[24]

It is in this messy state of ethno-nationalism, religion, and gender politics that Turbo-Folk emerged, later evolving into Pop-folk. To this day, there is just one Turbo-folk or Pop-folk performer who has publicly declared their belonging to the LGBT community. Nataša Maza is the only documented case of a transgender Turbo-folk performer who has made her status public; she is unpopular in comparison to her cisgender, heteronormative Turbo-folk peers. Although the outlook is bleak for the LGBT community on the Turbo-folk front, there have been indications of change from three Turbo/Pop-folk performers, Jelena Karleuša, Indira Radić, and Seka Aleksić, all of whom have publicly supported gay rights in varying capacities. Karleuša is the biggest public supporter of LGBT rights, having associated herself with the Pride parades, collaborated with queer performers such as Azis from Bulgaria, and put on spectacular queer-themed live shows filled with rainbow flags and LGBT symbols. Her song "Slatka Mala" is even celebrated within the Balkan gay community as a gay anthem.[25] Eurovicious has noted Karleuša's public support, stating that, "Karleuša's statements as well as many of her videos were highly regarded

[23] Irvine 2007: 102
[24] Mole 2016: 7
[25] This is discussed in detail in Chapter 3: Queerness and Body Politics.

among the part of the gay population who frequents gay night clubs in Serbia[26] and prefers turbo-folk music and foreign techno and pop music, particularly males."[27]

When comparing the response of the LGBT community with that of ethno-nationalists, it would seem that Turbo-folk and Pop-folk are understood for stunningly different reasons. The attraction of Turbo-folk to the LGBT community seems to be the representation of cosmopolitan, globalized sounds, fashion trends, and camp style for which the singers are seemingly portrayed. The ethno-nationalists, who are opposed to anything outside of the heteronormative societal structure, understand it differently. It seems that while the ethno-nationalists approve of the use of Turbo-folk and Pop-folk to symbolize nationalist ideals of virile, warrior men and objectified, hyperfeminine women, there is a rejection of acknowledging the queerness and kitchiness of the genre. Further, Mole asserts that, "the ethnicisation of politics and the greater antipathy of ethnic nationalists towards sexual minorities [. . .] enabl[ed] nationalist politicians to exploit pre-existing homophobia for personal political gain."[28] The LGBT community celebrates Turbo/Pop-folk for its sexually liberating themes; the ethno-nationalists are only interested in sexual liberation as long as it is for the good of the country - meaning the production of warrior-heroes by devoted nuclear families to defend the nation.

1.4. Importance and Relevance: Nationalism, Gender, and Music

> "It is in living, breathing individuals that 'culture' and musical meaning ultimately reside."[29]

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[26] In future research, I would like to explore these gay clubs in person to better understand the connection between gay iconography and Turbo/Pop-folk artists. However, that is beyond the scope of this paper.
[27] Eurovicious 2014. "Queer as Turbofolk (Part III)."
[28] Mole 2016: 17
[29] Turino 2007: 95

In "Constructing Transnational Divas: Gendered Productions of Balkan Turbo-folk Music," Zala Volčić and Karmen Erjavec assert that Turbo-folk and Pop-folk singers effectively reproduce popular global trends to appeal to the wider public; at the same time, they are historically embedded in the ethno-nationalist ideology of the past.[30] In this way, these two music genres act as living, breathing mediators of cultural production, being both products of the culture and producers of it. Turbo-folk and Pop-folk are prime examples with which to explore the ways in which political agendas are intertwined within popular culture and how they ultimately affect society as a whole.

Music and ideology, when combined, can be a very powerful, persuasive tool. In his book *Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism*, Anthony Smith argues that, "there is no greater effect on the collectivity of members than that created by moving ceremonies, reiterated rituals, striking political symbols and the **music** and imagery of choreographed mass gatherings, especially when these are linked to the ideology of the nation."[31] In the Balkan context, both Turbo-folk and Pop-folk have been and are still presently involved in the continuation of ethno-nationalist ideology. Although both genres have brought a more globalized image to the Balkan popular music scene, the essence of both genres ultimately serves Serbian ethno-nationalism.

Because the identity of the nation is tied up with the need for outward displays of success, Turbo-folk and Pop-folk draw on global trends. As Volčić puts it, "nationalism, in the neoliberal context, is no longer a form of political identification but a mode of consumption increasingly oriented toward the sentimental and kitschy aesthetics of commercially produced cultural spectacles."[32] I have discussed previously the Serbian nationalist regime's main goal to

[30] Volčić and Erjavec 2011: 49
[31] Smith 2009: 52-52. Emphasis added.
[32] Volčić 2011: 44

reaffirm Serbian men's strength and virility. What better and faster way to accomplish that than through popular media?

1.5. Research Methods and Limitations

Although popular music studies are becoming more well-recognized in academia, the methods for research need more study. I have spent most of my time conducting "field" research in a more informal sense. I began first by listening to and watching as many different Balkan pop musics that I could find, as well as exploring urban alternative rock, ballads, and traditional folk music. My aim was to develop an ear for Balkan musical culture because I am very much an outsider to the culture in both the literal and figurative sense. I also studied the Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS) language at the University of Indiana for three consecutive summers in order to gain a firm grasp of cultural and textual context and meanings. I spent many hours translating lyrics from BCS to English as well as documenting YouTube comments left under Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music videos. In 2018, I began to follow multiple Balkan singers on social media that span all the most popular music genres - rock, ballads, and Turbo/Pop-folk. Lastly, I have watched numerous interviews of famous Turbo-folk and Pop-folk singers and read Balkan tabloids and opinion articles.[33]

I have spent so much time exploring all these avenues for one simple, but important reason: exposure. The biggest limitation to my research is that I have unfortunately been unable to conduct research "in the field," as ethnomusicologists and anthropologists would call it. My "field studies" have relied for the most part on the availability of internet sources, the other part being conversations with my BCS language professor and the few other Balkan natives I have

[33] These include: Srbija Danas, Index.Hr, and the Optimist, to name a few.

encountered through the language program. In the summer of 2020, I had intended to finally conduct true field research as part of a language immersion program in Zagreb, Croatia through Indiana University. However, due to what is sure to become a historical event - the COVID-19 pandemic - the program was cancelled, leaving me with no choice but to finish this document without the undoubtedly invaluable research and experience the program would have afforded me.[34]

Therefore, much of this document relies on my previous individual research of popular media and my experience gained through my BCS language studies at the University of Indiana. I also draw on my graduate training in anthropological, musicological, and ethnomusicological research methods, theories, and analysis. I have gathered information from multiple personal conversations and formal/informal interviews over the years with people native to the Balkan area to help me make sense of all the information. That being said, I feel confident that what I have to offer, although maybe less "academic" by musicological standards, is still a complete and thorough analysis of the popular music genres Turbo-folk and Pop-folk.

1.7. Chapter Outlines

Chapter one is an overview of the historical emergence of Pop-folk, beginning with the encompassing Neo-folk music genre in the 1960s, continuing through the *novokomponovana muzika* phase, or Newly Composed Folk Music (NCFM), of the 1980s. From there I discuss the establishment of Turbo-folk in the 1990s and the emergence of Pop-folk in the later 2000s and 2010s. The history of these musical genres is situated within a socio-historical context of the

[34] Among the topics I would have explored during the international course were gay night clubs, other Balkan popular music, the role of music in everyday life, and the opinions and thoughts of Balkan natives about ethno-nationalism, music, gender, and queer culture.

establishment of Serbian ethno-national identity. I discuss the subjects of ethnicity, nation, religious divides, and language in order to give the reader a broad understanding of the ideological space within which Turbo-folk and Pop-folk reside.

In Chapter two, I focus on the musical aspects of both Turbo-folk and Pop-folk, including instrumentation, melodies, rhythms, and lyrics. I demonstrate the ways in which the music encapsulates historical nationalist ideology through sound, while at the same time taking place in the present through the singers in performance, media presence, and music videos.

Chapter three combines ideas discussed in the previous chapters in order to explore and analyze aspects of queer performativity and body politics within Turbo-folk and Pop-folk in the music video videography. I discuss how the portrayal of the singers in the music videos and in the singers' media presence asserts ethno-nationalist ideology I focus on two artists - Jelena Karleuša and Nataša Maza - in order to explore the contradictions of the localized ethno-nationalist and cosmopolitan queer forces at work in the Pop-folk scene.

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL ASPECTS

1. Ethno-National Identity

The establishment of ethno-national identity in the Balkans began as far back as the tenth century. Identity politics of the region are strife with war - the reason for this being that the Balkan peninsula is directly in the center of the historical fault line between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Christian Orthodoxy, as well as the border between the empires of Islam (the Ottomans to the south) and the Christian empires in the north. Further, because of these religious divides, the settlement of the South Slavs in the Balkan Peninsula in the tenth century allowed for all of these different religious empires to exert strong influence on the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes - the Serbs influenced by the Byzantine Empire and later the Ottomans, while the Croats and Slovenes were occupied by the Habsburg Empire.[35] Because of these stark divides of religion, and later, language/dialect, the South Slavs, although very similar, began to form distinct identities that evolved into the ethno-national consciousness of each people. Figure 1 shows the prominent religious divides still present today.

The Serbs by far cultivated the strongest sense of national identity compared to the Croats or Slovenes. Their strong sense of identity comes from three realms - religion, language, and political consciousness. The Serbian people were the first and only South Slavs to establish their very own church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is an autocephalous church formed in 1219.[36] To this day, the Serbian Orthodox Church is one of the strongest indicators of Serbian ethno-national identity.[37] Next, the Serbs were graced with the scholar known as Vuk Karadžić,

[35] Singleton 1989: 14-18
[36] Singleton 1989: 25
[37] A quick gaze at the official website of the Republic of Serbia confirms this: http://www.mfa.gov.rs/en/republic-of-serbia.

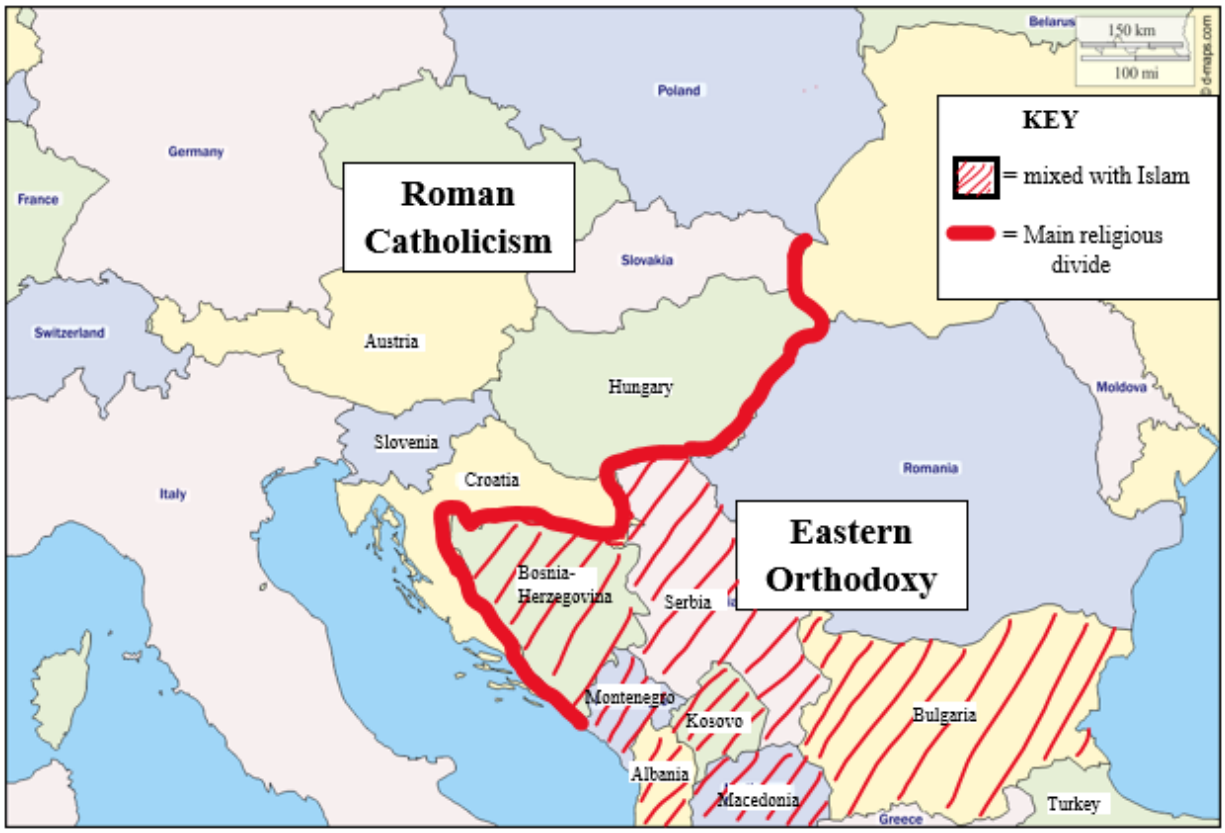
who played an enormous role in the rise of national consciousness in the 1800s. Karadžić is credited with the standardization of the Serbian language, the writing of the first Serbian dictionary, and the creation of a compilation of Serbian national songs collected between 1814 and 1830.[38] Because of Karadžić, not only did the Serbian people have a strong religious identity, but then had a set language with which to call their own. Lastly, what brings the Serbian national consciousness together is the idea of collective suffering, which began with the first loss of their independence at the Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389 to Ottoman forces.[39] The other ethnicities - Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Bosnians, etc., being closer to outside influences, were unable to cultivate the same strong national identity until much later.[40]

Vuk Karadžić not only established a standardized Serbian language, but he also laid the groundwork for the shared South Slavic dialect now known as BCS (an abbreviation for Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian). However, this became a widely contested issue in the face of nationalist politics in the 1800s because it challenged national activists to reconsider exactly what constitutes "the people" and also maybe more importantly, who generates knowledge about these matters.[41] Karadžić's legacy connects music and ethno-nationalism, because his status as a so-called "patriot-scholar" revolved around the collection, publication, and analysis of poetry, music, and other material pertaining to "our people" (a.k.a. the Serbian People).[42]

[38] Singleton 1989: 89
[39] Singleton 1989: 27
[40] Beyond the scope of this paper is a discussion the ethno-national identities of the other Balkan ethnicities: Croatians, Bosnians, Bosnian-Muslims, Bosnian-Serbs, Slovenians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Bulgarians, and Albananians. In future publications, I would like to focus on each in-depth.
[41] Hajdarpasić: 22-23
[42] Hajdarpasić 29

The arts became a clear path through which ethno-national identity could come to fruition and be easily disseminated.

Figure 1. Religious Divides in the Balkans[43]



1.1 The Yugoslav Problem

Since the very beginning of their kingdoms, Serbians and Croatians have fought against each other for superiority, which has always been further exacerbated by the religious and cultural divides between them. The establishment of the kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1921 came about as a mostly Serb-led endeavor. The Serbian politicians of the time evoked the image of the suffering of the Serb people in their rhetoric - they argued that they had sacrificed much in

[43] The basic map image is courtesy of freeworldmaps.net. The annotations and labels are courtesy of the author of this document, Ashley Green.

the Balkan Wars and the First World War to rid the South Slavs of Ottoman and Habsburg rule.[44] Further, the establishment of the kingdom of Yugoslavia indicated all South Slavs were simply a culmination of a "Greater Serbia," because the Serbs held the most political power of all the kingdoms, and therefore made it so that the constitution was signed on Serbia's national day - June 28 - which coincides with the Serbs defeat at the Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389.[45]

After the Second World War ended in 1945, however, a new federal system was put into place. Yugoslavia was re-formed (since it was split by the war) with Josip Broz Tito, a Croatian politician, at the head. Tito, encouraged by the wave of support for communism, was largely successful in implementing the new system. Many aspects of political and social life were changed. First, since communism asserts an atheistic basis for political decision making, the power of the Serbian Orthodox church was severely diminished, especially because the church was implicated and held responsible for much of the war violence. Second, the new system aimed to reduce Serbian dominance over the Balkan region; Serbia's size was diminished with the placement of two autonomous regions in the north and south, much to the dismay of the Serbs, with leadership separate from the Serbian Nation-State.[46] Perhaps the largest grievance in the Serbs' eyes was the loss of the Kosovo region, the birthplace of their church.[47]

2. Rural vs. Urban: Enter Neofolk

A significant occurrence during Tito's rule was the mass immigration of Serbian peasants from rural villages into the cities, most notably Belgrade. Political sociologist Eric Gordy notes

[44] Singleton 1989: 141
[45] Singleton 142-143
[46] Irvine 2019
[47] Beyond the scope of this paper is an analysis of the effect of the two Serbian autonomous regions on music production.

that the Belgrade population increased from 385,000 in 1948 to 843,209 by 1961. By 1981, there were 1,470,073 people living in Belgrade. The city's social dynamic radically changed, because the rural newcomers vastly outnumbered the urban residents. Less than half of people living in Belgrade by 1971 were born there.[48] The migration of peasants from rural to urban spaces brought rise to neofolk music, through an incorporation of western pop music styles, amplification, and electric sounds with traditional folk melodies beginning in the 1960s.[49] Due to the domination of peasant urbanites in Belgrade and subsequent rise of neofolk music, the Belgrade music scene became split between two distinct musical tastes. The urbanites from Belgrade gravitated towards European and American music such as jazz and rock and roll, while the peasant urbanites much preferred neo-folk, then excluded from urbanite culture.[50] This split was still present in the 2010s.[51]

In the beginning stages, neofolk had a very distinct folk sound. The acoustic instruments of the accordion, clarinet, and violin were widely used, combined with the more modern instrumentation of drum set and electric bass. Some songs still used a strophic form, which is a common form of traditional folk songs. The dominant artists of the genre during this time were male, the most popular being Šaban Šaulić. One of his major hits from 1972, "Bio sam pijanac" (I was a drunkard)[52] exemplifies the burgeoning neofolk music scene. In the song, a characteristic accordion melody launches the song, accompanied by a quick, offbeat rhythm established by the drum set and an electric bass outlines a simple bass line. The lyrics reminisce about Šaulić's days as a drunkard due to a bad breakup and celebrate that he is no longer a drunk.

[48] Gordy 1999:106
[49] Gordy 1999:127-128
[50] Gordy 1999:107
[51] In future research, I would like to explore this urban-rural divide in musical taste.
[52] "Bio sam pijanc" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nL4zm68Qnlc

Much of the lyric content of the songs by men in the 1960s and early 1970s follow a similar discourse, focusing on lost love, heartache, or celebration of love. Female artists such as Nada Topčagić and Zorica Brunclik began to gain fame in the middle of the 1970s with hits such as "Ne daj da nas rastave"[53] and "Na Drini čuprija."[54]

2.1. Gender and Neofolk

One of the newest and most significant implementations of the state socialist system was an assertion of egalitarian gender roles. Under Tito's rule, gender equality was improved. However, the differences between the roles of men and women were still strongly reinforced, even though on the surface there was improvement. There was an increase in women's literacy and university attendance, women's participation in the workforce expanded, and liberal policies were introduced in regards to divorce, abortion, and maternity leave. However, American scholar Sabrina Ramet asserts, "women tended to be concentrated in certain professions (textiles being the classic example) and all but excluded from other professions (such as court judges); second, women remained severely underrepresented in leadership bodies, whether within the party hierarchy, or the delegate system, or even the self-management councils."[55] Also, even though women were allowed to hold political positions, scholars Jill Irvine and Carol S. Lilly assert that women "seldom held any real decision-making authority in state or party institutions" and gender relations in the private sphere were never addressed.[56] In the same vein, images in textbooks used in this era emphasized males as "strong, courageous, warrior-like, and creative"

[53] "Ne daj da nas rastave" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oShO1FdCCuo
[54] "Na drini cuprija" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0zRLCmaSII
[55] Ramet 1999: 97
[56] Irvine 2007: 97

while females were shown to be "maternal, beautiful, and indecisive, thereby giving encouragement to women to be weak objects of male conquest."[57] Thus, even though Tito and his new communist system outlined specifics for bringing women on equal footing with men, in reality, women still were widely discriminated against by men and relegated to lesser, "traditional," and more "feminine" roles in both the public and private spheres.

In music, it was the neo-folk genre that became a reflection of these new gender relations. By the end of the 1970s, women artists began to dominate the neofolk scene; however, the lyrics and songs were usually written by men. Highly influential artists such as Lepa Brena, Vesna Zmijanac, and Draganać all debuted their first songs in the beginning of the 1980s. Musical elements from earlier songs remained in the 80s, such as the acoustic instruments of accordion and clarinet, as well as the drum set and electric bass. However, a new "exotic" flavor was added to the music, highly reminiscent of Turkish musical sounds, which I assert is a marker of the then emerging novokomponovana muzika (NCFM) genre. Characteristic čoček rhythms,[58] nasal clarinet, and melismatic melodic lines and Turkish embellishments were added as well as modes that included a flat two or raised four scale degree. This cluster of musical features created a distinctly Turkish flavor. "Hvala Ti Za Sve" (Thank you for everything)[59] by Vesna Zmijanac in 1979 is an early song of this type. A prominent čoček rhythm and nasal clarinet are featured in the song as well as highly melismatic and embellished vocal lines by Zmijanac. The sudden inclusion of Turkish elements created an exotic dimension to the neofolk genre, which I assert helped to objectify the female artists for the male gaze. Even though women began to be included in the neofolk scene during the Tito era, the treatment of female neofolk artists reflected

[57] Ramet 1999: 104
[58] To be discussed in chapter two.
[59] "Hvala ti za sve" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NqHQSFngvI

the wider Serbian society of gender relations in which women were used as objects of desire to serve the dominant male cause of political power and fame.

3. The Influence of Globalization: Novokomponovana Muzika

After Tito died in 1980, aspects of political and social life shifted once again. Serbs had built up resentment towards Tito's federal system and launched a "de-Titoization" campaign in the mid-1980s. Figure 2 (at end of this section) is a timeline of the events, also comparing the release of popular NCFM songs to the political unrest. The Serbs accused Tito of being responsible for massive repression, economic mismanagement, and a conspiracy to weaken Serbia. The violence between the Serbs and Kosovar Albanians flared up again as well, exacerbated by the political strategy of nationalist humiliation through sexual violence. There was a prominent case of male rape in the 1980s in which a Serbian man was said to have been raped by Albanian men.[60] This imagery symbolized Serbian men's loss of manhood and encouraged them to stand up and become men again through fighting back against the Albanians in Kosovo.[61] The emasculation of men became a huge issue again in the late 1980s when Slobodan Milošević rose to power in 1988.[62]

Reflecting this break down of Tito's system, the rock and roll aesthetic of individualism, especially in the 1980s, became a marker of the urbanites' retaliation, refusal, and rejection of the current political party.[63] The Serbian rock and roll scene, however, disappeared once the war in the early 1990s broke down contact between Belgrade and other urban centers in Yugoslavia.

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[60] Irvine 2019
[61] Kosovo was a part of Serbia up until 2008, which is populated by primarily people of Albanian ethnicity. Kosovo is important to Serbia because it is said to hold the birthplace of the Serbian Orthodox Church.
[62] Irvine 2019
[63] Gordy 1999: 111

The dominance of peasant urbanites contributed to this quick decay of urban music genres. In the void left by the disappearing genres in the early 1980s, a new genre, *Novokomponovana Muzika,* or Newly Composed Folk Music (abbr. NCFM), came to fruition. NCFM had begun to become popular among the peasant urbanites a couple years earlier, but after the fall of the rock and roll scene, it thrived while relegating the rock and roll scene to the periphery.[64]

In the confusion of the 1980s Serbian political scene, a new leader, Slobodan Milošević rose to power, backed by the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). Milošević launched a takeover of leadership in Yugoslavia, beginning in 1988 with the leadership of Vojvodina. He then quickly secured Montenegro in January 1989 and Kosovo in Feburary of the same year, then claiming four out of eight seats of the Presidency. His wife, Mirjana Marković was likewise a formidable and strong political presence. She ran the political party JUL (basically street thugs) and it is well-known that she had a huge influence on Milošević's policies. She was regarded very highly by him, even though he denied her influence on his political decisions.[65] Scholar Slavoljub Djukić documented that Marković also "kept her maiden name…insist[ed] on being addressed as "Comrade," and believ[ed] that a 'woman who wishes to be a lady will never be human.'"[66] Her strong presence and influence on Milošević was widely criticized, but her influence reflects the changing gender politics of the 80s with a shift towards the inclusion of women in more powerful or prominent public roles, which is also reflected in NCFM's dominant portrayal of female artists.

[64] Gordy 1999: 114
[65] Djukic 2014:174
[66] Djukic 2014:168

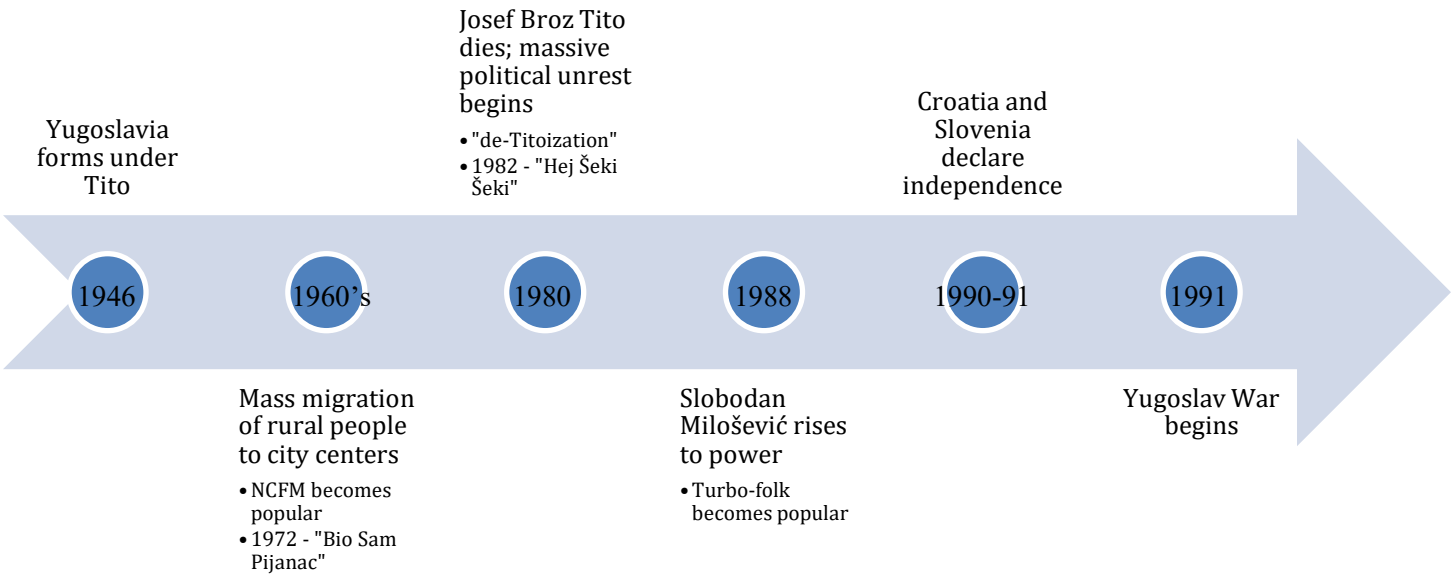
The difference in treatment of male and female artists is apparent when comparing two NCFM songs from 1985, "Spomenar" (Scrapbook)[67] by male artist Šeki Turković, and "Hej Šeki Šeki" (Hey Sheikh, Sheikh)[68] by female artist Lepa Brena. Both songs include Turkish musical elements, albeit in different ways. In "Spomenar," the melodic line has a distinctive flat two scale degree, which is used sparingly as a point of interest, rather than to emphasize any Turkish background. The only instruments used in the song are an accordion, electric bass, and drum set, which are the continuation of the 1960s and 1970s neofolk instrumentation. Turković's voice and the accordion display slight melismatic melodic lines with some Turkish embellishments, but overall the song still is firmly planted in the Serbian folk music tradition; the strophic form and reminiscing lyrics about a former lover also contribute to the Serbian aesthetic.

"Hej Šeki Šeki" is the complete opposite. In this song, Brena sings about how she is so beautiful that a Sheikh wants to buy her everything and give her riches in exchange for her love. Everything in the music blatantly signifies the Turkish music tradition through the nasal clarinet, the zills (Turkish finger cymbals), the violins and doumbek, as well as the characteristic Turkish gallop rhythm present throughout the song. To further the sexual nature of the lyrics paired with the "exotic" flavor of the music, the music video further cements the song as almost a mockery of Turkish music and dance. The video shows Brena dressed in a beautiful gown surrounded by Turkish musicians in hijabs and Turkish fez fake-playing traditional Turkish instruments. The entire video displays Brena as an object of desire by the men and by the viewer; the belly dance moves Brena uses further the sexualized nature of the imagery and the lyrical content. It is clear from these two musical examples that even though men and women were becoming equal in the

[67] "Spomenar" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9lym1ypn1Y
[68] "Hej Seki Seki" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oi7-wwB8_4

public sphere, the idea that women were objects for male conquest began to take hold, clearly reflected in NCFM portrayals of the relationship between men and women.

Figure 2: Timeline of Tito Era to Yugoslav Wars[69]



4. The 1990s: Enter Turbo-Folk

At the start of his rule, Milošević supported NCFM, which gave rise to the genre Turbo-folk at the end of the 80s into the early 90s. The Milošević government supported the music, since "turbo-folk largely promoted the alleged superiority of the Serbian nation even during an era of wars, violence, poverty, and hyperinflation."[70] It also represented the popular opinions of the masses, the peasant urbanites and tied his rise as a political figure to cultural projects of

[69] Graphic made with Microsoft Word Smart Art. Information provided by Ashley Green.
[70] Volcic 2011: 38

national revival.[71] And further, it supported the need for Serbian men to assert their virility. Figure 3 (at the end of this section) demonstrates is a timeline of these events, from 1991-1995.

As Turbo-folk rose, with support of Milošević regime, rock and roll was relegated to a small space and remained a protest to nationalism, war, and xenophobia espoused by turbo-folk and the peasant urbanites.[72] Eric Gordy asserts that the political protests in 1991 and 1992 by the young urban population "was encouraged by the rock and roll culture that characterized them,"[73] which featured the rock n' roll aesthetic of high powered guitar riffs, a driving rhythm, and lyric focus on revolution against the system. In stark contrast, Turbo-folk incorporated heavy Balkan folk musical aesthetics and emphasized love for the people and country. The song "Jugoslovenka" (Yugoslavian)[74] by Lepa Brena in 1989 is a prime example of the obsession with national identity that began to take over the political scene, before it became Serbian Turbo-folk. The lyrics romanticize the country of Yugoslavia as a great country with beautiful scenery and women. This love for the Yugoslav country was the focus of Milosevic's rule in the early 90s, before an emphasis on Greater Serbia took hold over his policies.[75]

Shortly after the release of this song, the Yugoslav wars began in 1991. The wars were filled with tragedy, as the Serbian paramilitary forces, known as the Chetniks, committed mass atrocities against the Croat and Bosniak[76] people. The most disturbing of these atrocities were the mass rape camps set up by the Chetniks throughout the wars of the 1990s concentrated in the Bosnian state. Chetnik soliders repeatedly raped and tortured thousands of women and young

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[71] Gordy 1999:130
[72] Gordy 1999:114-117
[73] Gordy 1999: 126
[74] "Jugoslovenska" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsKn5KX6XnU
[75] Irvine 2019
[76] Bosniak refers to Bosnian Muslims. The term "Bosnian" refers to either Croats or Serbs living in Bosnia.

girls, often in front of the victim's family. Those who survived were forced to bring their resulting pregnancies to term; others died of their wounds. This genocide and act of ethnic-cleansing by the Chetniks soldiers was to assert their dominance over the other ethnicities and replace the massacred populations with those of their own.[77] And through all of this, Turbo-folk prevailed, arousing Serbian men with images of hypersexual women, which in turn supported the mass rapes as part of affirming Serbian male virility.

Through wide political and public support of Turbo-folk, the controversial artist Ceca rose to fame and critical acclaim. Volcic and Erjavec assert that Ceca signified "the lingering patriarchal fantasy of a strong Balkan woman steeped in patriotic love of the homeland but willing to leave the sphere of the political to men,"[78] even though on the political front, there were Marković and other female politicians. Ceca became the embodiment of the nationalist project and showcased that through her music. To further the connection, she married the warlord Željko Arkan in 1995; this was after he had already been established as a gangster, commanding the paramilitary unit The Tigers that was responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo from 1991-1995. Ceca was also known to have worn a military uniform, one of the first Tubo-folk artists to do so.[79] In her song, "Nije monotonija" (It's not monotony),[80] the imagery of the music video includes her playing with a baby tiger, a symbol of her involvement with Arkan and the Tigers. In this song, she sings of her longing for her absent lover (referring to Arkan) as he is away (probably for the war). Because of her close connection to Arkan and her massive popularity as a turbo-folk artist, turbo-folk was subsequently placed in direct connection with the wrongs of the Milošević political agenda and the paramilitary

[77] Kohn 1994; Doja 2019
[78] Volcic 2011: 35
[79] Volcic 2011:40
[80] "Nije monotonija" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soiKKyQs-6k

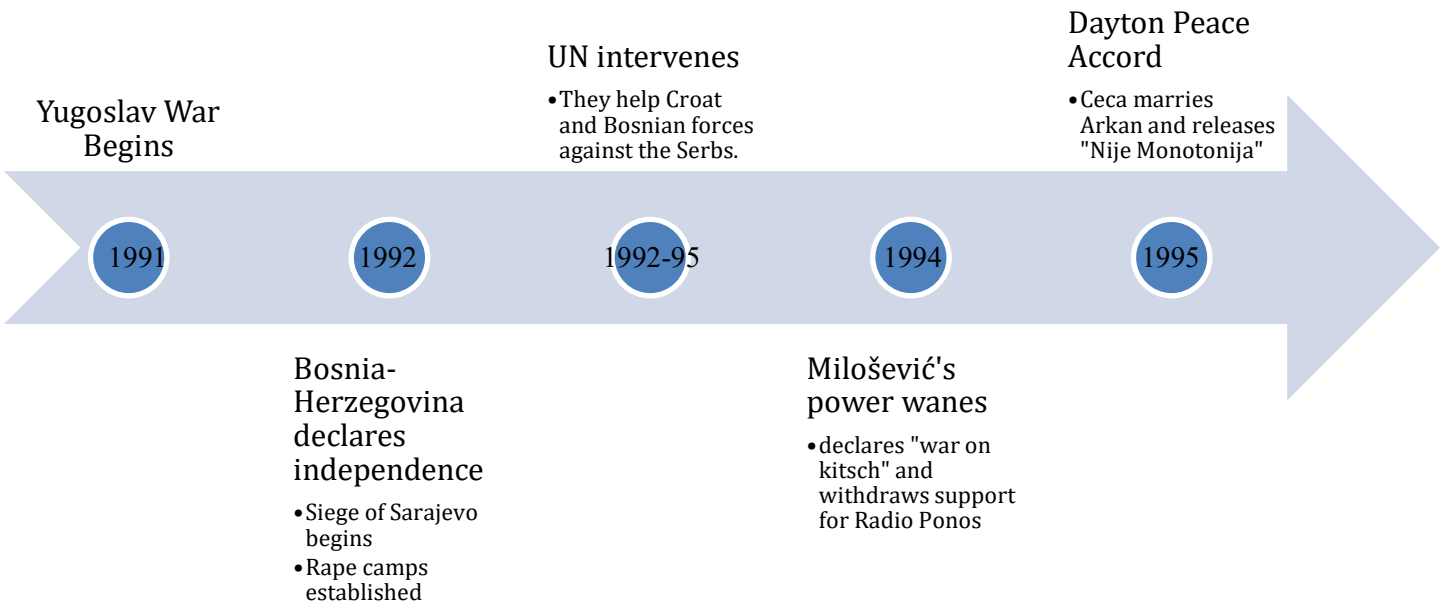
nationalist project – which included ethnic cleansing, and "international economic sanctions [that] helped the Serbian criminal underground gain significant economic and political power."[81] These negative associations with Serbian nationalism and paramilitary forces has forever stained the turbo-folk genre.

In August 1994, turbo-folk was once again forced to evolve. During this time, the Bosnian Serbs refused to sign a peace treaty backed by Milošević. This refusal to cooperate caused a chain of events that marked a swift end to support for turbo-folk. Milošević aligned himself with Washington D.C.; he backed away from the nationalist project and began negotiating with the West, while also withdrawing support from Vojna krajina, the military frontier established by the Austro-Hungarian empire in the 1800s that was made up of mostly Serbian families who had been placed there as a barrier against the Ottoman empire's advance.[82] His withdrawal from the national project also included withdrawing support for turbo-folk. The slogan "Peace has no alternative" began to be promoted by the Milosevic regime and resulted in Turbo-folk being viewed as an embarrassment and threat to Serbia. A "struggle against kitsch" began in an attempt to promote more "true" cultural values.[83] This was exacerbated by the concerns of Communist elites about the use of Turkish music styles/elements in turbo-folk music, which had become a dominant musical aesthetic since the 70s and 80s NCFM genre emerged.[84] Last, support was withdrawn from Radio Ponos (Radio Pride), which was the main source for turbo-folk music. In the absence of regime support, Turbo-folk, rather than disappearing, increased in popularity once again through the harnessing of Western high fashion and commercial dance music, as well as synthesized and amplified sounds. These changes

[81] Volcic 2011:40-41
[82] Irvine 2019
[83] Gordy 1999:153-158
[84] Gordy 1999: 152-153

relegated the folk elements to the background, rather than foreground of the music.[85] The Turkish musical elements such as the melodic modes, ornamentation, clarinet, and rhythms, remained as a marker of the past NCFM phase.

Figure 3: Timeline of Yugoslav Wars 1991-1995[86]



5. Late 90s and Early 2000s

Near the end of the Milošević regime, the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), which had been a powerful influence since the 80s, continued to drive political discourse and its ideologies were reflected in the prevalence of turbo-folk at the end of the 90s. Turbo-folk from 1995 to the early 2000s became distinct from early 90s nationalist turbo-folk through the imagery and lyrics, driven by SRS ideology on gender and gender roles, which Irvine and Lilly assert, "recognized women's important role in reproducing the nation, yet they described Radical women, for the

[85] Gordy 1999:133-134
[86] Graphic made with Microsoft Word Smart Art. Information provided by Ashley Green.

most part, in terms of their individual merit and abilities in the political and economic realms; in other words, while masculinity was conveyed in the nostalgic language of communalism, femininity was often conveyed in the more modern language of individualism.[87] The SRS also blamed men for declining birth rates because of their loss of manhood.[88] This image of the strong, independent, educated Serbian women, in other words, put women responsible for taking a step towards modernity, since the men had failed. In the evolving Turbo-folk music, these new gender roles continued to evolve as well. In the early 90s, Turbo-folk lyrics emphasized women longing and waiting for their lovers to come back to them. After 1995, the lyric content shifted to support a more individualistic view held by women about their love lives, giving them agency in their love. Lyrics, while still focused on romance, often depicted a woman as knowing what she wanted and either asking for her desires or letting go of past love, rather than yearning after a lover who left them. Figure 4 (at the end of this section) is a timeline of the events after 1995.

Prominent examples of the post 1995 Turbo-folk scene include songs from older, but still popular artists such as Vesna Zmijanac, and Dragana Mirković, as well as new, emerging artists such as Jana and Jelena Karleuša. Vesna Zmijanac's song, "Da budemo nocas zajedno" (Let's be together tonight)[89] is a fascinating example of the new individualistic agency of Serbian women. The lyrics to this song are about a past lover who Zmijanac asks to come be with her so they can kiss again. The song is almost typical of the early 90s style, but the music and imagery in the music video suggests otherwise. The musical elements have a more modern sound than previously in the genre with less acoustic instrumentation. The accordion is absent, but violin and acoustic guitar are included; synth drum dance beats and synthesizer chords support the

[87] Irvine 2007:108
[88] Irvine 2007: 112
[89] "Da budemo nocas zajedno" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXWRfUw0FdQ

melody, which is still slightly melismatic, reminiscent of Turkish vocals. However, the predominant change is in the music video, which shows Zmijanac alone, wearing a plain white suit, which is sometimes contrasted with images of her in a yellow sundress. Zmijanac's hair is cut very short and smoothed back, giving her a more traditional masculine look, especially when paired with the white suit. She is the only one present in most of the video; she does not dance and is not the characteristic hyper-sexualized woman seen in other Turbo-folk music videos. The music video also does not show the object of her desire, which leaves it open to being either a man or a woman, especially since the lyrics do not indicate which gender. At the end of the video, a woman's face covered with long hair is shown slightly smiling. Whether or not this hints at the woman being Zmijanac's lover seems to be open to interpretation.

Other examples of post 1995 turbo-folk music such as "Sokolica"(Falcon)[90] in 1998 by Jana and "Gili, Gili"[91] in 1999 by Jelena Karleuša follow a similar vein of women's agency. Both of these songs contain the characteristic Turkish elements of čoček rhythms and melodic embellishments paired with electric instruments such as electric bass, electric guitar, and synthesizers, as well as synth dance beats. The lyrics of "Sokolica" celebrate Jana's break-up with her lover and how she is happy to move on in her life. In "Gili, Gili," Karleuša sings about how she is so special that men need to buy her things to compete for her affection. In the music video, Karleuša is hyper-sexualized, which is more characteristic of turbo-folk imagery, in comparison to Zmijanac's performance in "Da budemo nocas zajedno." However, I argue that this hyper-sexualization, albeit a product for the male gaze, also is contextualized as an emergence of a preference for stronger, individualistic women's roles in the late 90s into the

[90] "Sokolica" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyBv7FQHpvY
[91] "Gili, Gili" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJ-ZBekLmiQ

2000s by the SRS, which ultimately served to strengthen ethno-nationalist sentiments through the portrayal of hypersexual, modern women and dominant, virile men.

Figure 4: Timeline of events from 1995-2010[92]



6. The Emergence of Pop-Folk

In the 2010s, Turbo-folk evolved to reflect the flux of gender roles of both men and women and a sense of nostalgia for former Yugoslavia, which is reflected in the wide range of Turbo-folk fans who are not just relegated to Serbia. Dumancic and Krolo assert that "turbo-folk fans self-represent as affirming their national traditions and/or the Balkan regional identity more broadly."[93] Along with the new identity as a more pan-Balkan music genre, Turbo-folk, now known as Pop-folk, began to make room for queer artists, although their inclusion is still very

[92] Graphic made with Microsoft Word Smart Art. Information provided by Ashley Green.
[93] Dumančić 2016: 158

much on the periphery. Male Pop-folk artists[94] are also becoming more popular, although they have simultaneously become "poster boys for capitalist indulgence rather than national pride."[95] Violence against men also seems to have become a more common theme since the early 2000s. For example, in the 2010 song "Dzukelo" (You dog)[96] by Ana Nikolić, she is seen at the end of the music video poisoning and killing the man who was unfaithful to her.[97]

The relative stability of Serbian politics in the 2000s, I argue, has encouraged the further evolution of Pop-folk, which has been heavily influenced by the Western pop music scene, into a more accepting and experimental view of societal norms while at the same time being packaged in a way that is acceptable to the Balkan public. Older artists such as Ceca and Vesna Zmijanac seem to have faded in popularity, while new artists have emerged in their place. One of the most popular pop-folk artists in the 2010s was Nikolija, who is also the daughter of Zmijanac. Nikolija, along with popular male artists Milan Stanković, Filip, Daniel Djokić have ushered in a new era of pop-folk, bending the rules of gender normativity and challenging accepted norms of sexuality, which is seen in both the lyrics and the music videos, as well as the new music aesthetic that has kept some presence of instruments such as the accordion, clarinet, and violin, but has removed the drum set and looping dance beats and replaced those with electronic sounds and heavy bass. Rapping as well is a new element in present-day pop-folk. There seems to be less of an inclusion of the Turkish musical aesthetics, although they are still widely used.

[94] I focus primarily on female artists in this document. In further research, I would like to focus more exclusively on male artists.
[95] Dumančić 2016: 161
[96] "Dzukelo" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n53tGey7AoM
[97] Beyond the scope of this paper is a discussion of the portrayal of violence against men by women in Turbo/Pop-folk music videos.

Nikolija's "Cao Zdravo" (Ciao Goodbye)[98] is a far cry from the early 1990s turbo-folk scene and a prime example of the new 2010s pop-folk genre. Nikolija conflates the image of masculine and hypersexual/feminine through her scant clothing and demeanor. In the video, she sits on a throne surrounded by leather-clad and chained women, which she controls by making them crawl on their hands and knees in front of her while she pulls at their chains. The lyrics are sexual in nature – the point of the song is how she wants to have sex in the bathroom of the dance club. At one point during the song, a male voice is dubbed over Nikolija's voice, making it seem as if her voice has become deep and masculine. All of these elements combined are more than just a hint of the queer performativity that became mainstream in Pop-folk music in the 2010s.

More recently new female artists have taken up the mantle to continue the legacy of the Turbo-folk genre through Pop-folk, but older artists such as Jelena Karleuša also have managed to continue to carve out space in the ever-evolving music genre. Arguably the biggest names in the Pop-folk scene, female artists Tanja Savić and Teodora from Serbia, represent the epitome of localized globalization as a front for Serbian ethno-nationalist ideology through their music and "Pop-Diva" status. As a brief example, Tanja Savić's 2019 hit song "Hitna Pomoć" (Ambulance)[99] showcases Savić as the classical hypersexual woman, dancing provocatively to an oriental-sounding melody while unmistakably adorned with an earring of the Serbian Orthodox Cross on her left ear. Without realizing the historical implications of such imagery, one might assume the innocence of such a display as a mere indicator of the influence of globalization on the Balkan pop music scene. However, it must be understood as the historical continuation of objectifying women, thus confirming male virility and therefore the stability of

[98] "Cao Zdravo" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wL35iOvHJ2M
[99] "Hitna Pomoć" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxPWo_D1j0U

the Serbian nation. All of this is done transculturally but underlying it all is the same ideology that has continued to unfold for the past two decades.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MUSIC

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will situate ethno-nationalism in the realm of the actual music production-side of the Balkan pop music scene. I argue that Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music can be heard as a local-global music phenomenon in which the sound and structures of the music are the place of highly complex musical identities woven together through time. The historical influences on these two genres place the music in a liminal space in which the music is both historically ethno-nationalist, but also historically cosmopolitan in its construction. Although one could say that most music is at some level influenced by multiple cultural soundscapes, the uniqueness of Turbo-folk and Pop-folk lies in the historically intercultural mixing of musical sounds, political ideologies, and ethnic identities from its very origins as neo-folk music in the 1950s.

In the present, it may be surprising to those unfamiliar with Balkan music radio stations that while Turbo-folk and Pop-folk dominate, music from Western Europe and the United States are also huge contenders for play time. For instance, right before I wrote this, I listened to the late 1990s Europop hit "I'm Blue (Da Ba Dee)" on the Serbian music radio Radio Ada.[100] Later on, I listened to Aleksandra Radović, the daughter of Turbo-folk superstar Ceca on another Serbian radio, Hit FM Radio.[101] Serbian radio stations feature all kinds of music. Radio Pink[102] from Belgrade is the most popular radio to feature Turbo-folk and Pop-folk hits of the present. Anytime I tune in to this radio, without a doubt I will hear music from one of those genres. Then,

[100] https://www.radioada.rs/
[101] https://www.radio.net/s/hitfmrs
[102] https://www.radio.net/s/pink

when I want to listen to American top popular artists, I can turn to Top FM Belgrade to listen to the likes of Rihanna, Beyonce, Lady Gaga, Shawn Mendes, Ariana Grande, Janelle Monae, etc. If I did not know Top FM Belgrade was a Serbian radio station, I would assume I was listening to a local popular music radio station in Norman, Oklahoma.

These radio stations contradict the common conception that the Balkan people are closed off to/ignorant of the world. Although I have yet to travel there, simply from speaking with Balkan natural-born citizens, researching their culture, and listening to their music, I find their experiences relatable to my own in the United States. Of course, there are many differences as well, such as political mindsets, history, ethnicities, language, etc., but the Balkans are not as foreign as someone from the United States may think. The other reason I included my anecdote about Serbian radio is to demonstrate the intercultural exchange of musical ideas across the Balkans. You cannot listen to one radio without realizing that their popular music interests have been heavily influenced by global trends.

The next section discusses the various influences on the neo-folk music genre. The final section analyzes specific musical elements: instrumentation, melody, harmony, rhythm, and lyrics.

2. Influences

According to my thesis, Pop-folk and Turbo-folk music are ambiguous when it comes to the sound of these music genres. This is because since their conception, the music has been comprised of local and global trends. Older musical elements often become replaced with newer, more popular trends to the point that the origins of the neo-folk genre are almost completely lost in the present continuation of the music. However, some elements are stable and form the core of the genre. These elements, I argue, are Orientalism, Globalization, and Ethno-nationalism.

Without them, Pop-folk and Turbo-folk would cease to exist. I could attempt to discuss each element separately; however, the elements are so intertwined that it makes the most sense to discuss them as a whole.

2.1 Orientalism, Globalization, Ethno-nationalism

The concept of intercultural mixing in Turbo-folk and Pop-folk has been discussed by many prominent ethnomusicologists who focus on Eastern-Europe. Ljerka Rasmussen in her 2007 chapter entitled, "Bosnian and Serbian Popular Music in the 1990s: Divergent Paths, Conflicting Meanings, and Shared Sentiments" discussed the mixing of local and global sources in neofolk music, discussing that Turbo-folk is unmistakable as a local-global phenomenon mixed with orientalist overtones. Specifically, she argues that,

> It operates on already tested precepts of ethnopop globalization: manipulating myriad local sources and those of a few selected Mediterranean locales, appealing to a larger Balkan home, and rejuvenating its modernity by co-opting the latest from the West. And yet, against the backdrop of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and elsewhere, *turbo folk*'s "schizophonic" insistence on Orient-ornament hybridity - indeed fetish - gives us pause, because it reveals Muslim ethnicity as a function of stylistic decorum.[103]

In the Balkans, "orientalism" is specifically related to Turkish cultural symbols, which is derived from the Ottoman Empire's influence on the area. Turbo-folk in particular is notorious for fetishizing the Islamic religion of Turkish culture; it uses Muslim ethnic symbols in both the musical sounds and videography.[104] Muslim symbols are used to over-exaggerate the sexiness and sensuality of the singers through such stereotypes as belly dance movements, homophonic male chanting, and Turkish rhythms and melodic embellishments. A clear example of this can be

[103] Rasmussen 2007: 89.
[104] Discussed in Section 3

heard and seen in Lepa Brena's 1985 hit song "Hej Seki Seki.[105] While this recording is a precursor to 1990s Turbo-folk, similar oriental elements have remained throughout the years. In 2015, Croatian Turbo-folk artist Sandra Afrika released her hit song, "Devojka Tvog Druga" ("Your Other Girl"),[106] which although released 30 years later, still holds clear resemblance to Brena's 1985 performance through the hip shaking, reminiscent of belly dance, the male almost chant-like vocals, and the prolific Turkish rhythms and melodic embellishments.

Another prominent ethnomusicologist, Donna A. Buchanan, discussed the proliferation of the Ottoman Turkish tune "Üsküdara gider iken" ("On the way to Uskudar") in her chapter on the movement of musical ideas across the Balkan peninsula. Although the song's exact origins are unknown, it is a prime example of intercultural contact across the Balkans, which continues to characterize Balkan popular music today as a highly cosmopolitan genre, while still viewed as ethno-national symbols. Further, Buchanan asserts,

> Specific features of text and tune mark each variant as associated with a particular community, time, and place to such an extent that in recent years these markers have sometimes symbolized powerful ethno-nationalist sentiments...the popularization of a single song in so many venues also reveals circuits of Balkan interchange well-established prior to those of contemporary global media.[107]

In Serbia, the song emerged in the early 1900s as a sevdalinka called "Ruse kose, curo, imaš."[108] A sevdalinka is still a very common music genre in the Balkans. The genre originated as a Muslim devotional song known as *ilahije* (sing. *ilahija*) popular among Bosnian Muslims and Jews; secular lyrics were set to ilahije tunes, which eventually were influenced by

[105] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oi7-wwB8_4 - Analysis provided in section 3.
[106] "Devojk Tvoga Druga" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2XT1vFUo2Q
[107] Buchanan 2007: 4
[108] Buchanan 2007: 26-27

globalization.[109] Buchanan describes this transition, stating that, "non-tempered intervals associated with Turkish modality became tempered, and the formerly heterophonic texture replaced by precise playing techniques and four-part polyphony, as melodies were harmonized with chords." Further, she explains that ensembles consisting of clarinet, accordion, violin, tambura, and bass replaced the original saz[110] accompaniment.[111]

These two influences, globalization and orientalism together serve to create very stark ethnic boundaries between the various ethnicities in the Balkans, most notably that between the Serbs and Croats. Rasmussen notes that, "in regard to the Serb-Croat conflict in particular, graphically clear lines of separation were drawn between the genres of pop and newly composed folk music. Croatia eliminated the latter from public circulation, while Serbia propelled it forward in the form of *turbo folk.*"[112] Croatia and Serbia, although next door neighbors, have been historically divided from their very conception - Croatia was occupied by the Austro-Hungarian empire, converted to Catholicism, and became heavily Europeanized while Serbia was occupied by the Ottoman Empire, established the Serbian Orthodox Church under heavy Muslim influence, and was in essence separated from Western European powers and culture. To this day, it is a widely held belief in the Balkans that "affinities with the West are seen by the elite as affording privilege and prestige, while associations with the East (equated with Turkey and the Middle East - the "Orient") are viewed as degrading and undermining culture."[113]

It is from this strict separation of cultures that the neo-folk genres Turbo-folk and Pop-folk emerged from Serbia in an attempt to reconcile the modernity of "the West" within the

[109] A discussion of the popularity of Sevdah tunes in the present day is beyond the scope of this paper.
[110] a Turkish long-necked lute
[111] Buchanan 2007:28-30
[112] Rasumessen 2007:61
[113] Beissinger 2007: 96

Serbian ethno-national identity. Therefore, the music uses oriental elements inconsistently - to assert the placement of Serbian identity as a part of past Ottoman occupation while at the same time using it in such a way that it 1) pokes fun at the negative Balkan stereotype of backwards, redneck, uneducated people and 2) acts to reclaim their history to be a proud symbol of their identity.

3. Musical Elements of Turbo-folk and Pop-folk

In this section I will explore the specific musical characteristics that make up the two genres Turbo-folk and Pop-folk. In essence, the main differences between Turbo-folk and Pop-folk is the degree to which globalization replaces oriental or folk signifying sounds. Dumančić and Krolo describe Pop-folk as resembling a more Western pop and hip-hop music style, which includes the use of verse-chorus forms, short, attractive melodies, and hip-hop dance visuals. Pop-folk also minimizes the use of the "trilling voice," which is a Turbo-folk signifying sound.[114] In many informal discussions with Balkan natives, there was a general consensus that pop-folk is more characteristic of "softer" Western pop music whereas turbo-folk tends to sound more hardcore, aggressive, and vulgar because of the heavy inclusion of folk and oriental musical aspects. In one informal conversation, a Serbian native expressed that the *folk* in turbo-folk and pop-folk is not a positive thing, insisting that "folk" is "trashy."[115] Most Balkan natives I spoke with are from a similar demographic (Masters degree/PhD degree, well-traveled). Because of this, it became quite clear that this demographic tends to perceive Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music genres as distasteful. Therefore, much of my analysis considers their viewpoint

[114] Dumančić 2016: 160
[115] Conversation with a native of Serbia

because I have yet to meet an ethnic Balkan person who professes a love for these folk music genres![116]

3.1. Instrumentation

To discuss instrumentation, it is necessary to describe chronologically the transformation of neo-folk music into Pop-folk because each genre (neofolk, NCFM, Turbo-folk, Pop-folk) built upon the preceding genre.

In the beginning stages, neofolk had a very distinct folk sound. The acoustic instruments of the accordion, clarinet, and violin were widely used, combined with the more modern instrumentation of drum set and electric bass. The dominant artists of the genre during this time were men, the most popular artist being Šaban Šaulić. One of his major hits, "Bio sam pijanac"[117] (I was a drunkard) from 1972 exemplifies the neofolk music scene of the 1960s and 70s. In the song, a characteristic accordion melody launches the song, accompanied by a quick, offbeat rhythm established by the drum set. An electric bass outlines a simple bass line.

Much of the instrumentation of neo-folk has remained throughout the decades, especially the use of accordion and clarinet. However, as time progressed towards the era of NCFM, a new "exotic" flavor was added to the music, that of oriental, or Turkish, musical sounds. The clarinet became more prominent; its timbre transitioned from a more subdued accompaniment instrument to a very present, nasal sound characteristic of Turkish classical clarinet playing.[118] "Hvala Ti Za

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[116] However, it should be noted that most of these people admitted that a fondness or affiliation with either genre was social taboo, or that it was embarrassing to even mention in regular conversation.

[117] "Bio sam pijanc" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nL4zm68Qnlc

[118] For a highly entertaining example of the classic Turkish clarinet sound, listen and watch this music video by famous Turkish classical clarinetist,Hüsnü Şenlendirici: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Euv1atgsbTg. From this video, it also becomes clear that the clarinet is massively popular in Turkey to this day.

Sve"[119] (Thank you for everything) by Vesna Zmijanac in 1979 is an early song of this type. A prominent nasal clarinet is featured in the song as well as a highly melismatic and embellished vocal lines by Zmijanac. The accordion as well has remained a prominent signifier of folk music, which can be heard in the 1985 song "Spomenar" (Scrapbook)[120] by male artist Šeki Turković. The only instruments used in the song are accordion, electric bass, and drum set. Turković's voice and the accordion display slight melismatic melodic lines with some Turkish embellishments, which fall under the NCFM style.

Turkish percussion instruments such as the doumbek and riq became wildly popular in the NCFM era, the doumbek being the most heard still today. Even as the drumset was replaced by drum and synth loops borrowed from 1980s Europop, the doumbek stayed noticeably present. Lepa Brena's 1987 NCFM song "Sanjam" (I Dream)[121] is a common example of the use of the doumbek amid the dance club sounds then popular. Throughout the song, the doumbek is used sparingly as an embellishment at the ends of Brena's vocal lines. Combined with the folk sound of the violin and Croatian tamburiza, it places "Sanjam" within the neo-folk genre.

Once Turbo-folk dominated the music scene in the 1990s, the drumset of the very early iterations of neo-folk was almost completely replaced by drum loops. At the start of the 1990s, there was a nostalgic element in early Turbo-folk. Listening to a song such as Turbo-folk superstar Ceca's 1990 song "Pustite me da ga vidim" (Let me see him) resembles the earliest neo-folk songs such as "Bio sam pijanac" with the use of the electric bass and accordion melodic line. However, the difference in Ceca's 1990 song is that there is the inclusion of synthesizer and electric guitar, which became much more prominent in this decade. And soon, the nostalgic

[119] "Hvala ti za sve" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NqHQSFngvI
[120] "Spomenar" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9lym1ypn1Y
[121] "Sanjam" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVBNoywalfc

sounds of old neo-folk were quickly replaced - listening to Ceca's song "Volim Te"[122] (I Love You) from the very next year, 1991, demonstrates a quick transition to Europop drum and synth loops and the use of electric guitar instead of accordion or clarinet. The one true signifier of the neo-folk genre in this song can be heard in Ceca's vocals - the iconic "trilling" vocalizations of her voice on any sustained note stems directly from a long history of Turkish musical influence. The trill is characteristic as a very wide vibrato forcefully produced by the vocalist. This vocal technique is so prominent that it has become a source of jokes about turbo-folk singers - every person I spoke with commented or made jokes about the sound (or let loose their extreme annoyance of the sound).

As the 2000s arrived, traditional neofolk instruments disappeared (electric bass, drum set, tamburitza) in favor of the then globally popular Europop and dance club synth loops and drum loops. Vocal timbre wavered between the iconic trilling and a Westernized pop vocal sound of belting vocals and occasional shouting/speaking. Jelena Karleuša's 2001 song "Ludača" (Lunatic)[123] showcases this new era of turbo-folk music, which continued to borrow elements derived from the explosion of globalization of the music scene. Further, although the traditional instruments disappeared, the oriental sounds of Turkish percussion remained a prominent signifier. Synthesizers were used to create accompaniment reminiscent of the clarinet and accordion - the nasal timbre is what most signifies this.

The transition from Turbo-folk to Pop-folk is surrounded by ambiguity since the neo-folk genre as a whole is founded on borrowing. In the 2010s, heavy electronic sounds, heavy bass, and synthesizer similar to that heard in EDM, Dubstep, etc. became common as well as the softer

[122] "Volim Te" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPwgepV8O2g&list=PL1DEAWw6t6VYMegI4DHZsCdEdl0_mRxL1&index=20
[123]"Ludaca" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfZoP9akUJo

influences of Rap, R&B, and Hip-Hop. What seems to be the distinguishing feature of Pop-folk is the minimal inclusion of oriental instrumentation such as Turkish percussion and clarinet. Also, the "trilling" vocal timbre is noticeably diminished in favor of the vocal style of R&B or Hip-Hop singers and the use of auto-tune.

Ana Nikolić's hit song from 2013 "Milion Dolara" (A Million Dollars)[124] is a prime example of the newer Pop-folk genre. Nikolić was a very popular Turbo-folk singer in the 2000s and remained popular in the next decade by transitioning to Pop-folk. The song "Milion Dolara" opens as a rap song; Nikolić's name is announced by a gruff male voice similar to that heard in American rap. The rap verses are contrasted with the chorus sung by Nikolić; her vocals are heavily covered by autotune, which masks her trilling vocal timbre. The presence of her trilling vocals is the only easily recognizable neofolk sound still present. The inclusion of the percussive drum track is loosely reminiscent of Turkish percussion sounds, although it is packaged in a very Westernized way.

Nearing the 2020s, Pop-folk has dominated the Balkan music scene, although Turbo-folk can still be heard. Singers will release albums that showcase a plethora of musical influences that may include a range of Turbo-folk, Pop-folk, and Balkan Pop music. Seka Aleksić's 2019 song "Zakuni se u kurvu" (Swear to the whore)[125] is one example of the path of most Balkan pop singers of today. She has been labeled as a Pop-folk singer, even though she used to produce Turbo-folk songs in the past decades. What remains in her music is her slightly trilling voice. Then, there are singers such as Tanja Savić who tend to release music that is much heavier in the inclusion of folk instrumentation, although it is still relatively subdued in comparison to the

[124] "Milion Dolara" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbyYgu0fDE8
[125] "Zakuni se u kurvu" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kOvxfnJsIg

1990s and early 2000s. Savić's Pop-folk hit from 2019 "Stranci" (Strangers)[126] features her subdued trilling voice accompanied by Turkish doumbek and symphonic violins, both of which come from the recent neofolk past.

3.2. Melodies and Harmonies

The melodies and harmonies of neofolk music are embedded in oriental musical sounds. Melismatic melodic lines characteristic of Turkish music are combined with melodic modes that include a flat two or a raised four. The use of drones and open intervals (mainly 5ths and octaves) as well as male homophonic chant-like vocals are reminiscent of Middle Eastern performance practice,[127] although this aspect declined rapidly in the early 2000s.

Early neofolk from the 1950s and 60s minimally used Turkish musical characteristics - the one characteristic used being that of the melismatic vocal melodies and flat twos. It was during the rise of NCFM that oriental melodic structures and harmonies became common.

An example from 1982 that showcases the return of the Turkish clarinet, featuring highly melismatic instrumental and vocal lines and the flat two can be heard in Zorica Brunclik's song "A tebe nema" (And you are gone).[128] In the same decade, Vesna Zmijanac began to release more Westernized NCFM that included the use of male chant-like vocals and her highly melismatic vocals. One such example is her song from 1988, "Leto" (Summer).[129]

[126] "Stranci" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dECnSunx6uo
[127] Buchanan 2007: 8
[128] "A tebe nema" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoBZTKOuHLk
[129] "Leto" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBSjEVixtEc

Jelena Karleuša's 1997 hit "Vestiče vile" (Witch fairies)[130] demonstrates the "kitsch" label turbo-folk received in the 1990s. The song mashes many different elements of orientalism and globalization together: the flat two, melismatic vocals, male chanting, the trilling ornaments in melody and accompaniment. The bass line/harmonic progression is provided by an electric bass throughout. Towards the very end, the song features a key change for the very last iteration of the chorus, a technique taken from Western pop music.

As time has progressed, hits such as Karleuša's "Vestiče vile" have become the standard Turbo-folk sound, while Pop-folk has begun to phase out the oriental melodies and harmonies, although they still remain. Pop-folk tends to hint at melismatic melodies in combination with more modern, belting vocals. For example, a popular pop-folk artist of today, Teodora, has very minimal oriental sounds in her music. What she uses is a hint of the trilling and melismatic vocal lines at the ends of vocal phrases as well as occasional flat twos in accompanying melodic lines. It ends up being more of a novelty rather than the defining element of her music. For Teodora's music, what is more prominently oriental is her inclusion of percussive tracks that are reminiscent of the Turkish doumbek. An example of her subtle oriental Pop-folk style can be heard in her massively popular song from 2019 entitled "Story."[131]

3.3. Rhythms

One of the most important elements in neofolk music is the rhythmic structure. While in the beginning stages, neofolk relied on straight duple rhythms, the addition of oriental elements gave rise to the importance of syncopated, driving rhythms. Middle Eastern duple rhythms such

[130] "Vestiče vile" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB68_b0i6D8
[131] "Story" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGwVFV0nxFw

as the maqsum and ayyub are now widely used, which also serves to create a polyrhythmic feel when paired with the melody. This rhythmic tension and complexity, Beissinger asserts, "figures in the textured "oriental" sound of the music."[132]

The most popular rhythm used in neofolk throughout its historical transitions is the Ayoub rhythm. This rhythm is very similar to the Balkan Čoček rhythm. Ayoub is a rhythm in 2/4; it is played on the darbuka or doumbek. The rhythm can be vocalized as such: Dum -k Dum Tek.[133] In music notation, the rhythm would be equivalent to a dotted-eighth sixteenth rhythm followed by two eighth notes. This rhythm can be clearly heard in Teodora's 2019 song "Kristijan Grej" (Christian Grey)[134] which forms the driving rhythmic base of the entire song. Further, the song employs a sound reminiscent of the Turkish riq, a tambourine, on the offbeats occasionally throughout. This heavy, driving rhythm creates a very oriental feel to the music even though it is decidedly less blatant than versions found in Turbo-folk music such as Ceca's 2000 song "Crveno" (Red).[135] In this song, the ayoub rhythm is presented by the actual sound of the darbuka and accompanied by the riq. It is also used in a much slower, sensual rhythmic feel. In addition, this song employs many other aspects of oriental sounds such as melismatic melodies, trilling vocal ornaments, the clarinet, and the flat two.

3.4. Lyrics

Before I discuss specific lyric content, I will first introduce the reader to the Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian Language (BCS). I do so because as a Slavic language, BCS operates quite

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[132] Beissinger 2007: 110
[133] Listen to the ayoub rhythm here: https://www.darbukaplanet.com/pages/ayoub-darbuka-rhythm
[134] "Kristijan Grej" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQ3SYgdGmP8
[135] "Crveno" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuFYCTdWqzY

differently from Germanic languages most familiar to an English speaker although concepts such as gendered nouns are similar to German and Spanish. In section 3.4.2. I focus intensely on the gendered aspects of the language, because through the language, ethno-nationalist discourse is rigidly supported. As discussed in chapter one, ethno-nationalist ideology in the Balkans firmly focuses on the role of men and women in society.

3.4.1. BCS Dialects

BCS is a unique language that actually refers to multiple regional dialects around the Balkans which are mutually intelligible even though grammatical structure, slang, colloquial speech, and pronunciation may vary. For example, A Croatian native would be able to understand anyone from Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina without any need to study regional differences. The most important aspect of BCS which directly relates to ethno-national divides are the main dialects called *Ekavian* and *Ijekavian*. Serbians mostly use *Ekavian* dialect whereas Croatians and Bosnians use *Ijekavian*. In my BCS language courses, I learned that the difference between the two are very subtle, but nonetheless important in distinguishing ethnicity. The main difference that is immediately recognizable is the treatment of the letter *e*, pronounced like the *e* in bed. In *Ijekavian*, speakers will often add the dipthong "ij," pronounced "ee-y," before *e*. The syllable 'j,' pronounced "y" is also used in the same way. The *Ekavian* dialect does not do this. See Figure 5 for an illustration of these differences.[136]

[136] This information was provided to me during three consecutive summers attending BCS language courses at Indiana University's Summer Language Workshop from 2018 to 2020.

Figure 5. BCS Dialects

English	Ijekavian Dialect	Ekavian Dialect
Beautiful	l**ij**ep	lep
Monday	Poned**j**eljak	Ponedeljak
After	Posl**ij**e	Posle

3.4.2. BCS and Gender

In BCS, discussing 'gender' is virtually inseparable from discussing 'sex;' the word *pol* is used to denote both terms.[137] Scholar Rosi Braidotti notes that the etymology of *pol* is derived from the Old Slavic word *(s)pol* meaning 'half,' which "is developed from *(s)pholu*, meaning "what has been cut away, cut into two." She goes on to clarify that "in most Slavic languages the meaning of the word 'sex' denotes the biological characteristics of maleness or femaleness, as well as grammatical gender."[138] Therefore, in BCS, a strong binary division between male/female or man/woman is clearly drawn with no terminology for variance. From my three years of BCS language study, I have learned that even in nouns, gender is always asserted.[139] Nouns are denoted as either masculine (muški), feminine (ženski), or neutral (srednji). Further, in mixed gender settings, the pronoun used to address the group automatically takes on the masculine form. For example, one male and female student would be discussed with the pronoun

[137] Braidotti 2002: 289
[138] Braidotti 2002: 289
[139] Supplementary textbooks used throughout these courses include *Bosnian Croatian Serbian: A Textbook with Exercises and Basic Grammar, Second Edition* by Ronelle Alexander and *Hrvatski Za Početnike 1* from Croaticum, centar za hrvatski kao drugi i strani jezik (the center for Croatian as a second language).

Oni (they, masculine), as in: *Oni su studenti* – They are students. Two female students would be addressed with the feminine form, *One* (they, feminine).[140]

On another note, there is another term related to sex and gender, *rod*, which has been used to form the word for gender studies, *Rodnije Studije*, in Balkan universities.[141] Braidotti explains that the Old Slavic word *rod* is the equivalent to 'gender,' but is also strongly correlated with the words for 'to give birth', 'nation' (na+rod), and 'relatives.'[142] With this in mind, it seems that *rod* actually has strong ties to nationalism and partriarchal values of the nuclear family. Further, the Serbian language commonly makes use of patronymics in surnames to signify the patrilineal line of descent.[143] For example, Marković is translated to "son of Mark/Mark's son. Ov/ev are possessives to which the diminutive – ić is added.[144] In addition to grammatical rules, gendered proverbs and idiomatic expressions further supplant the internalization of patriarchal thinking and internalized misogyny. Linguist Elke Hentschel notes that Serbian proverbs indicate women's traditional domestic roles, their emotional deception, inferiority to men, and inability to keep secrets.[145] Prominent examples include: *Svaka žena dobre ćudi, kuva što vole ljudi* (Every good-natured woman cooks what people like); and *Žena se uzda u plač, a lupež u laž* (A woman relies on her tears, a crook on his lies). Idiomatic expressions such as *Ženska glava* (Women's head) implies an "empty or stupid head, which is in stark contrast to *Muška glava* (Man's head), referring to the man as the head of the family, clearly indicate the view that men are superior to women.[146]

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[140] BCS Language study, 2019, Indiana University
[141] Discussion with my Croatian language teacher Teuta Ozlecik, Indiana University, 2019
[142] Braidotti 2002: 289
[143] Mole 2016: 7
[144] BCS Language Study, 2019, Indiana University
[145] Hentschel 2003
[146] Hentschel 2003: 300-301

Hentschel also discussed that the use of feminine noun forms used to name newer professions for which women can now apply are widely contested. This is because Balkan linguists argue for *nationally* correct forms of address, especially Serbian linguists. Hentschel's study determined that Serbians refer to women with masculine nouns because the masculine form is more common – in many cases there is no alternative. Hentschel further notes that most Serbian women avoid using the feminine noun form to refer to their profession because it is viewed as degrading; he conjectures that this is related to historical prejudices against women as being less qualified in the same profession as a man.[147] This internalized misogyny prevalent through the language manifests in a wider acceptance of the Serbian patriarchy and ethno-nationalism. I assert that the internalized misogyny through the language has encouraged the proliferation of those values in turbo-folk and pop-folk music.

Profanity also explicitly asserts the dominance of men. Hentschel notes that "swearing is almost exclusively sexual: The target of an insult will be represented as the passive or receiving object of male sexual activity."[148] Most commonly, the verb *jebati*, meaning "to fuck (as a male activity)" is used as a personal insult directed towards one's mother with the phrase *jebam ti majku!* (I fuck your mother!).[149] The implications of such an aggressive, sexually domineering statement directed towards the highly important mother figure of the Serbian family demonstrates that the ethno-nationalist, patriarchal perception of women is that they are objects to be dominated and controlled (sexually). Although many Serbian nationalists place high value on women as the life-givers of the Serbian Nation, I argue that language use suggests women's

[147] Hentschel 2003: 300
[148] Hentschel 2003: 302
[149] Hentschel 2003: 302

high value is only valid only long as they are able to provide sexual gratification to men and produce future sons to protect the nation.

Language is so important to ethno-national identity in the Balkans because of Vuk Karadzić's influence, which established certain dialects as signifiers of certain ethnicities.[150] Karadzic's standardization of the Serbian language has ingrained highly gendered phenomena in not only language, but also Serbian folk music and art, which has continued to exert influence on modern day Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music. He created classification schemes for folklore collections that were gender-based and published these in gender-separate volumes; he asserted that heroic poems about epic tales of conquests, battles, and deeds embodied a dominant male element symbolizing Serbian nationalism. Short, lyrical songs of love, longing, and nature were placed in books for women.[151] This long-established acceptance of the dichotomy between men and women and the hierarchical dominance of men has persisted through the decades, the epitome of which is represented in Turbo-folk and Pop-folk.[152]

3.4.3. Language and Lyrics

Through the lyrics, Pop-folk and Turbo-folk cement ethno-nationalist ideology as part of the music genre. Neofolk of the 60s and 70s featured lyric content from both male and female singers focusing on heartache or the celebration of love/romance. By the 1990s, lyric content and motifs had shifted from songs about love (based on traditional gender hierarchies), to content actively meant to proliferate Serbian political ideology through stories of patriotic love under the guise of romance. Before the start of the wars in the 1990s, tensions between the ethnicities and

[150] Discussed in Chapter 1: History.
[151] Hajdarpasic 2015: 27-29
[152] Beyond the scope of this paper is an analysis of Karadzić's folk song collections.

subsequent instability of Yugoslavia encouraged some artists to use nostalgia as a tool to remind Yugoslavians of the positive aspects of their society. Lepa Brena's 1989 song "Jugoslovenka" (Yugoslavian) romanticizes the beauty of Yugoslavia. The chorus says:

BCS	English Translation
Oči su mi more Jadransko. *Kose su mi klasje Panonsko.* *Sretna mi je duša Slovenska.* *Ja sam Jugoslovenska.*	My eyes are the Adriatic Sea. My hair is Pannonian wheat. My Slovenian soul is content. I am Yugoslavian.

These lyrics represent the beginning of the wave of ethno-nationalism that ultimately ended with the breakup of Yugoslavia. This love for the Yugoslav country was the focus of Milosevic's rule in the early 90s, before an emphasis on Greater Serbia took hold over his policies.[153]

Through wide political and public support of turbo-folk, the controversial turbo-folk artist Ceca rose to fame and critical acclaim. Volcic and Erjavec assert that Ceca signified "the lingering patriarchal fantasy of a strong Balkan woman steeped in patriotic love of the homeland but willing to leave the sphere of the political to men."[154] Ceca became the embodiment of the nationalist project through her music throughout the 1990s and 2000s Turbo-folk era. To further the connection, she married the warlord Željko Arkan in 1995; this was after he had already been established as a gangster, commanding the paramilitary unit The Tigers that was responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo.[155] In her song, "Nije monotonija"[156] (It's not monotony), she sings of her longing for her absent lover (referring to Arkan) as he is away

[153] Irvine 2019
[154] Volcic 2011: 35
[155] Volcic 2011: 40
[156] "Nije monotonija" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soiKKyQs-6k

(probably for the war). Paired with the imagery in the music video of her playing with a baby tiger (symbolic of The Tigers paramilitary group) creates a very distinctive ethno-national fantasy. The lyrics depict her as a Serbian woman dedicated to her true love in such an extreme way that without him she becomes ill. In the chorus Ceca says:

BCS	English Translation
Nije monotonija što me noćas ubija *što mi srce razbija na sitne komade* *to je melanholija, nije monotonija* *bolest koja probija sve moje blokade*	It's not monotony that kills me tonight What breaks my heart into small pieces It is melancholy, not monotony An illness which breaks through all my blockades

This fantasy assumes her national role as a housewife and mother, because Serbian ethno-national gender roles dictate that women must raise children to serve the future country while the men are away fighting for it. Further, it plays into the stereotype of the hysterical woman ruled by her emotions, which is a common trope in depictions of women in Turbo-folk and Pop-folk.

After 1995, a notable shift in lyric content is seen; there is a strong push towards female individualism and agency in love, although women still remain stereotypically emotional and obsessed with love. The 1998 song "Sokolica" (Falcon) by Jana demonstrates this shift. In the chorus, Jana vehemently declares that she is moving on from her unfaithful lover:

BCS	English Translation
Ni pet para ne dam *Ni suzu sa lica* *Na rastanku s tobom* *Biću sokolica*	I don't give a damn (lit. Not five para[157] I give) No tears on my face On my parting with you I will be a falcon

[157] Para is a very low currency amount from the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Even though her insistence is that she leave her relationship, the underlying symbolism of gender roles as established by Vuk Karadzić remains - women sing about love because that is their symbolic place in ethno-national discourse.

Nearing the 2000s and on, lyric content once again shifted to emphasize the hypersexuality of women. Whereas before this time female singers' sexuality was more symbolic than explicit, lyrics evolved to become overtly sexual. In the 1999 song "Gili, Gili" by Jelena Karleuša, she flaunts her body, unabashedly acknowledging her beauty:

BCS	English Translation
Znam da sam lepa, nisam slepa *Takvu me majka rodila*	I know I'm beautiful, I'm not blind That's how my mother birthed me

She goes on to taunt the men that spend all their money buying her things, thinking it will buy her love. However, her love cannot be bought with money, a fact that does not stop her from asking the men to spend all their money on her:

BCS	English Translation
Dolari, marke, lire ti vire - ko se još tako udvara? *Gili-gili-gili-gili, ako me voliš - voli me do zadnjeg dinara*	Dollars, marks, liras peep at you - who courts like that? Gili-gili-gili-gili, if you love me - love me to the last dinar[158]

And so, she falls into the same stereotypical trope of a woman obsessed with love and also adds the element of female hypersexuality that continues to affirm male virility.

[158]Yugoslav currency

In 2010s Pop-folk, these lyrical tropes remained consistent, although female hypersexuality seems to have become the most prominent. For instance, the lyrics of Nikolija's popular 2010 song Čao Zdravo[159] are extremely sexual. In the pre-chorus, Nikolija sings:

BCS	English Translation
bila bi steta, stvarno velika steta da me ne ispratis do toaleta	It would be a shame, a really big shame If you don't take me to the toilet

The entire song is about Nikolija expressing her excitement about having sex in the club bathroom. Much of the lyrics are almost nonsense. The chorus repeats as such:

BCS	English Translation
Ovo je ludilo, ovo je ludilo *Ovo je ludilo, totalno ludilo* *ludilo ludila dok radimo u klubu to* *Ovo je ludilo, totalno ludilo* *Ludilo ludila dok radimo u klubu to*	This is crazy, this is crazy This is crazy, totally crazy Crazily crazy while we do it in the klub This is crazy, totally crazy Crazily crazy while we do it in the klub

Nevertheless, "Čao Zdravo" was a very popular song in 2010. The lyrics, although very repetitive, remain a signifier of female hypersexuality - this song is a standout example of overtly sexual language.

In 2019, Tanja Savić released a massively popular Pop-folk hit entitled "Hitna Pomoć" (Ambulance)[160] that displays the typical ethno-nationalist gender rhetoric that has been mainstream since the late 1990s. The lyrics paint a picture of Savić as a highly emotional, obsessive, love-crazed woman. Through the lyrics, she agonizes that she cannot live without her

[159] "Čao Zdravo" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wL35iOvHJ2M
[160] "Hitna Pomoć" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxPWo_D1j0U

man even though she realizes that he is a playboy that does not actually love her:

BCS	English Translation
Nema te dijagnoze, ma mama stvarno loš je Lože ga stvari loše, njemu je ljubav samo reč Ti i kad lud se praviš sa tobom sve mi fali Ma da li, da li telefon moj još uvek znaš napamet? Ma o okreni moj broj, prošla je ponoć Noćas si loš, a meni trebaš kao hitna pomoć O odnesi mi bol, al' ostavi ponos Odeš li opet meni trebaće hitna pomoć	There is no diagnosis for you, momma he is really bad He's driven by bad things, love is just a word to him Even when you pretend you're crazy I miss you But do, do you still know my phone by heart Turn around my number, it's past midnight Tonight you're bad, and I need you like an ambulance Carry away my pain, but leave the pride If you go again I will need an ambulance

The insinuation that she might die if she is not with him highlights the tragic internalized misogyny of ethno-nationalist ideology. She is helpless, unable to be on her own. She would rather be with a man that repeatedly hurts her (emotionally) and uses her than treat herself with decency. This is what the internalized message of ethno-nationalist ideology spreads to the listeners under the veil of globalization.

4. Conclusion

When the individual musical elements of Pop-Folk and Turbo-folk - instrumentation, melody and harmony, rhythm, and lyrics - are viewed as a cohesive whole, it creates an undeniable connection between ethno-nationalism and the two music genres. The historical implications of each element affirm that both music genres carry a long line of political baggage that is impossible to separate from the music itself. Being so embedded in the actual musical production, I assert that Pop-Folk and Turbo-folk are a medium for the proliferation of ethno-nationalist ideology among the general public. It is a reflection of the globalized Western pop

music scene in which the globalized aspects are twisted to serve local ethno-nationalist politics.[161]

[161] Beyond the scope of this paper is an analysis of lyrics of Croatian and Bosnian Pop-folk artists which would undoubtedly uncover subtle differences between Serbian vs. Croatian vs. Bosnian Pop-folk performers.

CHAPTER THREE: BODY POLITICS AND QUEERNESS

1. Introduction

What may be the most complex and interesting aspect of Turbo-folk and Pop-folk is the relationship between ethno-nationalism, body politics, and queerness. Serbian ethno-nationalist rhetoric asserts definitive roles for men and women: traditional motherly roles for women (who must be sexy) and strong, virile, men. Further, ethno-nationalist gender ideology supports a heteronormative framework, which stems directly from the hefty influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC). The need for hypersexual female bodies to excite men's lost virility is encouraged and justified by the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) through its anti-modernist stance. Rada Drezgić's research on the permeation of SPC values in Serbian politics found that the SPC "has contributed to the revival of traditional, patriarchal values that reduce women's roles to motherhood and nurturing, situating them symbolically within the private realm and, thus, limiting their opportunities to participate in public and political life."[162] This assertion of "natural" motherhood is a powerful influence on Serbian society because the SPC is a defining factor of Serbian national identity.

The permeation of SPC values in multiple Serbian institutions is evident in both Turbo-folk and its successor Pop-folk. SPC is staunchly patriarchal; the influence on female artists is clear through the incorporation of religious iconography, most prominently the Orthodox cross[163] and on the advocation for compliant woman who want nothing more than to find a man (and have a family). Tanja Savić's popular pop-folk song "Hitna Pomoć" from 2019 is one such example of the inclusion of Orthodox imagery. In the music video, Savić fastens a large

[162]Drezgić 2010: 966-967
[163] Grujić 2009: 220

Orthodox cross earring on one ear; this asserts her identity as a Serbian Orthodox woman. Besides religious iconography, lyric tropes that assert a woman's need for a relationship with a man further serves to promote the Serbian Orthodox value on the family. Hegemonic heterosexuality and familial values are both reinforced by nationalism and Serbian Orthodox dogma.

Where queerness comes into play further complicates the relationship between ethno-nationalism and the neo-folk music genres. Since the 1990s, the well-known Serbian video director, Dejan Miličević, who happens to also be an openly gay man, has been heavily involved in Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music video production. He worked numerous times with Turbo-folk/Pop-folk singers Seka Aleksić and Jelena Karleuša, both who have professed support for the LGBT population.[164] Jelena Karleuša in particular has shown a strong dedication to the support of the LGBT population through her continued collaboration with Bulgarian chalga singer Azis, an openly gay man,[165] her Pride-themed live concerts, and her long-time participation in Belgrade Pride parades.[166] This would seem contradictory to the ethno-national basis upon which Turbo-folk and Pop-folk are founded. To a point it is, but it must be realized that queer elements in the music can be traced back to globalization rather than from within the Serbian nation-state.

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[164] This article states that Seka Aleksić dedicated her 2015 album "Nemoj za njim" to the Serbian homosexual population: https://www.srbijadanas.com/clanak/seka-aleksic-konacno-iznela-svoj-stav-o-homoseksualcima-03-07-2015. In another interview from Serbian gay magazine *Optimist*, she discusses her support of the LGBT population: https://www.optimist.rs/seka-aleksic-biti-ono-sto-jesi-najveca-je-ljudska-sreca/

[165] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1esazCdNRHM – Performance of Karleuša's "Ostavljam te" featuring Azis

[166] This video from Nacionalni Dnevnik news shows Karleuša walking in the 2017 Beograde Pride parade and speaking at the event. In her speech she declares, "Ni ko ne može ni jednem bog ne može da ima ništa protiv ljubavi, protiv ljudi koji drža rukama šarene zastavice i želi samo jedna. Da imaju pravo. Da budu isti ka drugi. Ljudi sa pravim da budu ljudi." Translation: No one, not one single god, can have anything against love, against people who hold colorful flags and want only one. They have rights. They are the same as others. People with the right to be human. Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMXtvA0Pldc

Therefore, there is a juxtaposition of images presented in music videos that may perhaps be lost amongst the general public - queerness might be read as "kitsch" in the same way that ethno-nationalist elements are read as kitsch. However, that does not stop the subtle, but still very real proliferation of ethno-nationalist ideology through the music; it may be that queerness is another mask under which it thrives.

In this chapter, I will analyze the body politics of Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music videos in order to demonstrate how ethno-nationalist ideology is reflected in the imagery. Then, I will grapple with the conundrum of queerness in the music videos in order to argue that although portrayals of gender and sexuality seem to be changing, the underlying principles of ethno-nationalism remain its roots.

2. Female Hypersexuality

The SRS nationalist ideology resulted in the "representation of a gender-dichotomized nation consisting of a naturalized gender in/compatibility: the 'virile masculine body' and the 'happy sexualized feminine body'" for which Turbo-folk became the main symbol and transmitter of Serbian ethno-national values.[167] A prominent example of the intertwining of Turbo-folk with nationalist politics in the 1990s is evident in the music video for the song "Nije Monotonija" from 1995.[168] The song, sung by the popular artist Ceca and discussed earlier (p. 30 and p. 55), links the Serbian paramilitary group the Tigers to the music through blatant images of a baby tiger, further defined by Ceca's marriage to the leader of the Tigers, Arkan. Ceca's body in the music video is hypersexualized through sheer, tight-fitting clothing that emphasizes her

[167] Papić 2002: 139
[168] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soiKKyQs-6k

large breasts as she erotically dances for the camera. Her hyperfeminine, hypersexual image exemplifies the intersection of politics on popular culture, because her sexualized body was made for the explicit purpose of recovering Serbian men's virility in order to save the Serbian Nation. Ceca and other turbo-folk artists' apparent independent, decadent lifestyle was further encouraged by Serb nationalists because Serbian women's emancipated lifestyle was a "symbol of Serbian modernism" that defined the Serbian women as superior to women from surrounding countries.[169] Therefore, Serbian women had to conform to a sexy mother stereotype for the sole purpose of helping their male counterparts save the nation.

Even though Pop-folk music displaces parts of the Serbian ethno-national signifiers through sound, the patriarchal imagery in music videos and lyrics as well as the hypersexualization of singers' bodies remains. There has been much written on the hypersexualization of female turbo-folk singers' bodies. Jill Irvine confirms that the hypersexualization of nationalist Serbian politics by focusing on traditional gender roles that emphasize men's virility and control over women in 1990s is synonymous with Turbo folk culture that "linked the provocative, public sexuality, pornography and pop stardom with the defense of the ruling regime."[170] In female performers, plastic surgery to enhance breasts and lips is a requirement in order to become a popular folk star. This emphasis on enhancement of "womanly" features such as the breasts is directly related to ethno-nationalist perceptions of woman, which is in line with Marija Grujić's assertion that enlarged breasts are "signifiers of particular power relations between the ideals of community and womanhood."[171] Historically, Turbo-folk artists justified the need to arouse men to confirm men's sexual virility, which in turn

[169] Irvine 2007: 98-99
[170] Irvine 2007: 114
[171] Grujić 2009: 213

would help save the Serbian Nation. However, even though Serbia has enjoyed independence for almost two decades, the hypersexualization of so-called pop-folk artists remains prominent. In recent years, I have also found that an emphasis on long, lean legs has been added to the hypersexualization of female pop-folk artists.

One of the most recent outrageously popular pop-folk artists, Teodora, displays a hypersexual, feminine body with enlarged breasts, oversized lips, and beautifully sculpted, long legs, all of which are accentuated in her music videos. For instance, in her music video for her 2019 song "Tom Ford,"[172] Teodora is shown wearing a jeweled headdress to accentuate her facial features, especially her lavishly painted eyes. Her body is always covered with tight-fitting clothing that features a strapless design to show off the shape of her breasts and curves while her legs are always uncovered. The videography often shows closeups of her lips, butt, and breasts while she either poses in a sexually suggestive way or sensually dances like a belly dancer. Through this, the music video undeniably demonstrates a continued focus on feminine hypersexuality.

In discussions with Balkan natives about the appearance of Turbo/Pop-folk singers, I was given very similar reactions. One person stated that they do not like the way the singers look, referring to the breast implants as "too big." Others stated that Turbo-folk singers are "too much of everything," referring to plastic surgery, fake nails, and flamboyant clothing. Another went so far as to enlighten me of what Serbian women actually look like. They asserted that the traditional appearance of a Serbian woman is "more natural," meaning more subtle in clothes and appearance. As an example, they explained that a normal woman would only paint her nails one color, but a Turbo-folk artist would have many; Further, this person jokingly stated, "I guess

[172] "Tom Ford" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2sqwpcmxw8

Kim Kardashian would be Turbo-folk." Based on these conversations, it is fair to conclude that the hypersexuality of Turbo/Pop-folk female artists embody unrealistic versions of women by Serbian men. This of course makes sense, since the male erotic fantasy of a beautiful, sexy woman wanting nothing but a man serves the purpose of the ethno-nationalist aim to assert male virility.

3. Masculine Gender Fluidity

Female turbo/pop-folk singers are not the only ones who have been shaped by ethno-nationalist ideology and westernization. Through the rise of Pop-folk, Dumančić and Krolo argue that "the fetishization of commodity has essentially supplanted the primacy of exclusivist ethno-nationalism, so that male pop-folk artists have become poster boys for capitalist indulgence rather than national pride."[173] This may be true in part, but I argue that this analysis is an oversimplification of what signifies ethno-nationalism and further, supports the idea that Pop-folk artists are either one or the other (ethno-nationalist or not). Up until this point, I have argued that Turbo-folk and Pop-folk are, at the core, based on ethno-nationalist ideology. Going even further, my analysis of numerous Turbo-folk and Pop-folk artists exposes a juxtaposition of both ethno-nationalism and globalization, intertwined through a combination of musical sounds, lyrical content, and imagery to the point that the artists embody conflicting identities of ethno-nationalism and globalization. It is not a definitive line that separates the two; what is clear is that local ethno-nationalist values have twisted globalized ideas into a readily accessible package for the Balkan public.

[173] Dumančić 2016: 161

As one of the few popular male Pop-folk artists, Milan Stanković is an interesting case of mapping these two intersecting forces specifically onto his body image. Stanković occupies a more liminal space in Serbian gender norms; his earlier look is abnormal in comparison to the stereotypical Serbian man. In one of his early music videos from 2013, "Od Mene se Odvikavaj" (Give Up On Me),[174] Stanković appears with dyed blond hair, no facial hair, and an open shirt that displays a lightly muscled abdomen. What is unique about his look is the unnatural hair color and child-like face. I have been assured in conversation that facial hair is a strong symbol of masculinity. In addition, Stanković's demeanor in the music video suggests a much less rigid masculinity; he lightly dances and shows off his body to the camera, seductively winks, smiles, and acts bashful at times. All of these behaviors are atypical of Turbo-folk male singers; the stereotypical image of a male folk singer is to be reserved and bearded with a more serious face.[175]

Additionally, Stanković's look in the video is even more atypical since this particular song is much more heavily laden with folk sounds than other Pop-folk music. His vocals often utilize the trilling vocal ornament and there is the prominent nasal sound of the Turkish clarinet combined with the riq. Stanković's look combined with his early Pop-folk videos resulted in his sexuality coming into question – he was rumored to be gay by the Serbian audience. This is a significant indicator of the importance of Serbian "manliness" as it is mapped onto Turbo/Pop-folk singers. Stanković's overall earlier style mixes an ethno-nationalist musical sound with a fashion style that is prominently influenced from a Westernized version of male beauty

[174] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBOzt38F0uc
[175] For an example of a stereotypical male Serbian Turbo-folk singer, look up pictures of Aca Lucas.

standards. However, to Serbian audiences his fashion style pushed the boundaries of acceptability too far, thus his sexuality came into question.

In the next six years, Milan Stanković's look drastically changed from his boyish demeanor to one that is more in line with Pop-folk standards for heterosexual male performers. In his latest song from 2019 "Trans" (Trance)[176] from his so-called "Tokyo Trilogy," his collaboration with Bosnian hip-hop/rapper duo Jala Brat x Buba Corelli has also significantly changed his musical style to a much more trap/hip-hop/rap influenced genre with very little folk influence. In the music video, Stanković is almost unrecognizable from his earlier style – he sports a stubble beard and mustache, wears baggy clothes, and has a very serious demeanor, giving him a gruff, bad boy look. The musical folk elements are relegated to the rhythmic background and a sprinkling of a synthesizer melody reminiscent of the nasal Turkish clarinet sound. The subject of his affection is *moja zla barbiko* (my evil barbie doll), a woman of whom he describes as being an adventurous seductress that loves cocaine and alcohol. This new style is more in-line with ethno-national patriarchal standards of a manly Serbian man indicated through his fashion, demeanor, and lyrics. However, the music video is set in a foreign place, somewhere in Japan, as suggested by the name of the trilogy and the Japanese city images. The placement outside of familiar Balkan landscapes suggests a transportation of ethno-nationalist imagery to a de-politicized space where it has no hold. Outside of the borders, Stanković is more free to express his gender and sexuality without the influence of ethno-nationalism. This juxtaposition supports Dumančić and Krolo's argument that "both the music and film industries simultaneously challenge and affirm normative gender and sexuality roles, creating a dynamic

[176]"Trans" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFWfLAi2e6E

field of cultural contestation."[177] However, the drastic change of Stanković's look from a more feminine to masculine appearance is a result of the normative boundaries in which he lives.

Still, in his music videos he is presented as concerned about his appearance, a historically feminine characteristic. In his most recent music video, "Pablo,"[178] he is shown in bright orange capris and a black muscle shirt and sporting black sunglasses. Throughout the video, he is displayed sitting on top of cars or posing by a car while a beautiful woman poses in front, far away from him. His treatment in the music video places him as more of an object on display, rather than the masculine, stoic man expected. This feminine portrayal of him marks a gender fluidity unknown to female Pop-folk artists.

4. Queerness

In Serbia, LGBT culture, specifically homosexuality, is associated with negative stereotypes related to the perceived invasion of Western viewpoints. Scholar Miloš Jovanović asserts that "mainstream religion in Serbia regards the issues related to LGBT community to be the topic which is imposed from abroad (Western Europe and America)."[179] This perception has created a negative association with queer inclusivity, especially through the imposition of EU anti-discrimination laws, which are actually perceived as an attack on ethno-national values.[180] Historically speaking, homophobia was used during the rise of nationalism in the 1990s by nationalist politicians to emphasize heteronormative discourses on hegemonic norms of gender and sexuality, which was affirmed and supported by the Serbian Orthodox Church. This discourse created the view of homosexuality as a threat to the Serbian nation.[181] Scholar Sabrina

[177] Dumančić 2016: 155-156
[178] "Pablo" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgdeKRS0Vdo
[179] Jovanović 2013: 83
[180] Mole 2016: 14
[181] Mole 2016: 13-14

Ramet similarly concluded that the assertion of traditional patriarchal notions of the family as a national duty placed homosexuality as a traitor to the Nation.[182] This pushback against the queer community by Serbian ethno-nationalists makes it difficult to argue that Pop-folk, as a genre inextricably intertwined with Serbian ethno-nationalist values and discourses, has become a depoliticized space, as it has been argued by Dumančić and Krolo.[183] Even though Pop-folk on the surface appears to encompass a more inclusive, globalized space which allows for queerness, it nevertheless subtly maintains the ethno-nationalist discourses surrounding traditional gender hegemonies.

So this begs the question - how are Pop-folk and Turbo-folk the most popular music genres in Serbia and the Balkans despite their inclusion of queer imagery? In the 2014 article "Queer as Turbofolk (Part I)," author Eurovicious claims that,

> Serbian music videos feature just as many scantily clad men than women – if not more. I think the region's Southern European macho culture enables this considerably: lingering shots of shirtless hunks and glistening musclebound torsos are a common and acceptable sight in media, and are not interpreted as "gay" as they typically would be in the West.[184]

To be clear, yes, Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music videos present the bodies of both men and women in a sexualized way. However, that does not explain the acceptance of Dejan Miličević or the status of many Pop-folk and Turbo-folk stars as gay icons, as well as the popularity of Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music in Serbian gay clubs in a country where homophobia is part of the national ideology. However, my Serbian friends have disputed this, arguing that the wider Serbian public does not think of queer imagery in Turbo-folk and Pop-folk music videos as

[182] Ramet 2002: 261
[183] Dumančić 2016
[184] Eurovicious 2014 "Queer asTurbofolk (Part I)

serious advocacy for queer inclusivity. Queerness as it is perceived by the Serbian public is used more for shock value than for any real substance.

However, it needs to be acknowledged that an interesting influence of globalization on Serbian Turbo-folk and Pop-folk genres is the presentation of female singers as gay icons by the Balkan gay population. Serbian Turbo/Pop-folk singers Vesna Zmijanac, Seka Aleksić, and Jelena Karleuša have all been cited as gay icons, which is evidence of the influence of Western notions of queerness and the LGBT community in the Balkans.[185]

Vesna Zmijanac's song from 1997, "Da budemo nocas zajedno"[186] (Let's be together tonight) is a fascinating example of a more globalized, queer image of a female folk star. The lyrics to this song are about a past lover that Zmijanac asks to come be with her so they can kiss again. The musical elements emote a more globalized sound through the synthesizer harmonies, while the folk and oriental sounds are included through the violin, acoustic guitar, and an ayoub drumbeat. Zmijanac's vocals are slightly melismatic, and she utilizes the trilling ornamentation of Turkish vocal techniques. Since the music fits into the neo-folk category, it is assumed that the lover she sings about must be male. However, the videography and imagery in the music video assumes a different interpretation. The music video shows Zmijanac alone wearing a plain white suit throughout much of the video. Sometimes, she is contrasted with images of her in a yellow sundress, but the overall appeal is the masculine-looking white suit. Zmijanac's hair is cut very short and smoothed back, which for a female folk singer is never seen - female singers almost always are depicted with luxurious, long flowing hair. Paired with the white suit, Zmijanac presents a more stereotypical masculine appearance. Further, she is the only one present in most

[185] Beyond the scope of this paper is a discussion of the thoughts, opinions, and awareness of Turbo/Pop-folk singers when it comes to women's rights, LGBT inclusivity, and their gay icon status conflated with ethno-nationalist ideology.
[186] "Da budemo nocas zajedno" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXWRfUw0FdQ

of the video; she does not dance and is never shown as the characteristic hyper-sexualized woman seen in other turbo-folk music videos. The music video overall does not present her as the object of desire. Therefore, the video can be perceived as less for the male gaze and more for a general audience. Lastly, at the end of the video, a woman's face - not Zmijanac - covered with long hair is shown slightly smiling. Whether or not this hints at the woman being Zmijanac's lover seems to be open to interpretation.

This music video, being in stark contrast to other hypersexualized female Turbo-folk videos, may have provided an avenue for popularity among the Balkan LGBT population because of the ambiguous presentation of gender and sexuality. Since Zmijanac is considered to be a gay icon, this makes sense. However, what really seems to be the reason behind the gay icon status is not a defiance of stereotypes, but a full embrace of hypersexual, goddess iconography. Female singers are known for their body enhancements, striving to have oversized lips, breasts, buttocks, and over-accentuated curves. Their makeup is usually over-the-top flamboyant as well as their clothing, which is designed to be eye-catchingly ostentatious. This over-exaggeration of feminine beauty is similar to that of drag queens, a uniquely Western phenomenon. The gay population of the Balkans most likely are more familiar with global trends such as drag queens and therefore read singers' appearances as such. Scholar Marija Grujić similarly confirms that, "glamour, the grotesque and the aesthetics of exaggeration in performing heterosexuality that are involved in [turbo-folk's] production have been the reasons why particular groups from the gay population in Serbia and in other parts of the region identify themselves as fans of turbo-folk."[187]

The best example of this exaggeration of femininity in Turbo/Pop-folk videos is Jelena Karleuša's song "Slatka Mala"[188] (Sweet Little One) from the 1990s. The song is now known as

[187] Grujić 2009: 241-242
[188] "Slatka Mala" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XGrxLCBZoQ

the Serbian gay anthem;[189] Karleuša performed the song at the opening of her "All About Diva" show in Belgrade, Serbia in 2010, which featured very pro-gay themed imagery such as rainbow flags, half-naked men wearing angel wings, and recordings of the words "Love and Marriage" while she screams the word "Liberty."[190] The music video, which was directed by none other than Dejan Miličević, actually features three real drag queens (men dressed as women) who throughout the entire video poke fun at Karleuša's image by jokingly shaking their hips, smacking each other's butts, and acting ludicrously sexual. This music video is a one-of-a-kind critique of the hypersexuality of Turbo/Pop-folk singers, acknowledging the fact that their over-exaggeration of femininity is similar to that of drag queens. As a whole, it seems that queerness can serve two separate purposes: that of the "shock factor" of kitsch to those inclined toward ethno-nationalism, and the indication of queer inclusivity to the LGBT population in the Balkans. It is a complicated relationship, but nonetheless exists.

5. Nataša Maza - Transgender Pop-folk Singer

A transgender artist named Nataša Maza emerged from the Pop-folk industry for the first time in --. Maza's existence indicates one possible example of the subversion of Serbian gender and sexuality hegemonies. She has produced Pop-folk music since 2014, released on her YouTube platform, all of which she is cited to write herself.[191] Composing her own songs is a departure from the industry's past (and present), because traditionally, songs are written by men for female artists to sing. Further, Maza's songs are overtly pro-LGBT, which besides Karleuša's

[189]Eurovicious 2014 "Queer as Turbofolk (Part IV)
[190] Live version of "Slatka Mala" at the "All About Diva" show - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETCgxH86mhc
[191]Her YouTube page - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6V4pwUEWQb1JnCyhUALdjw

"Slatka Mala" anthem does not exist in any neofolk genre. The boundaries she breaks by being an out transgender woman and also a known Pop-folk singer is extraordinary, even though her popularity is confined to a small segment of the population.

Her song and music video "Dekolte"[192] are very pro-LGBT: the music video shows Maza brazenly kissing a woman and dancing with people who do not fit within the traditional Serbian gender binary. Maza sings lyrics about breaking free from her chains to embrace her identity; this is further supported by the introductory image of "no hate" and the ending text which states in English, "we are all born to love." Through this, Maza has created a very blatant anti-nationalist message, since Serbian ethno-nationalism is founded on the heterosexual matrix of power that gave rise to the neo-folk music genres Turbo-folk and Pop-folk. However, her appearance and presentation of herself seem to indicate the very same internalized misogyny of ethno-nationalism, which has forced the stereotype of exaggerated femininity for the male gaze.

First, Maza's appearance takes on the stereotypical hypersexual, hyperfeminine Turbo-folk aesthetic, complete with surgery-enhanced breasts and lips. On her Instagram page @natasamaza,[193] she frequently posts images accentuating her feminine features, indicating her obsession with her appearance. This is a parallel to other Pop-folk singers in their treatment of their appearance and image on social media, which is almost always used to showcase their feminine beauty.[194] Since Maza's actions and appearance are those of a stereotypical Pop-folk star, it begs the question of whether her music is actually a critique of ethno-nationalism.

In the music video, the storyline depicts Maza killing the man she invited over to sleep with her; this depiction of murder has already been a common theme among Turbo/Pop-folk

[192] "Dekolte" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlq6VU1pUug
[193] Her instagram page: https://www.instagram.com/natasamaza/?hl=en
[194] See the instagram pages for @karleusastar (Jelena Karleuša), @tanja_savic_private (Tanja Savić), @teodoradzehverovic (Teodora), etc.

artists.[195] The murder arguably plays into the stereotype of the hysterical woman, which makes the act not one of breaking free, but one of internalizing misogyny of women as hysterical and irrational. Further, Maza produces videos such as "Abu Dhabi"[196] which are indistinguishable from female Pop-folk artists in the ethno-nationalist imagery and folk musical sounds. Because of this, I argue that even though Maza seems to be using the Pop-folk genre to subvert traditional gender hegemonies, her influence is diminished by the proliferation of underlying ethno-nationalist values guiding her appearance and musical tropes.

6. Towards a "Pan-Balkan" Identity?

Some scholars have argued that the Pop-folk genre transcends ethno-nationalist boundaries to encompass a more globalized, Pan-Balkan identity that emphasizes upward mobility to women and a wider acceptance of gender fluidity.[197] However, based on my limited research and ethnographic data, I would argue the opposite, which is more in line with Marija Grujić's assertion that "performers still preserve the main topoi of heteronormative settings of communication between an individual and community, just adjusted to the contemporary life circumstances."[198] Pop-folk artists are still hypersexualized and lyric content evokes patriarchal/religious values of heterosexual relationships (and therefore family). Subsequently, I conclude that Pop-folk is effectively indistinguishable from its predecessor Turbo-folk in that the

[195] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n53tGey7AoM – One such example by the artist Ana Nikolić from 2010
[196] "Abu Dhabi" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBR4-G5aaVU
[197] Dumancic 2016; Jelača 2015
[198] Grujić 2009: 239

underlying matrices of power stem from Serbian ethno-nationalism which has become normalized across the Balkans.

Since the rise in popularity of Turbo-folk in the 1990s, a juxtaposition of two conflicting images – ethno-nationalist and Western cosmopolitanism – has been present; Pop-folk is simply a mutation of the genre, incorporating much more influence of the musical style and music video production from a more global industry while still propagating Serbian ethno-nationalist values. The first mega-Turbo-folk star from the 1990s, Ceca, was the first to fuse ethno-nationalism and globalism through Turbo-folk music. Ceca demonstrated an ethno-nationalist ideology by asserting her identity as a Serbian woman through her behavior in the music industry and in her personal life. She followed Western beauty standards religiously, becoming a fashion role model to young Balkan girls akin to Madonna in the United States. Since Ceca, her influence has become an ingrained part of Turbo-folk, and now Pop-folk. All future Turbo-folk and Pop-folk singers' appearances, lyrics, and representations on social media and in the news demonstrate women obsessed with Western fashion and beauty standards while always emphasizing either love for family and children, the need for a partner, or the hypersexuality of their bodies.

7. Concluding Thoughts

Based on the research I have done, I conclude that Pop-folk music recycles the same ethno-nationalist themes present in Turbo-folk of the patriarchal family, the sexy mother, and the virile and aggressive man, which are supported by the strong Serbian identity with the Serbian ethno-national ideology, the Serbian Orthodox Church, and are embedded in the historical Serbian standardized language. Therefore, I assert that the Pop-folk genre keeps recycling the same ethno-national values that have been present since the 1990s. The presence of queerness

and globalized elements in the music and music videos are used to simultaneously assert a modern view of the Balkans while ultimately it twists them to serve Serbian ethno-nationalism. The massive popularity of both Turbo-folk and Pop-folk across the Balkans demonstrates music's power to be subtle propaganda – it is highly entertaining, but it is nonetheless ethno-nationalist. My hypothesis is that for the Pop-folk genre to shed its ethno-national layers, it needs to transform the sounds and imagery to the point where it is no longer recognizable as resembling neo-folk, but as a different genre altogether, ultimately consigning the music to be played in museums and documentaries.

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