

The Balkans Geo-psychoanalysis

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ABSTRACT

In the 1990s, Julija Kristeva and Slavoj Žižek developed a unique discourse within psychoanalysis - the psychoanalysis of the Balkans. Their cultural and political analysis represented the Balkans as a pathological region of nations suffering from the syndrome of an “archaic mother.” They propose in their different ways that the subject (nation) must radically separate from oedipal attachment to the attachment to nationalism as unemancipated Oedipus and subordinate to the authority of the symbolic father, that is, to the West. At the heart of such an approach is a conservative policy of labeling the Balkans as primitive behind Kristeva and Žižek loom self-orientalization and geopolitical de-identification with the Balkans as a precondition for their cosmopolitan and universalist identity.

Keywords:
Kristeva;
Žižek;
psychoanalysis;
Balkans

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The *Mittel Land* of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* invokes both the Balkans and Central Europe, and Central Europe has been imagined as "a transitional zone between proper Western civilization and the unfathomable identity of Russia."¹ This transitional status is intensified in the Balkans, which, in addition to being part of the East/West, is also seen as a bridge between the Christian North and the Muslim South. And both Western and Eastern Christianity, as well as Islam, are established in the Balkans, and their practice coincides with ethnic and national lines. The Balkans was never colonized in the modern sense. Rather, during the centuries of Ottoman rule, strategies of repopulation, religious conversion and polarization were introduced to control the territory, and Balkan people came to perceive each other (and themselves) as both colonial rulers and as colonial subjects. This inscribed ambiguity left the Balkan nation-states emerging in the 19th century particularly vulnerable to *representational* colonization by "proper Western civilization," and to aspirations of "European" identity. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the period of the formation of the Balkan nation-states on the ruins of the Ottoman empire, it was common practice for the intellectual elite to study in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, or Istanbul—whichever imperial capital had exerted the strongest cultural and linguistic influence on a particular region. Because of the inherent ambiguities I have described, the Balkans, within its own

discursive space, replicates the dynamics of center-to-periphery identity formation by shifting geopolitical pathology to the eastern neighbor.² In so doing, Balkan nations not only orientalize the "other" but also occidentalize themselves as the West of the "other." *Balkanism*, as a system of discourse-geography, accounts for ways in which the geopolitical ambiguity of the Balkan space has been internalized into the Balkan identity both through *self-orientalization* and hegemonic representation.³

This essay focuses on the Balkan discourse-geography as a hidden contingency of the intellectual work of two Lacanian psychoanalysts, Julia Kristeva and Slavoj Žižek. Their iconic status as global intellectuals and the sheer volume of their work have generated an equally industrial-sized body of criticism. However, most of that criticism has taken their work at face value as stemming solely from the tradition of the European discourse of rationality. In what follows here, instructed by Gramsci's concept of intellectual labor as social *praxis* and its self-empowerment through marginal geography, I bring to bear a specifically Balkan gaze upon Kristeva's and Žižek's respective discourses on exile and universality, emphasizing their own Balkan origins and the discursive geography of the region as dissonant infrastructure to their self-proclaimed universalism and cosmopolitanism.

In conceptualizing their intellectual

production more broadly, I invoke some basic concepts of Gramsci, such as geographic and historical specificity as central to both intellectual labor and the internal plurality of the subject. This concept of Gramsci, and others, are particularly resonant in today's climate of tension between the homogenization of global capitalism and the cultural diversity of immigrant labor, which has displaced the economic conflicts of global capitalism onto culture and identity. Gramsci's work is also foundational to the interdisciplinary area of cultural studies (which includes Balkan and other "area" studies). Many of the academics and writers working in these fields are themselves expatriates who identify with the subaltern groups about which they write or from which they come and whose dislocation operates as radical resistance to the cultural orthodoxy of their host nations, the former colonial centers.

The work of Kristeva and Žižek, on the other hand, offers a reverse, dissident response to exile which discursively subjugates the Balkans and immigrants to European symbolic dominance. Under the sign of psychoanalysis of the Balkans their work promotes the internalization of the Balkans' geopolitical location as the other of Europe and produces a negative version of the Balkans' subjectivity as failing Oedipus which pathologizes immigrants' subjectivity on the basis of the incestuous bond with the lost space. This pathologization is achieved by invoking

1. Tomislav Z. Longinović, "Vampires like Us" in *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, ed. Dušan I. Bjelić and Obrad Savić (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 39-55.

2. Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54.4 (Winter 1995): 917-931; hereafter cited parenthetically as "Nesting."

3. See Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); hereafter cited parenthetically as *Imagining*.

the Lacanian theory of the split subject as a universal structure of modern subjectivity which replicates the cognitive split between empire and colony as symbolic father and archaic mother. This universal scheme ignores the subversive role of geography and history in the formation of Balkan subjectivity. This “situational intensity and sensitivity”⁴ lacking in Kristeva’s and Žižek’s work is central to Gramsci’s concepts of intellectual labor and individual subjectivity.

In elaborating convergences in Kristeva’s and Žižek’s work and in their personal histories, I acknowledge and account for divergence within those areas, including in the circumstances of their displacement from Bulgaria and the ex-Yugoslavia respectively. I argue, however, that even with these differences, each offers an exclusionary discourse of radical conservatism, framed in the language of desire, as an idiosyncratic form of intellectual labor.

Bulgarie, ma sous-France

The history of Julia Kristeva’s dislocation from her Bulgarian origins is well known. She was born in 1941 and received a largely francophone education. After graduating from the University of Sofia with a degree in linguistics, in 1965 she received a scholarship from the French government that enabled her to pursue graduate studies in Paris, where she quickly made her mark on the French intellectual scene, studying with such eminent scholars as Roland Barthes, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Emil Benveniste, among others. Soon after her arrival in Paris she became part of a circle of intellectuals identified with the avant-garde literary journal *Tel Quel* (and eventually married one of its founding editors, writer Philippe Sollers. She herself published in the journal as did Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and other prominent figures of the Parisian literary scene. She was at first a Marxist and student rebel,

then she began studying with Lacan and incorporating his ideas on subjectivity into her work on structural linguistics. *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) one of Kristeva’s doctoral theses, combined Bakhtin’s Marxist theory of polyphony in language with the Lacanian notion of the split subject, a unique theoretical position reconciling bourgeois aesthetics with the revolutionary field of text. It was this work which definitively launched her as the leading literary theorist of her time.

Kristeva’s “politics of signification” discursively transforms intellectual labor from an agent of symbolic-material intervention into a purveyor of desire for signifiers and self-signification as a permanent source of revolt and creative negativity. Her concept of “exile” as a state of cosmopolitanism originates not so much from her life in Paris as from her experience of herself as a liberated, fully Oedipalized subject exiled from her maternal space of birth: “exile is already in itself a form of *dissidence*, since it involves uprooting oneself from a family, a country, or language...”⁵ She extends this concept of dissidence to the idea of “Oedipal revolt” against the maternal space and posits that the subject exists in the tension between the joy of speech (desire for the father) and the seduction of the pre-lingual state of maternal unity (desire for the mother). In and through the tension created by these opposing forces, the desiring subject and autonomous speaker is constituted. She herself, in order to become a fully Oedipalized subject, had first to demonize her Bulgarian identity according to her own theory of abjection: “I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which ‘I’ claim to establish *myself*.” (3) From exile, she writes with “love” to Bulgaria as the geopolitical object:

Subject/object⁶

You suffer from chaos, from vandalism, from violence. You suffer from the lack of authority. You suffer from corruption, the

*absence of initiative, the sloppiness that redoubles an unprecedented brutality on the individual level, the arrogance of the mafia and the scams of the newly rich.*⁷

Her message to Bulgarian citizens is, following her example, to “...undergo a psychoanalysis or psychotherapy” (182) in order to join European civilization successfully. Kristeva discursively reintroduces the colonial paradigm into European geopolitics via her politics of signification in the same way the Lacanian split subject is articulated through her theory of poetic language. The maternal drive for the lost space supplies endless raw material for building the cultural capital of the French nation.

Consistent with her theory of poetic language and the prelingual state of *chora*, the archaic drive for the mother remains underneath language as a permanent prelingual drive rupturing symbolic conventions into new expressive forms. Language is central to Kristeva’s work on more than one level. As a Lacanian psychoanalyst, she adheres to the principle that language is essential to the symbolic order which provides the pre-existing culture and rules, forms the ground for the subject emerging from the archaic maternal—the *chora*. The French language in particular, in addition to being a tool with which she articulates her project of Oedipal revolt, is emblematic of her own “resurrection” as a cosmopolitan intellectual.

And yet Bulgarian is an almost dead language for me. That is, a part of me was slowly extinguished as I gradually learned to speak French, first from Dominican nuns, then at the Alliance Française, then at the university. Finally, exile cadaverized this old body and substituted it with another, fragile and artificial, at first, then more and more indispensable, and now the only living one: French. I am almost prepared to believe in the myth of resurrection when I examine the divided state of my

4. Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and other Essays*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 466.

5. Quoted in Danielle Marx-Scouras, *The Cultural Politics of Tel Quel: Literature and the Left in the Wake of Engagement*, (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 195.

6. In Serbia 2005. Photo by the author (<http://www.agora8.org/1a.htm>).

7. Julia Kristeva, *Crisis of The European Subject*, Translated by Susan Fairfield, (New York City, NY: Other Press, 2000), 176: hereafter cited parenthetically as *Crisis*.

mind and body.⁸

The centrality of the French language to Kristeva's intellectual project was graphically illustrated in May, 2003, when she received a *Doctor Honoris Causa* degree from her Bulgarian *alma mater*, University of Sofia. She gave a speech on that occasion whose subject was "Language, Nation, and Women."⁹ As the title indicates, this speech touches upon the main themes of her work, and in it she directly acknowledges her allegiance to France and her love and admiration for the French culture and language: "I love the logical clarity of French, the impeccable precision of the vocabulary, the niceness of judgment..." From the outset, however, her devotion to the French language was evident to her largely Bulgarian audience since she actually delivered the speech in French. (There was a token passage in Bulgarian at the end).

Kristeva's predilection for all things French has implications far beyond self-aestheticization. Her elevation of France and its language to the top of her civilizational hierarchy depends upon the abjection of her maternal country and language. This is made clear in the controversial essay, "Bulgarie, ma Souffrance,"¹⁰ in which she describes a return to her homeland in 1989, just before the fall of the Berlin wall. She laments the "garbage and flies on the streets of Sofia" and, even more, the lapses of taste revealed by the deteriorated state of the national language: "...they stuffed into this poor language of sensitive peasants and naïve thinkers a whole arsenal of tasteless and

rootless loanwords."¹¹ However, given her own disclosure that "Bulgarian is an almost dead language for me..." one must question just how qualified she is to render judgment upon it.

The title of this essay and its tone—even more than the derogatory comments about the Bulgarian language and the lack of aesthetics in the public sphere—reveal the repression and unhappiness of her early years living under a hardline Communist regime. Kristeva has written very little about this period but she does touch upon it briefly in the speech at University of Sofia, providing a strong clue that her fiction is, at least in part, autobiographical:

...I have no intention of inflicting a confession upon you, rest assured. This is not the time, and I have written novels for that purpose. In short, I will say only that I consider myself a cosmopolitan intellectual (this word alone was sufficient grounds for persecution in the Bulgaria of my childhood), of European citizenship, French nationality, and Bulgarian origin. Aside from the bitterness and wounds, I retain a grateful memory of my studies in Bulgaria...¹²

Bulgarian scholar Elena Gueorguieva elaborates on the autobiographical aspect of Kristeva's fiction in an essay entitled "Images of Bulgaria in the Fiction of Julia Kristeva", pointing out that in the novel *The Old Man and the Wolves*, "Santa Barbara," the novel's setting, is a fictional representation of Bulgaria. It is a place where people have become "wolflike,"

deeply steeped in murder and crime, where "Aggression remains the only counterweight to depression."¹³ This is strong condemnation, only thinly disguised, and provides evidence that the unhappiness and repression of Kristeva's early life drive her abjection of her maternal space.

For Kristeva, then, the Balkans and France do not meet as two subjects, two equal codes, but rather as French subject and Bulgarian abject: "The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to it."¹⁴ Within her project of "Oedipal Revolt," she pits Bulgaria as Europe's archaic drive against France as Europe's Symbolic and as a result she loses psychological heterogeneity to the simplified structure of geopolitical differentiation and hierarchy. In other words, the term "archaic mother" has quite different connotations in the respective contexts of European geopolitics and the theory of poetics. In the first case it evokes established geopolitical stereotypes and, in the second, it works to reveal fresh nuances of textual interpretation.

Kristeva implicitly offers her own biography as a model for immigrants' Oedipal emancipation, and it is difficult not to read the portrayal of the biblical Ruth, "The Model Émigrée,"¹⁵ in *Strangers to Ourselves*, as her idealized *alter ego*. Ruth, the princess of Moab, married a Jew, stopped mourning her maternal space and was rewarded by becoming the matriarch of Jewish royalty, ancestor of David's line: "The reprehensible immigration is thus inverted into a necessary condition for the accomplishment of

8. Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt. The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis, Vol. 2*, Translated by Jeanin Herman, (New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002), 243: hereafter cited parenthetically as *Intimate*.

9. Julia Kristeva, "La Langue, la Nation, les Femmes" ("Language, Nation, Women") Edition Université de Sofia, 2002; hereafter cited parenthetically as "Language". A copy of the speech in the original French was sent to me by Professor Dimitar Kambourov, who was present when Kristeva received the *Doctor Honoris Causa* degree and heard her speak. He reports, "I would say that people who know details concerning Kristeva's intellectual itinerary would not be that surprised by the fact that she gave her speech in French...in fact, there was widespread opposition to what she did then." (Personal communication, March 19th 2007. Quoted by permission).

10. According to John Mowitt, "though the uncanny remains unthematized in "Bulgarie ma souffrance," the encrypted mother returns here in national guise. I am thinking, obviously of the pun that unsettles her title, where Bulgaria is both where she suffers a delay, a site of pain, but also her beneath or under France." (61) John Mowitt, "Strangers in Analysis: Nationalism and the Talking Cure," *Parallax* 4.3 (1998): 45-63.

11. Julia Kristeva, "Bulgarie, ma souffrance," *L'Infini* 51 (autumn 1995): 42-52. Translated as "Bulgaria, My Suffering," in *Crisis* (163-183).

12. "Language" (4).

13. Elena Guéorguieva, "Images de la Bulgarie dans l'Oeuvre Romanesque de Julia Kristeva," *Etudes balkaniques*, 2.3 (2001): 215.

14. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez, (New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1.

15. Bonnie Honig, "Ruth, the Model Emigrée: Mourning and the Symbolic Politics of Immigration," in *Political Theory. An International Journal of Political Philosophy*, 25.1 (February 1997): 112-136.

Ruth's destiny."¹⁶ Kristeva's interpretation of the story of Ruth shows that she desires immigrants, Bulgarians, and the Balkans, to desire *her* French-ness and in this self-appointed role as signifier of the other's desire, she becomes an avatar of cultural hegemony.

Although distant in space from each other, French immigrants and the Balkans are, in Kristeva's register, related within the discursive framework of her own exilic identity. While the Balkans symbolize the mad, archaic mother, the immigrants are angry children and both are equally dangerous to the symbolic father. As Kristeva points out, France has a long history of openness to immigration and the granting of citizenship. However, with the influx of North African immigrants, both the French cultural right and left began to question whether citizenship should be granted to them because of their exotic culture and potentially competing loyalties. In this debate, Kristeva praised the *Committee on Nationality* (*Commission de la Nationalité*) chaired by Marceau Long, the head the *Council of State*, and supported "the existing fusion of *nation* and *Etat*" while rejecting "the idea of an 'ethnopluralistic' society."¹⁷ She argues that "The homogenizing power of French civilization, which has been able to take in and unify over the course of centuries various influences and ethnic groups, has been tried and tested [but immigrants] do not give up their particularities."¹⁸ Kristeva even accuses Third World immigrants, since their arrival in France, of "...Balkanizing the cultural, political, and economic forces of European people..."⁽⁵⁴⁾ Indeed, she lays the blame on immigrants for the "gruesome course" that French civil society has taken since the French Revolution. She recognizes her own destructive drive for the lost Balkan space in the Arab youth who, un-

able to accept the symbolic father, rebel against him with the incestuous madness of fundamentalists:

"People who adhere to fundamentalist Islam are rebels against colonialism or against the misery of the Arab world, against Zionist imperialism, against rich, colonial France, against banks, or against a consumer society."¹⁹

Kristeva recognizes the antipathy to French authority among French Arab youth, but locates the source of their rebellion in the unconscious of the colonial subject rather than in the injustices of French imperialism. From her psychoanalytic perspective, the real source of conflict between immigrant labor and global capital is not the unequal distribution of wealth and resources, but the universal structure of the Oedipus. Her articulation of "intimate democracy" and the social "consensus in the unconscious" reflects both the inherent paradox of her subject-position and her ignorance of colonial history. Discursive subjugation of the diversity of immigrants' experience to the universal signifier of the Lacanian subject is the foundation of her concept of "strangeness."

In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva confronts her own strangeness in the immigrants she writes of. She identifies four kinds of otherness: the other as immigrant in France; the other as the French host to the immigrant; the other as her own unconscious projection of a foreigner; and, finally, unconscious projection of herself as the other onto her fellow citizens. All of these forms of otherness have the unconscious as their foundation, and thus it must be recognized as the psychosomatic foundation of democracy which allows for both diversity and unity. However, the corollary to accepting that

unconscious fantasies constitute the other, is accepting that the symbolic castration and repression of prohibited desire is the foundation of otherness just as much as of symbolic expression. Intrinsically, then, psychoanalysis as the science of the unconscious becomes the ultimate arbiter of political and personal diversity, yet deeply invested in homogenizing identity, erasing colonial histories, and holding the key to cultural hegemony.

Defining "unconscious," in general, and the Balkans, in particular, both as the foundation and the refusal of the subject, "the improper facet of the proper self,"²⁰ Kristeva politicizes Oedipal subjectivity. The split from the mother engenders the desiring subject, and Kristeva's constitution of her own exilic identity epitomizes this process. That is, she denounces the Balkans only to create a prohibited desire for the place. This prohibited desire, the precondition for Oedipal subjectivity, is in fact the madness of the subject and the only truth about the subject. So the danger and truth about her is in the prohibited Balkans, her maternal space. Immigrants' hair, face, smell, clothes—all endanger the continued repression of the forbidden bond. This makes it absolutely essential that the politics of signification come down on the side of the subject who, recognizing her *doppelgänger* in the abject, must self-identify with the hegemonic culture in order to preserve the boundaries of the symbolic.

Kristeva's support of the French government's prohibition of Muslim schoolgirls' wearing headscarves is a specific example of her refusal to recognize Diasporic signification, or any aspect of immigrant identity formation that does not conform to the French symbolic system or rests on the incestuous bond with lost maternal space.²¹ Sociological study of the Islamic tradition in Europe reveals

16. Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez, (New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 1991), 70; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Strangers*.

17. Willian Safran, "Citizenship and Nationality", *International Political Science Review*, 18.3 (1997): 317.

18. *Strangers*, (194).

19. Julia Kristeva, *Revolt, She Said*, translated by Brian O'Keeffe (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2002), 106; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Revolt*.

20. Sara Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva. Psychoanalysis and Modernity*, (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2004), 189.

21. I am not suggesting that Kristeva is racist. However, I agree with David Macey's assessment that she cannot "escape the confusion that surrounds the entire French debate about citizenship and nationality. All too often, it is forgotten...that in many cases the offensive 'Muslim woman in a headscarf' is, and has from birth been, a French citizen." David Macey, "Rebellion, or, Analysis," *Radical Philosophy*, (March/April 2006): 47.

that Islamisation of the immigrant identity in an alien space produces neither a simple nor an incomplete self. Rather, in the absence of a spatial connection, Islamisation offers “lineage of belief” with the tradition of the lost space.²² For example, a young Turk interviewed by a French sociologist had reported that in order to remain in Germany after his mother requested that he return permanently with her to Turkey, he joined a Mosque, a compromise which satisfied his mother and permitted him to stay in Germany and attend university. Not only had he emancipated himself from the traditional family by signifying himself as an Islamist, he had also found his identity as a European in the exclusionary environment. “In fact Muslim religiosity serves the individual as a means of constructing himself as the *same* and as *different* within the society (my italics).” (300) Thus European Muslim identity can provide a middle ground between living in a space and being excluded from it.²³ According to Schirin Amir-Moazami,

“The hybrid character of identities, represented by *in-between* formations, demands a redefined understanding of borders and markers in the context of migration. Such an understanding has to go beyond the *either/or* scheme: Islamic or *lâique*, modern or traditional, the self or the other, etc.”²⁴

Gramscian “hybrid character of identities...” is precisely what Kristeva ignores in her articulation of her own exilic identity and of the state of “exile” in general. Yet, for immigrants themselves, hybridity is practical solution for cultural conflict.²⁵

Defending the French cultural dominance Kristeva constructs the Balkans as a discursive trope and then abjects her

own construction just as she abjects un-oedipalized immigrants. One might argue that she posits equality in the very existence of the shared unconscious. In other words, however much we may differ in looks or culture, are we not all strangers to ourselves and others because we repress desire? Yet there remains the crucial question of who claims and exercises the power to repress and interpret this desire, and this is the exact point at which the complexity of Kristeva’s discourse deteriorates into the banality of imperialism. It is also a *self*-orientalizing discourse in the sense that she locates and subjugates her Bulgarian origins as the east to her French supèrego. Then, replicating the operation of “nesting orientalisms” in Balkan identity formation, she orientalizes “strangers” in order to maintain her French supèrego as the West.

Père-version

The year the Berlin Wall fell, 1989, was a benchmark for both Kristeva and Žižek. It was the year she visited Bulgaria and began to comment sporadically on Eastern Europe. That same year, Slavoj Žižek published his first major work in English, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*.²⁶ Neoliberalism was on the rise, along with a general presumption of the end of ideology. Žižek not only refutes the death of ideology but also argues that the proclamation of its death represents ideology in its purest form. Ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia and elsewhere and the rise of European nationalism have proven Žižek correct in that argument. Writing in the context of the ideological storm raging in ex-Yugoslavia, in vivid language that drew from continental philosophy (Kant, Hegel), psychoanalysis (Lacan) and Anglo-Saxon popular culture, he soon established himself as an East European

political philosopher like none other, not only because of his ideas, but also the prodigious volume of his work. In addition, Žižek’s work, carried out in conjunction with his role as the most prominent member of what is now known as the Slovenian group of Lacanian psychoanalysis, was instrumental in revealing the existence of a flourishing philosophical scene in the formerly Marxist East.

Žižek was born and educated in Socialist Yugoslavia, earning a Ph.D. from the University of Ljubljana and eventually completing a second dissertation while studying in Paris with Jacques-Alain Miller. The Lacanian Group in Slovenia began to coalesce around him as its political leader in the context of the final disintegration of the Yugoslav state and he and other members of the Group worked within the Slovene youth alternative movement as dissidents to the Slovene pro-Yugoslav Communist government. Two publications in particular nurtured this spirit of dissent: *Mladina (Youth)*, run by the communist youth, and *Nova Revija (New Review)*, run by older, more nationalistic writers. Žižek began publishing in *Mladina* in the 1970’s. Žižek was also the intellectual standardbearer of another dissident group, NSK *Neue Slovenische Kunst* (New Slovenian Art), an art collective composed of “Laibach,” a rock group; “Irwin,” a group of painters; and the theater group *Scipion Nasice* (Sisters of Scipion Nasice). Promoting the idea of “culture as state” Žižek and the NSK developed a dissident strategy of “overidentification” which mocks the state by appearing to take it more seriously than it takes itself.²⁷

Becoming engaged in national politics through his collaboration with NSK and the Lacanians, Žižek was politically active during the formative years of the new Slovene state, running

22. Quoted in Nikola Tietze, “Managing Borders: Muslim Religiosity Among Young Men in France and Germany,” in *Muslim Traditions and Modern Techniques of Power*, ed. Armando Salvatore, (Munster-London: Lit Verlag, 2001), 295; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Muslim*.

23. “In other words, Muslim religiosity is a means for dealing with ambivalence, so that borders lose their power of separation. Continuity and discontinuity, ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’, difference and identity, dogma and heresy become compatible.” (305).

24. Schirin Amir-Moazami, “Hybridity and Anti-Hybridity: The Islamic Headscarf and its Opponents in the French Public Sphere,” in *Muslim* (324). For the critical status of Kristeva’s exile in the French context, see Winifred Woodbull, *Transfigurations of the Maghreb. Feminism, Decolonization, and Literatures*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 88-133.

25. For the critical status of Kristeva’s exile in the French context, see Winifred Woodbull, *Transfigurations of the Maghreb. Feminism, Decolonization, and Literatures*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 88-133.

26. Slavoj Žižek, *Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso Press, 1989); hereafter cited parenthetically as *Sublime*.

27. Alexei Monroe, *Interrogation Machine, Leibach and NSK*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), 110.

unsuccessfully for a seat on the collective presidency in 1991. The Socialist and multiethnic Yugoslavian state had officially nurtured progressive thinking around class divisions during a time of resurgent reactionary geopolitical and ethnic identifications, and the Lacanians were able to exploit the residual Marxist rhetoric of class equality, while promulgating a psychoanalytic explanation of the inter-ethnic violence capturing the political and theoretical attention of the West. At this time when Yugoslavia was literally in flames, their discursive strategy was to identify the Balkans as the Lacanian *Real*, which worked as theoretical reinforcement to the nationalist rhetoric of Balkan otherness in the new Slovenian state.²⁸

The impetus toward the establishment of a Slovene state, and the success of Žižek's and his Group's psychoanalytically-mediated political *praxis* in that context had much to do with the Slovenes' historical self-identification with Central Europe rather than with the Balkans. ("Back to Europe where we always belonged" and "This is a choice between Europe and the Balkans" proclaimed Janez Drnovsek, Prime Minister of Slovenia for 10 years, then President from 2002-2006). Historically, the concept of "Central Europe" has fluctuated according to the contingencies of European geopolitics, and it still does fluctuate from nation to nation. In the 1970's and 1980's, toward the end of the Cold War, emphasizing culture and subjectivity, political dissent, ethnicity and individual desire, it gained fresh currency as an alternative to the East/West ideological and geopolitical binary. Freud and psychoanalysis, as Central European avatars of modernity, have been an important influence on the

post-cold war construction of Eastern European cultural identity, with psychoanalysis becoming both the paradigm of Central European subjectivity and a discourse of dissent against political repression. Slovenia, a few hours by train from Vienna and the most liberal of all six Yugoslav republics, was fertile ground for such new expressions of dissent to take root and flourish.

But it was the "French Freud"²⁹ and "French Oedipus"³⁰ who assigned Žižek and his Lacanian friends the mission of bringing subjectivity to Slovenes. When Žižek returned to Slovenia after studying in Paris with Jacques-Alain Miller, Lacan's son-in-law and intellectual heir, his group took over the avant-garde magazine *Problemi* and used it as a medium for channeling the precepts of Lacanian psychoanalysis into Slovenian public discourse. Mladen Dolar, who also studied with Miller in Paris, remembers his own and Žižek's return to Slovenia in the 1980s as a sort of mission to establish a Lacanian outpost there, encouraged by Miller:

"We had been publishing Lacan in *Problemi* and *Analecta* for years, and [Miller] was grateful for that. He thinks very strategically and didn't have anyone else published in Eastern Europe. To him, we were the last stronghold of Western culture on the eastern front."³¹

Miller's injunction to Žižek and Dolar to spread the Lacanian gospel reflects not only a desire to establish psychoanalysis as a discursive hegemony on the "eastern front" (i.e. the Balkans spearheaded by Slovenia), it also shows Miller's naturalization of the cognitive map of Europe, which, since the Enlightenment, had divided European space into the rational

West and the irrational East, a division that has shaped the Western discourse of rationality (including psychoanalysis) along the lines of colonial exclusion.³²

In a letter to Trieste psychoanalyst Edoardo Weiss (May 28, 1922) Freud makes clear that the people directly to the south of his native Austria—the Slovenes—do not meet the Oedipal civilizational standard. This is Freud's response to Weiss' complaint that a Slovene patient is not responding to therapy: "...our analytical art when faced with such people, our perspicacity alone cannot break through to the dynamic relation which controls them."³³ Southern Slavs in general, Freud argued in his clinical history of the "Rat Man," are anal; not only do they have a proclivity to sodomy, they also dream of shit as a sign of gold and good luck.³⁴

The Lacanian group adopted Freud's cognitive map of Europe as a basis for its own particular form of psycho-cultural discourse. This is apparent when Žižek, articulating a project of national rebirth through psychoanalysis, takes up the case of the failing Slovene Oedipus where Freud's discussion with Weiss concerning the "immoral Slovene" leaves it. Instead of questioning Freud's implicit geopolitical bias, overidentifying Žižek returns to the original pronouncement of "unanalyzability" to diagnose the collective condition of the Slovene Oedipus:

The "immoral" Slovene mentioned does not just embody the paradoxical way enjoyment and the Law are linked, but hides yet another surprise, which leads to the key to the Slovene national fantasy, to the theme of the "maternal superego", to the theme of the mother (not the father) as the bearer of the Law/

28. Tonči Kuzmič, *Hate-Speech in Slovenia. Slovenian Racism, Sexism and Chauvinism*, (Ljubljana, Slovenia: Open Society Institute-Slovenia, 1999).

29. Sherry Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics. Freud's French Revolution*, (New York City, NY: Basic Books, 1978), 49.

30. *Revolt*, (74).

31. Robert S. Boynton "Enjoy Your Žižek", an interview in *Lingua Franca*, October 1998: http://www.robertboynton.com/articleDisplay.php?article_id=43

32. For a perceptive account of Europe's discursive divisions during the Cold War, see Chapter 1 "The barbaric Left" in Timothy Brennan, *Wars of Positions The Cultural Politics of Left and Right*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 41-64.

33. Quoted in Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso Press, 1996), 8; hereafter cited parenthetically as *For They Know*.

34. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition, Vol. XII*, translated from German under the General Editorship of James Strachey in Collaboration with Anna Freud assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson, (London: Hogarth Press, 1968): 187-203; hereafter cited parenthetically as *SE*.

Prohibition.³⁵

According to Žižek's Lacanian interpretation, Slovenes are excessively attached in their "national fantasy" to the Mother. The absence of the Father, the bearer of internal law/Prohibition, engenders a "national fantasy" formed around maternal prohibition of external pleasures and creates the "impediment" to subjectivity expressed in the Slovene's sexual impotence and immorality. Only the Symbolic and internalized Law of the Father, through inner prohibition, engenders enjoyment as a form of transgression. And, Žižek concludes, "... we Slovenes – 'unanalyzable' according to Freud-had to wait for Lacan to find a meeting with psychoanalysis; only with Lacan did psychoanalysis achieve a level of sophistication that rendered it capable of tackling such foul apparitions as the Slovenes."³⁶ In other words, Žižek accepts and perpetuates Freud's privileged perspective and Lacanian language as the site of national self-transformation. And when subjectivity has been restored to Slovenia, what becomes of the "unanalyzable" identity attributed to it by Freud and Žižek? It may be transferred to the "other" Balkans via the Lacanian concept of the *Real*, the pre-symbolic world.³⁶ Not only did this discursive strategy reproduce the hoariest of representational clichés about Balkan violence, but was also really *self-orientalizing* in its adherence to the scheme of "nesting orientalisms" in Balkan identity-formation.

Žižek established himself as an analyst of the Balkan political situation at a time when the world was struggling to understand a sudden explosion of nationalism among the Yugoslav ethnic groups. *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality*, appeared in 1994 when the Bosnian war was at its height. In this book, Žižek analyzes the Balkans, and particularly the sexual violence of the

war in Bosnia using Lacanian theory and language to relate the violence to the Lacanian "father Thing" (*père-jouissance* or *père-version*, one of Lacan's famous puns). That is, soon after Žižek called upon Slovenes to abandon their incestuous bond with the archaic mother and to ground their enjoyment in the Name-of-the-Father, he turned to Bosnia to diagnose the general conditions of the declining Oedipus and the resurgence of the primal father as the political enjoyment of the Balkans' nationalism. For instance, the Serbs committed horrendous rapes of Bosnian Muslim women and often sadistically forced the father to watch the rape of his daughter. Here is Žižek's interpretation of one such hypothetical instance, in which he situates the ritualized sexual violence in the Lacanian pre-Symbolic, and circumvents the question of ethnicity by focusing on the "father Thing" in the cruelty of the rape:

Because his desire is split, divided between fascination with enjoyment and repulsion at it; or –to put it another way–because the implicit knowledge that the victim is *enjoying* her suffering, the observer's ability to act – to rescue the victim-woman from the torturer or from herself – bears witness to the fact that he became 'dupe of his own fantasy' (as Lacan put it apropos of Sade): *the blow aims at the unbearable surplus-enjoyment*.³⁷

Following Lacan, Žižek presents both facets of the "Father's enjoyment" here: the symbolic and the pre-symbolic. The former sets the rules and parameters of normative order, and his joy is separate from the *Real*. The father in his pre-symbolic aspect (the primal father from *Totem and Taboo*), on the other hand, is the owner of all women and the object of his sons' hate, and the source of sexual violence. He is also exempt from castra-

tion. The Bosnian father hypothesized by Žižek epitomizes the pre-symbolic, the primitive, the Balkan *Real*, one who still enjoys (by force) the incestuous bond. As such, he is inseparable from the history of the established pathology of the place itself, as are the rest of the people living there. This particular Lacanian dyad of *Père-Jouissance* discursively replaces the "un-analyzable Slovene" with the Bosnian father as primitive other who is all too readily analyzable by Žižek himself as symbolic father and phallic authority.

Père-version ("Father-thing")

In October, 2003, "In Search of Balkania", an exhibition of avant-garde Balkan art, opened at the *Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum* in Graz. The aim of the exhibition was to revive the Balkans as "a site of intellectual endeavor and cultural desire."³⁸ The above photograph of Žižek is reproduced in the "User's Manual" and was exhibited in Graz by Irwin, the NSK art collective. The same photo adorns the back cover of Žižek's book, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (2003), while the front cover displays Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio's painting, *The Virgin and Child*. Both images refer to Freud's visit to Trebinje (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in September, 1898, and to his first paper on the unconscious, "The Psychic Mechanism of Forgetfulness," published the same year in *Monatschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie*. The article in question concerns Freud's forgetting the proper name of an Italian painter, Luca Signorelli. The names "Botticelli" and "Boltraffio" kept coming to mind in place of "Signorelli." Freud theorized that his forgetting the name was the result of the unconscious mechanism of sexual repression.

The constellation of signifiers in the photo suggests the following: Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic couch was covered with a carpet sent to him from Sa-

35. *For They Know*, (55n).

36. Mladen Dolar, another prominent Slovene Lacanian, discusses Freud's visit to the Slovene caves in Divača in 1898, where he unexpectedly met the notorious anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna, Dr. Karl Lüger. Dolar describes the cave as "...this metaphorical abyss of the unconscious" where "...the Master missing from the symbolic makes an unexpected appearance in the Real." The Balkans is the *Real*, Europe's unconscious, where its repressed desires and violence emerge. And, as Dolar writes, "Finally it is the place of the unanalyzable." Mladen Dolar, "Freud in Yugoslavia," unpublished manuscript.

37. *Metastases*, (75).

38. *In Search of Balkania: A User's Manual*, (Neue Galerie Graz am Landesmuseum Joanneum, 2003), 2.

Ionica by his distant relative³⁹ (and future brother-in-law), Moritz Freud.⁴⁰ Moritz, in addition to being a carpet dealer, was also rumored to be involved in the white-slave trade. Historian Peter J. Swales suggests that Freud may not only have suspected this, but may have enjoyed the possibility that the carpet in his therapy room bore a tenuous connection to the reputed Turkish excess of sexuality. As Freud reported in his article: “[A colleague] had told me what overriding importance these Bosnians attached to sexual enjoyments. One of his patients said to him once: ‘Herr, you must know, that if *that* comes to an end then life is of no value.’⁴¹ The “un-analyzable Slovene” lies in a position to be analyzed not by Freud but by the symbolic Other immanent in the *mise en scène*. He rests on the “Bosnian” carpets, boxed as if *in utero* on the day of Lacan’s birth, with Courbet’s painting, *l’Origine du Monde*, hanging above him. The painting was originally commissioned by Halil Bey, a Turkish diplomat and collector of erotica. When the diplomat was called back to Istanbul from Paris, the painting came eventually into the possession of Lacan’s second wife Sylvie Bataille-Lacan, the former wife of Georges Bataille.

During his short visit to Trebinje, Freud walked upon the carpets of a former harem that had become a tourist attraction. The visit to the harem, Swales explains, could well have evoked the exotic aura of the carpet on his consulting couch at 19 Berggasse, and conjured up a fantasy of himself as a sexual despot in a seraglio inhabited by female patients lying upon the famous couch, ready for analysis as a kind of “epistemological coitus.”⁴² “And here,” Swales concludes his study of Freud’s visit to Herzegovina, “... I allude, of course, to how over time Freud

would create for himself a *de facto* harem—Martha, Minna, Emma, Fanny, Marie, Helen, Lou, Anna, the Princess, etc.—with the royal couch as its very organizing principle.”(62)⁴³

Balkanism and Intellectual Labor

Žižek uses the psychoanalytic language of desire to construct a comprehensive political philosophy and Kristeva to advocate “oedipal revolt” as a unifying culture of Europe. Both of these intellectual projects are antithetical to what Said calls “the spatial consciousness exemplified in Gramsci’s ‘southern question.’”⁴⁴ That is, considerations of regionalism and cultural hybridity, as well as historical contingencies of time and place, are absent from their analyses except in essentializing contexts such as Žižek’s elaboration of the Lacanian “father Thing” as endemic to Bosnian violence or Kristeva’s reference to immigrants’ hair, face, smell, clothes. The lack of Gramscian “spatial consciousness” in Kristeva’s and Žižek’s work extends to their own relation to their Balkan origins. As we have seen in the case of Kristeva’s theorizing of Bulgaria and Žižek’s of Slovenia and the ex-Yugoslavia, they discuss their respective maternal spaces only in elaborately intellectualized (and depersonalized) terms through the medium of Lacanian theory. This careful distancing of themselves from their origins constitutes a sort of textual “dog that did not bark in the nighttime” that alerts one to the unacknowledged centrality of Kristeva’s and Žižek’s Balkan origins to their writing about the region, and also identifies elements of that work as “Balkanist.”

Bulgarian-American historian Maria Todorova posits that what we know about the Balkans can’t be separated from *how*

we know as the essence of the question, “What is the Balkans?” can’t be answered without examining the conditions of knowledge about the region. The Balkans as a stable representational scheme which originated in travelogues, literature and Western journalism may now be seen as a discursive problem rather than as “truth.” When Todorova named this process of representation “balkanism”, she named two contradictory elements: the Balkans as an object explained by rational knowledge and a space abandoned by rational knowledge.⁴⁵ Todorova acknowledges orientalist character of balkanist discourse, but as Milica Bakić-Hayden writes, “Todorova shows that *balkanism* independently developed a rhetorical arsenal of its own via its specific geo-political religious and cultural position...”⁴⁶ Bakić-Hayden goes on to elucidate “nesting orientalisms” as an important element in Balkan identity-formation. According to this scheme, in the Balkans “... the designation of ‘other’ has been appropriated and manipulated by those who have themselves been designated as such in orientalist discourse.” (922) Specifically, the Slovenes see themselves as more civilized than the Serbs, who are farther East; the Serbs, in turn, see themselves as more civilized than the Albanians. In addition, such representational schemes based on spatial hierarchies have been internalized as essential identities because they allow and justify exclusion of the other.

Rastko Močnik’s account of the status and function of *balkanism* within the context of globalization provides a framework to illustrate how Kristeva’s exegesis of “archaic mother” and Žižek’s of the “father Thing” fit into the scheme of Balkanist discourse. According to Močnik, two major *a priori* structures of

39. Ernst Jones, *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol I*, (New York City, NY: Basic Books, INC., 1954), 2.

40. Peter J. Swales, “Freud, Death and Sexual Pleasures: On the Psychical Mechanism of Dr. Sigmund Freud,” *Arc de Cercle* 1 (2003): 62; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Psychical*.

41. *SE*, Vol.III (292).

42. *Psychical* (62).

43. Regarding Freud as “primal father” see Ralph Blumenthal “Hotel Log Hints at Illicit Desire That Dr. Freud Didn’t Repress”, in *New York Times INTERNATIONAL / EUROPE* | December 24, 2006. [sister.http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/24/world/europe/24freud.html?emc=eta1](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/24/world/europe/24freud.html?emc=eta1)

44. Edward Said, “Secular Interpretation, the Geographical Element, and the Methodological Imperialism,” *After Colonialism and Postcolonial Displacements*, ed. Gyan Prakash, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1990), 28.

45. *Imagining*.

46. “Nesting,” 920.

domination and subordination govern *balkanism* as politics and as identity: the first is *horizontal* antagonism among the Balkan *ethnies*, in which each of them is a potential aggressor; the second is a *vertical* system of co-operation between each of these parties and the European Union. Within this system of *antagonisms* and *co-operation*, stereotypes of Balkan character emerge as *knowledge* and as *identities*. The Balkan identity becomes complete only when the geopolitical map has been fully inscribed and reflected as an ambiguous and incomplete self and as such is a supplement to global ideology in its very archaic closeness. Kristeva's "Oedipal Revolt" naturalizes both aspects of this scheme proposed by Močnik: horizontal antagonism in relationship to the Balkans as the primitive other, as maternal space, and as dangerous neighbor, and vertical cooperation with the established geopolitical hierarchy (France, as symbolic master). In the case of Žižek, since all elements of his hierarchical scheme are geographically within the Balkans, the concept of "nesting orientalisms" is a useful supplement to situating his discourse in Močnik's proposed structure of *balkanism*. However, in the case of Žižek as well as Kristeva, the transcendent vertical allegiance is to the universal subject and to psychoanalysis.

The line between the established geopolitics of the European *Grossraum* and Freud's metapsychology blurs in the Balkans. As I have shown, the geo-political map of the divided and hierarchized Europe preceded—and influenced—the development of Freud's theory of subjectivity. And the latent geopolitics of psychoanalytic language as both arbiter and symptom of modernity have made the Balkans, because of their strong tendency toward internalization

of dominating discourses, particularly susceptible to its implied universalism. However, Oedipal structure imposed as a universal to every national subject does not, as Kristeva would have it, serve the analytic function of individual emancipation. Rather, it becomes a geopolitical performative in nations aspiring to enter the privileged geography of the West. Miller sent Žižek and Dolar to establish a foothold for Lacanian discourse—but, more importantly, to rid Slovenia of its taint of Balkanness and "unanalyzability" and to establish a climate of psychoanalytic rationality there that would embody "the most radical contemporary version of the Enlightenment."⁴⁷

Miller's charge to Žižek and Dolar implies that the geopolitical aspect of their mission is an essential part of their intellectual project. When Žižek identifies with Freud's stereotype of the "un-analyzable Slovene," he is both *in* and *out* of the European discourse of rationality.⁴⁸ He is *out* because, as the object of the imperial gaze, he embodies the immoral and irrational substance of Europe; he is *in* by adopting imperial discourse, the symbolic Other that he has found in analyzing the Bosnian father via the "father Thing." It is at this moment of analysis that Žižek discovers both the symbolic Father and universal subjectivity. The relationship to the Bosnian father as the Balkan other reveals the meta-otherness as pure cogito, the symbolic Other that had already marked Žižek as the "un-analyzable Slovene".

Discovery of himself as symbolic Other at the moment of analyzing the Bosnian father has enabled Žižek to split from the Balkan substance; it has also purchased him a universalist gaze on global labor, immigration and multiculturalism—as well as status as a global,

rather than Balkan, intellectual. Speaking now from the place of the empty signifier which negates the incestuous substance of the maternal space and leads to its positive universality, Žižek hopes to do for global immigrant labor what the symbolic Other has done for him—to split it from its consubstantial relation with culture and territories. "Castration," according to the logic of the signifier, introduces the distinction between an element and its (empty) place of the symbolic Other. More precisely, it produces the primacy of the schematic place over the element and ensures that every positive element occupies a place which is not 'consubstantial' to it—that it fills a void which is not its own.⁴⁹ And, according to Žižek, the "logic of the signifier" is represented in the "true conservatism of the Eurocentric Left" that has placed its trust in the violence of the negative since the Jacobin terror.⁵⁰

On behalf of the symbolic Other and against the particular other Žižek uncovers "working class politics" and "productive antagonism" underneath the immigrant labor and Kristeva's multicultural tolerance. He inveighs against regression into the sensibilities of national taste, therapy, and otherness, because they are all anodynes that displace the productive antagonism of class struggle basic to Marxism. "National taste, therapy, and otherness" are also, of course, prominent themes in Kristeva's work and, in one of the few instances where he actually mentions her, Žižek warns, "... there is a danger that issues of economic exploitation are converted into problems of cultural tolerance. And then you have only to make one step further, that of Julia Kristeva in her essay 'Etrangers à nous memes,' and say we cannot tolerate others because we cannot tolerate otherness in ourselves. Here we have

47. *Sublime*, (7).

48. Žižek's *ambivalent* discursive position is evidenced when he proclaims his antagonism to "identity politics" and yet deploys Balkanist stereotypes in his own discourse ("Bosnian father" and "un-analyzable Slovene"). He also claims to be aware of the mechanisms of Balkan identity formation such as "nesting orientalisms", but there is no evidence that he takes them into account that they have influenced his own subject-position. "The fantasy which organized the perception of ex-Yugoslavia is that of the Balkans as the Other of the West: the place of savage ethnic conflicts long ago overcome by civilised Europe, ...". Slavoj Žižek, "Ethnic Dance Macabre" in *The Guardian* (UK) Aug 28, 1992.

49. *For They Know*, (231).

50. *Tiklish*, (374).

pure pseudo-psychoanalytic cultural reductionism."⁵¹

Kristeva's position is much more complex than Žižek's observation would indicate. She is an immigrant dislocated from her traditional culture, a trained psychoanalyst (Lacanian, as is he) and she denies class conflict for all of these reasons. Marxism in Bulgaria (as in Yugoslavia) was, for decades, a total discourse that regulated human relations and identities. In its practical totality, Marxism embodied the *local* culture. Kristeva declares herself "an exile from socialism and Marxist rationality."⁵² How can this position be reconciled with "working class" sensibilities without simultaneous regression to "the obsessional dialectic of the slave" of Hegelian political terror, and shattering her precious universalism?(294) "Working class" for Kristeva is not just an economic concept, but the equivalent of her repressed Bulgarian identity, of political machinery that "excludes the specific histories of speech, dreams and *jouissance*."(294) She cannot extricate herself from the language of dissidence. She acts from the unconscious and produces the freedom of intimacy, and her whole identity is at stake when confronting Marxist language: "The intellectual, who is the instrument of this discursive rationality, is the first to feel the effects of its break-up: his own identity is called into question, his dissidence becomes more radical."(295) Refusing to see labor in terms of economic exploitation and demanding instead psychological tolerance is the way in which she refuses the obvious and insists on the impossible, denying exploitation for the sake of the radical gesture of repressing her own past that opens her to the empty space of signification.

From Gramsci to Harold Garfinkel, "doing" philosophy is just one kind of

social practice, one that produces transcendental knowledge that sees itself as privileged in relation to what it mediates. When Edmund Husserl gave his famous Vienna lectures in 1935 "Philosophy in the Crisis of European Mankind" and follow them up with the Prague lectures "The Crisis of European Science and Psychology" on the problems of modern philosophy and science at a time of emerging anti-Semitism, he reminded Europeans of the Greeks' discovery of transcendental rationality and the need of the continent to return to the principles of universality. However, because Husserl was a Jew, no one would publish the lectures. They were eventually published in 1936 in Belgrade in international year book called *Philosophia* by Arthur Liebert as *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology*. It is ironic that this book, which is concerned, in part, with an important mathematical concept (transcendental rationality) discovered in the Balkan peninsula, could only be published there. This, of course, does not alter the internal argument made by Husserl that transcendental rationality is independent of its location. Nor does it alter the internal logic of the Pythagorean theorem. However, the implications of publication in the local space in itself valorizes the concept of transcendental rationality, while undermining Žižek's version of hyper Cartesianism.

The split and the signification transaction between the two contexts, internal-universal and external-local replicate the ushering in of European universality by the Enlightenment, when the Western part of Europe created its marginal space by relegating the Eastern part to a second serfdom.⁵³ As historians have recently argued, Voltaire and the Enlightenment divided European space into the rational West and the irrational East,

a division that has shaped the Western discourse of rationality (including psychoanalysis) along the lines of colonial exclusions. The philosophy of the Enlightenment constructed Eastern Europe and the Balkans as the dangerous exterior, "the dark side of the collective Europe," the place of Europe's forbidden desire, of vampires, unruly feminine sexuality and tribalism.⁵⁴ That is, all that West had to discharge in order to become the center of the world--the Empire--was ascribed to the East as the constitutive dark counterpoint to Enlightenment. Relations here have traditionally been fixed by a sort of "cognitive paranoia," whereby the West constructs the identity of the "other" part of Europe--known to Freud as well as to Žižek.⁵⁵ Lacking its own Enlightenment and corresponding Eastern European Cartesianism, this geopolitical "other" either submits to (and internalizes) the externally imposed identity or completely rejects it. So when Žižek insist that *cogito* is, " ... the authentic moment of discovery, the breakthrough, occurs when a properly universal dimension explodes from within a particular context and becomes 'for-itself; directly experienced as such (as universal);"⁵⁶ he subscribes to the Enlightenment's "cognitive paranoia".

To return briefly to Husserl in this context, he argued that Galileo was a great discoverer and a great concealer because his hypothetico-deductive method concealed the very local foundation of his transcendental knowledge. Similarly, we find that, in the case of both Kristeva and Žižek, the transcendental scheme of the Lacanian split subject conceals the split geopolitical identity upon which their interpretation and application of the Lacanian theory of subjectivity is founded. The East from which both Kristeva and Žižek extricate themselves by means of psychoanalysis was constituted from a

51. Žižek: "There is nothing to be said against tolerance. But when you buy this multiculturalist tolerance, you buy many other things with it. Isn't it symptomatic that multiculturalism exploded at the very historic moment when the last traces of working-class politics disappeared from political space? For many former leftists, this multiculturalism is a kind of ersatz working-class politics. We don't even know whether the working class still exists, so let's talk about exploitation of others." (Interview, <http://www.lacan.com/Žižek-measure.htm>)

52. *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi, (New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 1986), 299.

53. Robin Okey, *Eastern Europe 1740–1985: Feudalism to Communism*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

54. Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

55. See Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: "The East" in European Identity Formation*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

56. Slavoj Žižek, "Tolerance as an Ideological Category," http://consellodacultura.org/sentidos/wp-content/uploads/2007/03/Žižek_santiago.pdf.

Cartesian “bone.” However, the geopolitical split of the Balkans does not inevitably produce a split subject position as it has with Žižek and Kristeva. I can attest to the heterogeneity of intellectual work in the Balkans and to the fact that hegemonic culture and its politics of representation has been a common theme for intellectuals from the region, whether working within the Balkans or as expatriates.

It is illuminating to compare Kristeva, for instance, with her compatriot Tzvetan Todorov, who emigrated from Bulgaria to France about the same time as she. They were members of the same intellectual circle during their early years there and, as adherents of Mikhail Bakhtin, were instrumental in introducing his dialogical work into the overly static context of French structuralism.⁵⁷ From this point on, Kristeva’s and Todorov’s intellectual trajectories diverge. In the first chapter of his book, *The Morals of History*--about the use of the symbolic system of the advanced culture, Catholic Spain, to colonize the natives of South America--Todorov, discussing the Bakhtinian concept of *exotopy* explains it as “nonbelonging to a given culture.” And, he writes further, “According to Bakhtin, not only is *exotopy* not an obstacle to thorough knowledge of this culture, it is the necessary condition of it.”⁵⁸ He goes on to quote Bakhtin: “It is only in the eye of an *other* culture, that the alien culture reveals itself more completely and more deeply.”⁵⁹ (4) In other words, in order to be illuminated, a culture needs to be dialogically in relation to “other” cultures rather

than to abject them.

Kristeva substitutes the Lacanian split, fragmentation of the self, for dialogue with the Other. For her, there is only the Oedipal *split* between the Balkan morbid abject and the French imperial symbol. For Todorov, the concept of “primitive” signifies only the relation of power; for Kristeva, it is a regressed stage of European civilization localized in the Balkans. Imperialist, Christian exaltation, not *exotopy*, is what she expresses when she writes, “I am almost prepared to believe in the myth of resurrection when I examine the divided state of my mind and body.”⁵⁹

Žižek may usefully be compared with his former Slovene leftist friends Rastko Močnik and Tomaž Mastnak, particularly with regard to questions of racism and immigration. Močnik’s book, *How much Fascism?* (1993) is focused on European racism and was inspired by such events as the beating of a Bosnian student, closing of the Slovenian borders to Bosnian refugees, and the surge of nationalism and political repression in Slovenia. Žižek’s numerous analyses represent Yugoslavia as a dead system without class divisions—only populations regressed into the joy of nationalism with *jouissance feminine* substituted for the class principle. According to Močnik, however, Yugoslav self-management socialism had, in tandem with nationalism, a democratic discourse worth exploration and political investment that has been lost in Žižek’s homogenizing scheme.⁶⁰ In fact, Žižek’s

intellectual activism--and that of the NSK and the other Lacanians--were carried out within this vibrant climate of political and cultural debate.

While Žižek was discovering Christian ethics after the destruction of the Bosnian Muslim community, Tomaž Mastnak saw in the Bosnian genocide the configuration of a new European Christian identity and regression to the Christian politico-theology of the Muslim as enemy.⁶¹ Both Močnik and Mastnak remain active in Slovene civil society, committed to the progressive critique of power, and, in particular, to exposing government abuses of the human rights of ex-Yugoslav immigrants. Žižek, on the other hand, at the time he was politically active in the 1990’s, enthusiastically supported state institutions and was even willing, in the name of “pragmatic politics” and Leninist discipline, to tacitly condone as a silent executioner human rights abuses by the state while his party was in power.⁶²

Roland Boer perceives Kristeva and Žižek as seeking a means of redemption, a “way to salve the ravages of capitalism.” Žižek has “recovered a militant Leninist Marxism through Pauline Christianity.” And, Boer posits, “Their moves to Christianity function as substitutes for a sidelined Marxism (in Kristeva’s case) or as a complement to recovered Marxism (in Žižek’s case). And for both it is a redemptive program.”⁶³ Kristeva has followed Arendt’s politics of personalized narrative and public aesthetic and Heidegger’s

57. Todorov is author of a text widely viewed as the definitive work on Bakhtin: *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

58. Tzvetan Todorov *The Morals of History*, translated by Alyson Waters, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 4.

59. *Intimate*, (243).

60. Rastko Močnik, *Koliko Fašizma?* (How much of a Fascism?), translated from Slovene to Croat by Srećko Pulig, (Zagreb, Croatia: Bastard Press, 1998), 17.

61. Tomaž Mastnak, *Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western Political Order*, (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

62. Two Slovene students, Jasminka Dedić and Jelka Zorn, supervised by Vlasta Jalušič, a founder of the Peace Institute in Ljubljana, carried out an inquiry into the erasure of citizen’s files by the Slovene government. Their book deals with the social and political consequences of the discrimination. It contains a detailed documentation of the Kafkaesque secret “erasure” by the government of over 18,000 ex-Yugoslav citizens residing in Slovenia at the time when Žižek’s party held power. It also addresses the broader question of “organized innocence” and the complicity of media and public intellectuals in maintaining silence about a policy that was not “a ‘legal’ error arising from incompetence in legal matters, but a deliberately discriminatory political act for which national leaders at the highest level were responsible.” (*The Erased-Organized Innocence and the Politics of Exclusion*, Ljubljana, Peace Institute, 2003, 16); also see Chris Colin, “Slovenia’s Vanishing Act,” *Mother Jones* (January 11, 2007); Jelka Zorn, “Borders, Exclusions and Resistance: The Case of Slovenia,” *International Social Work and the Radical Tradition*, Michael Lavalette and Ian Ferguson (eds.) (Birmingham UK: Venture Press 2007), “Ethnic Citizenship in the Slovenian State,” *Citizenship Studies*, 9.2 (May 2005): 135-152; Brad K. Blitz, “Statelessness and the Social (De)Construction of Citizenship: Political Restructuring and Ethnic Discrimination in Slovenia,” *Journal of Human Rights*, 7 (2006): 453-479; Barbara Bezec, “The Impossible is Possible: An Interview with Aleksandar Todorović, initiator of the movement of the erased and founder of the DIPS (the Association of Erased Residents of Slovenia) and the CIA (the Civil Initiative or Erased Activists),” *Časopis za Kritiko Znanstvo* XXXV.228 (2007).

63. Roland Boer, “The Search for Redemption: Julia Kristeva and Slavoj Žižek on Marx, Psychoanalysis and Religion,” *Philosophy and Society*, 32.1 1 (2007): 174.

radical withdrawal from instrumental rationality into authentic intimacy and therapy. On this path she has abandoned the Hegelian dialectical foundations of Marxism and particularly Hegel's philosophy of the state-- responsible, in her view, for state terror. Žižek, for his part, has returned to everything abandoned by Kristeva: the Hegelian philosophy of the negative, Leninism, and Maoism. Kristeva's intimate democracy based on otherness and tolerance contrasts sharply with Žižek's insistence on culture as state, working class politics, and hate. I must confess to some skepticism regarding Boer's thesis that Kristeva and Žižek in their different ways sublimate lost socialism through psychoanalysis and Christian love. I am inclined to argue, on the basis of the Gramscian emancipatory epistemology of *praxis* that, on the contrary, psychoanalysis and Christian love allow them to be at home and enjoy the contradictions of capitalism.

Revisiting Močnik's version of the hierarchical structure of *balkanism*, I emphasize here—once again—that Kristeva's and Žižek's *ultimate* vertical allegiance is to Cartesian rationality and universal subjectivity. And this ultimate allegiance is also central to a broader contextualization of their "intellectual labor" through elaborating the Gramscian principles they honor in the breach.

Gramsci's "philosophy of *praxis*" challenged not only Cartesian subjectivity as pure *cogito*, but also the Cartesian elevation of abstraction over the senses. According to Gramsci, the subject, acting from various points of resistance beyond political institutions and traditional Marxist revolutionary thinking, transcends imposed divisions and opens strategic opportunities for resistance to hegemony—thus negating Cartesian exclusionary subjectivity. In place of the

self as abstraction, Gramsci offers the intersubjectivity of histories reflected in the internal plurality of a subject who speaks from a specific historical and geographic location as the nodal point of an "inventory of traces."⁶⁴ Gramsci was also able to conceptualize the intimate, historical, and geographical intersections of his own life as a heuristic source of new alliances and resistances. That is, the Gramscian "intersubjectivity of histories" not only casts into relief Kristeva's and Žižek's reliance on the universal scheme of the Lacanian split subject, it also points to Gramsci's origins in the poor, rural South of Italy as influential to his later work with the labor movement in the North of Italy and to his intellectual *praxis* in general. His observation and experience of class identity formation in the extremely diverse cultural and economic regions of early 20th-century Italy led him to awareness of the significance of cultural diversity in productive class conflict, a revision and extension of Marxist economic determinism.⁶⁵ His ability to incorporate his origins in a marginalized, poor region of Italy into his intellectual *praxis* contrasts with Kristeva's and Žižek's psychoanalytically-mediated decoupling of their intellectual production from their own geopolitical origins in the Balkans. Kristeva's "cosmopolitanism" depends upon her abjection of her Bulgarian origins and Žižek's universalism on replacing "consubstantiation" of geographical space with the "empty signifier."

Psychoanalysis is a discourse of power with particular implications in the Balkans, as I have shown. Through their use of psychoanalytic theory, and the language of desire, Kristeva and Žižek implicitly align the subaltern geography of the Balkans with global capitalism, discursively subjugating the region to the European Union--the new superpower--and its cultural universalism. This

process coincides with the European unified market's demand for "rational demographic composition"⁶⁶ which was Gramsci's characterization of highly functional American labor. Demographic functionality and universal subjectivity are two abstractions which stand for, and conflate two things: the interior of the individual and the exterior of the market. Discussing Oedipal eroticism as structural demand by the European single market, J. H. H. Weiler, clarifies the connection between economics and cultural universalism which undergirds Oedipal structure:

Not only have local products come under pressure, even national products have lost their distinctiveness. The very transnationalism of the Community, which earlier on was celebrated as a reinvention of Enlightenment idealism, is just that: universal, rational, transcendent, and wholly modernist.⁶⁷

Weiler's formulation of the Single Market as a synthesis of economics and transcendent rationality affirms Deleuze and Guattari's conception of global capitalism as a unity of nations and national identities structured around Oedipalized desire, the universal structure of the civilized subject. Oedipal structure based on the Law of castration is the very core of capitalism. Writing from his jail cell in 1928 Gramsci had, already, "caught the connection between Fordism and psychoanalysis"⁶⁸:

The truth is that the new type of man demanded by the rationalization of production and work cannot be developed until the sexual instinct has been suitably regulated and until it too has been rationalized.⁶⁹

In other words, rationalization of production requires "intimate revolt" against

64. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York City, NY: Vintage Books, 1979), 25; Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the *Prison Notebooks*, Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (eds.), (New York City, NY: International Publisher, 1971), 324; hereafter cited parenthetically as *Prison*.

65. Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's relevance for the study of race and ethnicity," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* (1986), 10 (2): 5-27.

66. *Prison*, 281.

67. J. H. H. Weiler, "To be European Citizen. Eros and Civilization", in *Nationalism and Internationalism in the Post-Cold War Era*, Kjell Goldmann, Ulf Hannerz, Charles Westin (eds.), (London: Routledge, 2000), 176-77.

68. Eli Zaretsky, "Narcissism, Personal Life and Identity: The Place of the 1960s in the History of Psychoanalysis," *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* 13. (2008): 95.

69. *Prison*, 296-97.

pre-symbolic sexuality and demands that erotics be placed under the sign of the universal Law as the precondition to successful application of Fordist principles to industrial production and development of “a new type of worker.” Gramsci situates psychoanalysis at the very center of the Fordist model:

“Regulation” of sexual instincts, because of the contradictions it creates and the perversions that are attributed to it, seems particularly “unnatural”. Hence the frequency of appeals to “nature” in this area. “Psycho-analytical” literature is also a kind of criticism of the regulation of sexual instincts in a form which often recalls the Enlightenment, as in its creation of a new myth of the “savage” on a sexual basis (including relations between parents and children).⁷⁰

In this brief passage, Gramsci addresses the relation of industrial capitalism to the Oedipal structuration of labor. The productivity of labor, he discerns, has an intimate erotic dimension; unsigned desire obstructs the planned conditions of production. Psychoanalysis, in its dual role of promoting the language of sexual emancipation and regimenting sexuality, resolves contradictions of capitalism by deploying Oedipal structure into labor’s intimate self-identification. In place of Gramsci’s model of social *praxis* as unity of mental and manual labor, Kristeva and Žižek offer a radical split between the two, *assigning to their own intellectual labor the task of managing the desire of “the new type of worker.”*

Kristeva and Žižek have universalized the crisis of global capitalism by deploying the universality of human subjectivity. But, unlike Gramsci, they truly believe that pure capitalism—Kristeva’s Gaullist version or Žižek’s Maoist version—is better than living under conditions of failing modernity. The psychoanalysis of the Balkans is a case in point. When Kristeva calls Bulgaria her “maternal space” to be abjected, or Žižek invokes the “father Thing” to be submitted to the Law, to the single market of the European symbolic,

their intellectual task of universalizing the crisis of the post-Communist Balkans resolves into *self-orientalization*. Kristeva’s and Žižek’s geographic asceticism subjugates the Balkans to the master signifier of Oedipal orthodoxy erasing the heterogeneity of histories and people and with it the erotics of resistance.

70. *Prison*, 294-95.

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