

EXPLORATIONS ON THE MOVE: DANCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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The purpose of this writerly contribution is to encourage in studies on East European dance, particularly those pertaining to the former republics of Yugoslavia, ethnographic and discursive explorations, which problematize commonly-held conceptions and paradigms surrounding these performance practices. The legs of my contribution, although centered on the Republic of Macedonia, stand on the assumption that in the parlance of North American academic anthropology “East European dance” operates as a gloss for dance of the “folk” variety.

Part One of what follows, an ethnographic essay entitled, “Program Notes for Choreographing Corporealities,” serves as the launching ground from which I address this gloss, and state my case for encouraging a new stage in the written representation of folk dance in Eastern Europe. Part Two, back-to-back performance texts, embraces this gloss while simultaneously reaching for ways to choreograph through paradigms of urban-based folk dance ensembles (a nexus of my research), which either dismiss these ensembles entirely, and/or frame them (that is, epistemologically freeze them) as examples of something else.

I offer my comments not as critique of precursory projects. Rather, I want to open the circle and expose the center of my own ethnographic and discursive movements toward remaining attentive and amenable not only to the instability of dance as an individual entity and to the circulation of traditional practices into new performance traditions, [1] but also to the ethnographic and discursive re-conceptualization of East European performance in our age of ever-widening and ever-deepening transculturation.

Part One

Program Notes for Choreographing Corporealities

In the pursuit of becoming more intimate with Macedonian folk dance [2]—precisely the subject matter I spent many months researching in the Republic of Macedonia so that I could choreograph my course from ABD to Ph.D.—despite allowing myself to be taken to all of the places where one would expect to find something “folk”—villages and rural festivals—I spent a great deal of time exploring the city-based ensembles affiliated with *Kulturni Umetnički Društva* (Cultural Artistic Societies or KUDs). Ensembles began to form in Macedonia as early as 1900, but the ones that exist today are descended largely from KUDs which

sprang up throughout the former Yugoslav republics after 1945, [3] although—at least in the case of the Republic of Macedonia—their numbers have dwindled, and those that do remain operate under considerable financial duress.

I mentioned above that in the parlance of North American academic anthropology, “East European dance” operates as a synonym for what might be characterized as “folk dance.” The roots of this annotation are planted firmly in what European ethnologists used to call *Volkskunde*, the romantic celebration of the rural peasantry as the repository of a distinct national identity. [4] *Volkskunde* fell into disgrace following what Kuper (1994:545) calls “its apotheosis in Nazi ethnology,” but its original intent of drawing upon the peasantry to shape, color, and contour the face of what were, at the time, emerging nations, persists to resonate in varying degrees and intensities in parts of Eastern Europe, bolstering and further entrenching the discourse of authenticity, and providing national institutes of folklore their abiding *raison d'être*.

I was not alone as I visited *društva* throughout Skopje. I was accompanied, in fact, by the specter of this very persistent research tradition. The gaze of the Macedonian Folklorist chastises those mining the field for folk dance outside of the “folk” context. “Foreigners come to the *društva* and think that this is the real thing,” an ethnologist from the *Marko Cepenkov Institute of Folklore* in Skopje once remarked to a crowd of ensemble artistic directors and fellow ethnologists. The group had assembled to discuss how the theoretical work of scholars could minister and nourish the perpetuity of Macedonian Folklore, the implication being, of course, that the “folklore” which needed to endure was not the highly-stylized, “unauthentic” kind that *društva* dance on stage. On several occasions I found myself cast as naïve by local ethnologists who questioned what I hoped to find by wandering into the rehearsal studios of urban-based KUDs where people who call themselves *Igraorci* [5] find pleasure and comfort in moving through the ambiguous territory of folk dance on stage. [6] I interpreted the questioning by my colleagues as a heartfelt concern that I was wasting my time; but I remained (in silence to myself) adamantly opposed to their conception of folk dance as a stable entity, and to their assumption that survivals of folk dance’s rural antecedents could only be found in rural environments. [7]

This writerly contribution is a product of my opposition, meant: to resist habituses of conventional associations which incarcerate people in time and space, to borrow Appadurai's imagery (cf. Abu-Lughod 1991:146); to interpolate new thoughts and ideas into a region of the world where state and non-state actors continue to compete to define the relationship between "culture," politics, and "identity" often in ways which languish in the rhetoric of the past; [8] and to expand the very locus of our investigations into territories where monikers such as "Macedonian dance" or "dance in Macedonia" evoke polykinetic images and interpretations.

Relishing essentialism and also trying to transcend it (Cooper Albright 1997), I move now through the corridor linking ethnographic and discursive reconceptualizations, following my Muse into murkier terrain. Terrain where I wrestle with the responsibility of remembering and re/(un)remembering, and of finding a way to write this dance into being.

Anthropologists have tended to neglect a performing practice such as dance, or at least treat it as what Jane Cowan refers to as the "icing on the cake of the harder structural realities" (1990:5). Historically, dance was relegated to a category of cultural frivolity, albeit a frivolity replete with beautiful sights and sounds, and bodies in motion which surely captured the imagination of the iconic Participant/Observer. If anthropologists studied dance, it was as a repose from observing and documenting the structural realities of culture, to which dance seemingly had no relevance.

Fast forward to the here and now. Despite the growing status of contemporary dance research, bolstered by the legitimizing presence of post-graduate programs in dance studies, and despite the up growth of literature which expands our awareness of the analytical departure points from which one can enter the dance, [9] experience and grapple with its complexities, and then re-emerge with a greater understanding of specific spatial and temporal corporealities, the reception can be chilly for those who venture beyond the interdisciplinary networks of scholars and artists transfixed on dance/performance/cultural studies.

The climate is especially cool for those whose movement research does not readily foreground, highlight, or placate the current trends and concepts, which often fuel the academic machinery and define the political-economy of foreign interest with respects to the country or region under consideration. One does not go to the former republics of Yugoslavia, for example, to study dance. One goes to investigate: post-socialist transitions; inter-ethnic relations; conflict resolution; reconciliation; minorities in the new nation-states, strategies of inclusion and exclusion; politics

of identity and difference. If one insists on studying dance, then surely one means to address dance as an example of one of these more relevant topics. But even then, dance? Folk dance? How relevant could this possibly be? [10]

To what can we attribute this marginalization within area studies? I turn to a previous source to help me negotiate one avenue of exploration. Lila Abu-Lughod, working out from under her concern over anthropology's complicity in painting portraits of the Other, crafts her argument for writing against the essentializing tendencies of culture.

Insofar as anthropologists are in the business of representing others through their ethnographic writing, then surely the degree to which people in the communities they study appear 'other' must also be partly a function of how anthropology writes about them (1991:149).

I reference Abu-Lughod's insight, reworking it so that I may interject my own observation. Insofar as scholars of East European folk dance practices are in the business of representing the movement of others through their ethnographic writing, then surely the degree to which these practices and sites of interest appear anachronistic or irrelevant to those on the outside looking in must also be partly a function of how scholars are writing about them.

"Are there ways to write about lives so as to constitute others as less other?" Abu-Lughod speculates (ibid.).

I follow her shadow closely and wonder. *Are there ways to write about Macedonian folk dance practices and the lives of the people who animate those practices so as to constitute them as less anachronistic and less irrelevant?*

Abu-Lughod answers her question, providing us compelling reasons for writing what she calls *ethnographies of the particular*, which by replacing the homogeneity, cohesiveness, alterity, and timelessness of theoretical generalization with textual particularities, link stories of specific individuals in time and place with the theoretical points those stories and lives engender (ibid.:153). I match Abu-Lughod's movement with an answer to my question.

In doing ethnography we confront people as themselves, and thus secure their de-exoticization. But in our insatiable will to meaning, there is a tendency to flatten our material. We rush to the depths of interpretation too quickly (Taussig 1991). Dance as a facsimile of ethnic identity set into motion. Dance as the vehicle by which people transform the intensity and/or direction of competing ethnic and nationalistic claims. Dance as an instrument of the State—a reminder of a time when Marshall Tito deliberately forged a relationship between politics and aesthetics. These interpretations may be true, relevant even.

But we rush, nonetheless.

We rush too quickly for the comforting fit of a cohesive model when really we ought to be lingering around in the interplay of forms, bodies, and experiences in which we ourselves are positioned and implicated.

In her work on Senegalese dance, Francesca Castaldi speaks eloquently of corpography, or “writing the body.” Corpography begins as a commitment to practice “as both a form of engagement and dialogue, as well as a form of memory” (2000:288). But it does not end here. Corpography extends vertically and horizontally through the written representation of dance and dance events; but rather than cowering to the Cartesian mind/body split which would have us “imposing the mind of the writer on the body of the dancer,” corpography “imposes the mind of dancing on the hand of the writer” (ibid.:290).

The shift in focus is quite elegant, powerful even. Corpography reminds us that form is always present. It transmits meaning along with content. Writing the body choreographically creates a resonance of multiple subjectivities, which much like Abu-Lughod’s *ethnographies of the particular*, works to transcend the essentializing tendencies of concepts such as “folk,” engendering in the process new words, explanations, and meanings which are in communication with the sights, sounds, and bodies that move and illuminate the worlds we seek to describe. [11]

The performative texts which follow emerge as attempts to write the body choreographically. My use of dance scenes tentatively follows the form of Marta Savigliano’s “Fragments for a Story of Tango Bodies (On Choreocritics and the Memory of Power)” (1996:199–232). [12] Like Savigliano, I have replaced my ethnographic persona with that of a Choreocritic. [13] Some will argue that by aping Savigliano’s tango scenes I commit the very transgression I have just warned against above of not rushing too quickly for the comforting fit of a model. Savigliano’s work does provide a compelling model toward which to rush, but it is not so much a fixed model as it is a model of engagement, which challenges both the ethnographer and the reader into becoming more alert and sophisticated in their roles as social critics. [14] As such, there is nothing comforting about Savigliano’s model, for following it means coming to terms with the politics of interpretation, exposing the seams of ethnography, and shifting the focus away from answering “What do I know about ‘the thing?’” to “What is ‘the thing’ telling me that I should know?” [15] In the end, however, I am concerned less with how my texts ape Savigliano’s form, and more with what I/we might learn from encouraging what Susan Foster (1996) calls “a rethinking of knowledge categories.”

Scene One of Part Two, “Learning to limp,” seeks to engage the sights, sounds, and bodies which move and illuminate Skopje’s folklore ensembles. I transpose what appears to be a simple, but nonetheless explicit reference to the limping rhythms which give both Macedonian music and dance their character, into a Foucauldian metaphor which gives salience to the idea that as one trains the body, one is also training the mind. That is, as one learns move-

ment, one learns how to perceive—or rather how to think and feel—about that movement (Tomko 1996). Drawing from an interview with three female *Igraorci* from the Skopje-based KUD, *Orce Nikolov*, [16] I attempt to deconstruct and interpret the socialization process, which initially calls a young novice to the dance, but then keeps her there, in the circle, over time, despite pejorative readings which devalue folklore ensembles and the labor of those involved.

“Learning to limp” mirrors the bodily presence of my own awareness that I, too, am part of a socialization process, learning to engage the specificity of what Savigliano calls “the dance itself and the sociohistorical conditions it expresses and produces (1996:200). Scene Two, “A call to dance,” further foregrounds awareness and engagement, and allows me to end my contribution to this special issue of the *Anthropology of East Europe Review* where the dissertation I am currently writing begins.

Part Two

Scene One: Learning to limp

Cast: Choreocritic, 3 female Igraorci, ensemble of musicians

The back wall of a dark stage suddenly falls under dramatic lighting, revealing a gallery of photographs. Not snapshots, but gorgeous, large-format portraits of dancers in motion from ten, twenty, thirty years ago or more. Trophies are stacked on top of display cases filled with medals, letters of invitation, certificates of congratulations, and all sorts of other paraphernalia collected over the years from across Europe, Asia, and North America. The musicians enter upstage right and set up in the corner. The dancers walk onto the stage, dressed for rehearsal. Workout pants, t-shirts, flat-footed, black Chinese slipper shoes, etc. A tight plastic garment peeks out from underneath the heavier girl’s sweat pants. All three have cinched their waists with leather straps just in case they need to grab one another as they dance. The clarinet player trills the first few notes of a suite of dance songs, and the rest of the ensemble joins in. Their playing is lively, quick, and merry.

MUSIC UP: Clarinet, accordion, acoustic guitar, double bass, and *tapan* [17]

The girls meet each other at center stage and go to join hands, but there is some confusion as to who will dance in which position. Each has their favorite spot. The older, more experienced of the three enjoys the freedom of being last, keeping the line in check by curling the tail in and out. Because she is a soft dancer, the others want to be next to her. They settle on an order. The long-haired brunette with the dreadlock draped delicately around the nape of her neck takes the lead. She begins circling the open line counterclockwise into a series of warm-up exercises. As they dance, the girls react to the Choreocritic’s text.

Choreocritic's voice on tape, "reading" her text:

Despite the idiosyncrasies of personal life histories, remarkable consistencies entwine the stories dancers tell about what led them to the dance. For some, encouragement came from a parent or grandparent who, remembering fondly their own experience as a dancer, gently prodded their child or grandchild to attend a folklore section for beginners. For others, the prodding was not so gentle nor necessarily directed to an involvement with 'folk dance' per se. The mothers of these dancers just wanted their child to escape the confines of their boredom, and get involved with something. So they signed up for 'folklore' because their first choice was already full. Others came to the dance, encouraged neither by family nor by accident, but because they followed a friend.

When you ask an *Igraorka* [18] about her experiences with dancing in an ensemble, many things will come to her mind. She will remind you about the rehearsals and the friendships. This is where it all begins.

She will tell you that she dances a lot, and that already the music is in her blood. Something digs into her to dance when she hears it. By locating the origins of her kinetic impulse to dance in the bloodstream, she seems to be hinting at the suggestion that Macedonians are pre-dispositioned to their music from the moment of conception.

Such a reading, however, would not be accurate. Although she phrases her metaphor in the language of biology, she means to address a metaphysical process of socialization. This process, far from being inclusive, stable, or a given for that matter, begins at birth and continues through adolescence into adulthood (to various degrees, at varying intensities, or even not at all) through one's exposure to music on the radio and television, and at weddings, village gatherings, parties, state-sponsored events, etc. An *Igraorka* stands apart from others in this paradigm in the sense that her process of socialization is supplemented with years of participation in dance rehearsals and performances both set to live musical accompaniment. When she hears music, that "something" which digs in to her to stand up and dance is her additional experience with music. It has infected her with an almost innate understanding of how to respond to music when she hears it being played.

The *Igraorka* is loyal to her calling, especially amongst friends who laugh and tell her that folk dancing is "peasant." Despite the young age of these friends, their comments expose a lineage to a strain of thought, which had its genesis in the early '70s as the communist system began to disintegrate, incapable of effectively or efficiently competing in the emerging global economies. Faced with a flood of media communications, the easement of travel restrictions, and the encouragement of international

Dancers in Chorus:

Yes, we are entwined...

(as the girls repeat the word "entwined" they step across their hopping/balanced right legs with the balls of their left feet. They shift their weight and repeat on the other side).

You could say that we are entwined...but we did not understand this at first. We began to dance without knowing.

Let us tell you where it begins.

(The tapandžija [19] hears his cue to accentuate a different rhythm. The girls dig their heels one at a time into the ground in front).

The more you learn! (*Dig right*)
The more you know! (*Dig left*)

(The girls release hands and twirl their bodies 360° without losing step with the music).

The more you learn! (*Dig right*)
The more you know! (*Dig left*)

Mmmmm...peasant...*(the clarinet player shifts the mood into a new song. As they think over the word "peasant," the dancers come down off the balls of their feet and start dancing flat-footed—village style).*

collaborations in the arts and sciences, many Yugoslavs struggled with convincing themselves and the outside world that they were not—as their folklore suggested—villagers.

Almost overnight, folkloric practices and the people who animated them with their involvement were shunned as embarrassingly archaic, stupid, and uncouth. In a word, “peasant.” *Društvo* membership declined. Disco clubs held more allure than the dance halls of folklore ensembles. Rock-n-roll superceded an interest in traditional music.

The *Igraorka* is aware that folkloric practices continue to be conflated with the pejorative usage of “peasant,” evidential in the remarks of others that “intellectuals are not interested in folklore,” “folklore is a venue for the lower and middle classes,” and “the kids who join [*društva*] are first-generation urbanites.” By deploying the word “peasant,” the *Igraorka* references these connotations and conflations. But it is clear that she is uncomfortable not only with the suggestion that she is involved with something archaic and uncouth, but how such a suggestion positions her vis-à-vis her own socio-economic status. Contrary to persistent stereotypes, a large majority of Skopje’s ensemble dancers are not first-generation urbanites, nor—if their parents’ occupations as economists, lawyers, dentists, nurses, restaurant owners, and engineers are any indication—are they coming to folklore exclusively from the lower to middle classes.

The *Igraorka* is sure to divulge that the opportunity for travel, while not her sole reason for initially joining an ensemble, presents an irresistible incentive for her to stick with it, despite practicing the same handful of choreographies week after week, year after year. Because of her involvement, she has been “everywhere” by her estimation, confronting the world outside of Macedonia, developing friendships and crushes, and picking up (along the way) something to brag about to peers who question the importance of what she does.

She is a consummate performer, drawn to the stage and to the ritual of preparation. She speaks of the pleasure she experiences applying makeup before a show. But it is clear that some stages are coveted more than others. She admits that performing for an audience of Macedonians at home does not leave her with the same visceral reaction—“THAT feeling” she calls it—as does performing for an audience abroad. As a foreigner amongst foreigners, she uses her cloak of anonymity to inspire her dancing to a level where the audience is encouraged to look at her and her ensemble and say “WOW! Where are these people from?”

This kind of reaction is hard for the *Igraorka* to provoke from audiences back home, doting parents and grandparents notwithstanding. The deference that she expresses for Macedonian folklore is in large part conditioned and

(Still not happy with the word “peasant,” the girls go back up on the balls of their feet, dancing faster and more intricately. They hardly notice the strain on their ankles and calves).

Lower class?...*(they giggle).*

First-generation urbanites?...*(more giggles).*

Archaic and uncouth...*(the dancers dismiss the barrage of insults with a wrinkle of the nose, a stomp of the foot, and a shake of the head. They continue to hop up and down, pivot right and left, unfazed).*

Ah, the trips!...*(the girls punctuate the Choreocritic’s text, running after her words with the beginning step pattern of Potrčano. Bearing weight, shifting ground. Trans-migratory moves not to be denied travel, geographic interaction, or history).*

We admit, a stage is not a stage.

(On hearing the word “anonymity” the girls swell their chests, lift their heads, and smile).

bolstered by the admiration bestowed on her by audiences abroad. She implicitly acknowledges this when she divulges, "When people tell us they like our folklore and that our folklore is rich, that gives us strength to respect more what we have."

The *Igraorka* imagines herself as more than a cultural ambassador. She stands as an intermediary. Her body labors to legitimize the enduring existence of Macedonians, and to provide sensuous ways of being which link the generations by keeping them in communication with one another.

As she has trained her body, so too has her mind been trained. The *Igraorka* knows that the red and black threads woven into the costume she wears are not colors of joy or happiness, but colors of blood and slavery, darkness and suffering. She speaks of what her ancestors bore in the past. She knows the names of her peoples' old conquerors. She knows the shapes of those forces which threaten her now—and she can not remain indifferent.

There is something that she can not explain. Something there, deep within her diaphragm. Simply she finds herself in a place, next to someone—a dancer like her—with whom she can share the secret.

Dance is an antidote to alienation.

If not us, who else will continue the tradition?

(The ensemble changes into a beautiful melody, full of longing. The girls are gliding across the floor, dancing as if on air, with their bodies fully efforted).

We know, and yes, it is true...
We can not remain indifferent.

Sshh...*(the girls come to a halt)*
Dance is an antidote to alienation.

LIGHTS OUT/MUSIC OUT

Entire cast moves off stage

Scene Two: A call to dance

FULL DARKNESS

A lead zurla [20] player signals the call with a high-pitched cry over the doleful drone of another. The deep, short-pitched thwacks of a tapan cut through the nasal resonance of the horns.

LIGHTS FULL UP

The three Igraorci are center stage, in a crescent shape, encircling the musicians in a slow rubato. No longer dressed for rehearsal, but for a performance, they are indistinguishable; swathed in the heavy clothes of their ancestors. Not light at all, but heavy, heavy clothes. Eyes cast downward, stiff like icons, they are moving without seeming to move at all. Like icons held up before the people. [21]

From off stage, the Choreocritic recites her text. She begins slowly, like the dancers, in a rhythm that is hard to detect:

When the call to dance comes, you have no choice but to submit.

Even if it is not *you* there—in the circle—you can not remain indifferent. The dance beckons. With anticipation you wait for it to happen. And it does, almost immediately.

That moment when memory's leash yanks at your mind and floods your being with things that just can't quite be explained. You are at once filled with unfettered happiness and a longing that aches.

Macedonian dance is sometimes calm and slow, sometimes quick and sure-footed, and sometimes both. It is light on its feet, proud in its posture. Nimble, with nerves alive. There is a hesitation to it. Macedonian dance moves with a limp—a sigh that seems to gesture that there is more to the story than what meets the eye. *I am caught somewhere between the struggle to build cohesiveness, and the tricks I want to play to unravel it. I reach forward for firm ground, but leave the hesitation in place.*

The dance (about which) I write dances particular tales, and in its movement and form—and through the very act of witnessing it—reifies those tales. Macedonian dance is not an example. It is the main ingredient, [22] a particularly apt metaphor for what it means and feels like to be part of a community. The very act of grasping hands to begin a dance signifies that one is committed to something larger than oneself. *I humbly stake out a textual "I," writing my body into a body of histories, knowing that there is never just one interpretation, but hoping that the one I have chosen is a responsible one. [23]*

From the legends of travel writers during the Middle Ages comes the warning that:

When you walk through Bosnia, do not sing!
 You will be out-sung.
 When you walk through Serbia, do not dance!
 You will be out-danced.

When you walk through Macedonia,
 do not sing nor play nor dance!
 You will be out-sung, out-played, out-danced. [24]

Many Macedonians proudly conceive of their folklore as their patrimony—a treasure to be cherished, preserved, and passed along to the next generation. Dance gives the folk tripartite of song, music, and dance its motion of swirling bodies laboring with controlled abandon to write themselves into being. For being means having. Having a say in what stories you tell, having a place to tell them, and someone to tell them to.

If only it were that simple. To start from this moment instead of the one(s) frozen inside all of those images that we have of ourselves and others. To rid ourselves of worn-out metaphors that just don't seem to be working for us anymore. To recognize difference without being so different that we lose our capacity to feel together. *This is the movement I am trying to perfect.* Don't we all know what it is like to persevere and have hope, but fear that we are really just locked into some kind of dance that keeps choreographing itself right back to where it started? Or worse yet to some point before? Two steps forward, three steps back. It's hard to progress this way.

MUSIC OUT/LIGHTS OUT

To be continued

ENDNOTES

1 I take my cue from Francesca Castaldi who conceives of her subject matter ("Senegalese dance") "not as a stable and individual entity, but rather an ensemble of relationships that mutually define each other and circulates across several times/spaces" (2000:13).

2 My use of "folk dance" follows standard translation practices articulated most clearly by Dunin and Višinski who write: "In the Macedonian language the term 'folk' (*narodno*) refers to those dances that are not the urban popular dances danced in pairs, that is, the 'modern dances' (*moderni plesovi* or *moderne igre*) of the 19th and 20th centuries. A further taxonomy of terms to describe types of 'folk' dance include: 'authentic' (*izvorno*) usually meaning dances from the villages, and 'town' (*starogradsko*) usually referring to the 19th and 20th turn-of-the-century dances (and music) from urban centers" (1995:2).

3 Those familiar with the Yugoslav era know the story well. In the wake of World War II, the socialist theory of communist Yugoslavia called for a period of national self-expression as a way to deal with the problems associ-

ated with ethnic antagonisms. The Yugoslav government, betting that national unification and *Yugoslavism* would be best met and fostered not by discouraging the differences amongst Yugoslavia's various peoples, but by "relativising them and subordinating them" (cf. Sutton 1998:44) to a larger political agenda, encouraged groups to speak their respective languages, and create their own newspapers, societies, theaters, and orchestras. It was hoped that by permitting ethnospecificity on a *cultural* level, ethnically-motivated irredentism on *political* level would be assuaged. Tied to this period of cultural intervention is the circulation of dance practices from villages and towns into the urban core, increasing the standardization of those dance practices, and the growing establishment of a community of amateur and professional ensembles committed to theatrical presentation. I would add, although not entirely tangentially, that this historical narrative silences the cultural interventions shaped/crafted/exercised by people who danced dances out of their ritual and social contexts—on stage, for an audience—at least a decade before Tito's policies went into effect (see Dunin and Višinski 1995).

4 See Obrebski (1976) for an account of native Balkan ethnography prior to World War Two, and Kuper's (1994) positioning and critique of the European nativist case within the context of a "cosmopolitan anthropology."

5 Literally, "dancers of *ora*." *Ora* is the plural of *oro*, which is the Macedonian word for the communal chain-linked dances done by practitioners. In its usage, *oro* is the structural equivalent of the Greek *syrtós*, the Bulgarian *horo*, and the Serbian *kolo*.

6 One veteran ethnologist from the *Marko Cepenkovich Institute of Folklore* who has been researching the instrumental *narodna musika* (traditional music) sections of ensembles which were active in Macedonia from 1900–1945, concedes that the post-1945 *društvo* environment does not interest him primarily because "It's more difficult," he confessed to me once. "I'm leaving that for the younger generation to work on," he added, gesturing to an ethnologist from said generation whom I knew from our conversations harbored no interest in undertaking such research either.

7 When Laurel Kendall began researching Shamans in South Korea, she set her sights on a village which, although less than an hour's bus ride outside of Seoul, was sufficiently rural enough she reasoned "to vest my accounts of shamanic practices with ethnographic authenticity" (1988:6). Only later did Kendall realize the irony of her logic. "The very fact that my observations were made in a rural setting undercut my insistence on the contemporary vigor of my chosen subject" (*ibid.*). Like Kendall, by centering my sights on urban-based ensembles, I was choosing not to live exclusively within the landscape of the past.

8 I have borrowed this wording from Keith Brown who, writing specifically about the Republic of Macedonia, uses the term “parapolitics” to describe “the realm in which state and non-state actors compete to define the relationships between culture, politics and identity, and thus invest symbols with material consequence...” (Brown 2000:123).

9 Elsewhere, Sally Ann Ness notes that the placement of the definite article “the” before the noun “dance”—as in “the dance”—signifies a theoretical conceptualization of dance “in which dance is understood as being essentially an institutionalized product of socio-cultural processes [rather than] primarily concerned with individual dancers and their dancing experience” (1996:267). My use of “the dance” envisions no such distinction, but rather serves to account for both.

10 At the risk of obfuscating the very definition of the word “current,” I would like to suggest that the current trends and concepts to which I intimate are, if fact, nothing new for the region. Maria Todorova, in tracing the rising specter of a Balkan ontology, notes that following the Second World War, due to the persistent belief of the Balkans as inhabiting an “intermediary state somewhere between barbarity and civilization,” the region was viewed as “a marvelous training school for political scientists and diplomats’ of the the First World preparing to perform in the Third; they were utilized as a ‘testing ground’: ‘In the nonacademic world, for example, a significant proportion of American governmental and semigovernmental personnel at present attempting to cope with the problems of the Afro-Asian countries received its training, so to speak, for such work in the Balkans, which have thus retrospectively become the original underdeveloped area’” (Todorova 1997:130) {NOTE} The above comments situated within single quotation marks are attributed to Joseph Rothschild, cited in Roberts (1970:180). Also noteworthy is the work of Myron Weiner (1971) who accessed Balkan history from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century seeking a descriptive model “that might prove useful for describing, explaining and predicting the patterns of political development and international behavior” of what were then recently-independent states of Asia and Africa (Maleska 2000). Maleska quotes Weiner directly: “I have chosen...to call it the Macedonian Syndrome, named after the region of the Balkans disputed by Greece, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, and that provided me with an almost pure case history with which to build the model” (ibid.:1).

11 I am not suggesting that we eliminate the word “folk” from our vocabulary. To co-opt the crux of James Clifford’s “predicament of culture”—“Culture is a deeply compromised idea that I can not yet do without” ([1988:10)—I concede that “folk” is a deeply compromised idea that I can not yet do without: “compromised” because the

discourse of authenticity that the word references silences the vigor of present-choreographed “folk” dance practices done by people whose lives are displaced from rural roots, and an “idea that I can not yet do without” because, in the end, “folk” is the only word that signifies the forms and bodies I wish to reference and describe.

12 I humbly offer my modest interpretation of Savigliano’s engagement with choreocritics and corpography, but urge the reader to consult her work as the ultimate example of the sophistication and rigor her provocative scholarly proposals necessitate.

13 My Choreocritic, still in her infancy, operates more or less as a narrator. This is in stark contrast to Savigliano’s Choreocritic, who notes Castaldi (2000:21) “relentlessly displaces the spectacle on the stage of the theater to the stage of world politics, inserting the moves of performers, spectators, and cultural critics into a larger choreography of power.”

14 See Abu-Lughod (1991) for an informative discussion on the advocacy of new forms of writing in anthropology.

15 I have taken the liberty of reformulating questions first posed by Marta Savigliano on October 18, 1999 in a graduate course at the University of California, Los Angeles entitled, “Ethnography on the Move.” Emerging out of a larger discussion on the politics of ethnography and the politics of a text, Savigliano’s original questions (“Is knowledge coming from you?” or “Is the thing telling you what to know?”) evoked a landscape of binaries equally as provocative in the way they reorient one’s attention. For example, the similarly-paired binaries: What is the essence of a dance? or What is the essence of a dance *for* the people who dance it?; and What does a dance have that makes people want to dance it? or What surrounds the practice of a dance?/How are people taught to think and feel about it? work, literally, to rescue the Choreocritic from the quicksand of metaphysics by shifting her focus and planting her, instead, upon the *terra firma* of description.

16 Maria (21), Vesna (18), and Dafina (18) are *Igraorci* with *Orce Nikolov*, a Skopje-based KUD, which was one of the first to form in the Republic of Macedonia after liberation in 1945. Housed in barracks adjacent to the old Bit Pazar on the northern side of the Vardar River, *Orce Nikolov* eclipses the city’s other KUDs with an interior space that looks and feels like a museum. The whole place is a visual documentation of *Orce Nikolov*’s accomplishments as a world-class ambassador of Macedonian folk song and folk dance, and in that sense, the documentation is also a testament to the ensemble’s respected position within the hierarchy of dance ensembles within the Republic of Macedonia. Maria, Vesna, and Dafina come to this “museum” three nights a week to rehearse choreographies that they first learned as grade-school-aged girls, and have been rehearsing ever since. They are led by Tofe Drakulo-

vski, a retired dentist and former *Igraorec* with *Tanec*, the Republic of Macedonia's professional folk dance and folk song company. With over 40 years experience as a teacher, Tofe has played a commanding role in influencing several generations of dancers as they have evolved from awkward beginners to seasoned amateurs on the threshold of professional careers as folk dancers. *Orce Nikolov* dancers predominate the professional ranks of *Tanec*, an achievement attributed in large part to the seriousness of purpose instilled in dancers under Tofe's leadership. "Even though we are amateurs," Tofe once boasted to me, "we work even more seriously than the professional ensemble."

17 The *tapan* is a cylindrical, double-headed, wooden drum.

18 An *Igraorka* is a female "dancer of oro." The male equivalent would be *Igraorec*.

19 *Tapandžija* is the specific word for a *tapan* player.

20 The *zurla* is a conical-shaped, double-reed horn.

21 I have adapted this passage from remarks made by a Serbian poet to Rebecca West, the famed British journalist and chronicler of Yugoslav life (cf. West 1940:93). The original passage reads: "A woman must not spring about like a man to show how strong she is and she must not laugh like a man to show how happy she is. She has something else to do. She must go around wearing heavy clothes, not light at all, but heavy, heavy clothes, so that she is stiff, like an icon, and her face must mean one thing, like the face of an icon, and when she dances she must move without seeming to move, as if she were an icon held up before the people."

22 I have borrowed this phrasing from Marta Savigliano who questions her own use of tango "as an example to describe the political economy of Passion" by protesting that "Tango is not an example; it is the main ingredient in this project" (Savigliano 1995:16). Savigliano's simple declaration belies a rather complex semiotic malfeasance, which conceptualizes dance only as a signifier to something else. On the contrary, Savigliano's achievements in dance scholarship as a choreographer of what Susan Foster calls "complex and masterful textual performance[s]" (see Savigliano 1995) signal that dance can stand front and center.

23 Ann Cooper Albright (1997:120) writes about staking out a textual "I" in order to talk back to her audience.

24 This passage is referenced by Duško Dimitrovski in his written liner notes to the 2002 compact disc recording of the *Pece Atanasovski Orchestra*. Skopje: AMANET Music.

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