

PERFORMING NATION ON THE MOVE: TRAVELS OF THE SRPSKO AKADEMSKO PJEVAČKO DRUŠTVO BALKAN (SERBIAN ACADEMIC CHORAL SOCIETY 'BALKAN') FROM ZAGREB, 1904–1914*

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Abstract: *In this paper I will examine the early activities of the Srpsko akademsko pjevačko društvo Balkan (Serbian Academic Choral Society 'Balkan'), from its foundation in 1904 to the outbreak of World War I, in the light of issues of nation and 'homeland'. As a Serbian music society active in the Croatian capital, the Choral Society Balkan was in the midst of contested issues of national identities and territories, shaped by the virulent political stage in which interests of the Dual Monarchy, Hungarian kingdom, Croatian administration, and Serbian community collided. I will show how the activities of the Choral Society reflected the new policy adopted by the leading Serbian party in Croatia, the Srpska samostalna stranka (Serbian Independent Party), including their modernist, political understanding of a nation. From the aspects of mobility and space representations, I will argue that the Choral Society Balkan's tours were particularly important, given their extent and intensity, in producing the sense of shared 'homeland' and national collective in the Serbian community in Croatia under Austria-Hungary. I will discuss the experience of travel from the vantage point of the Choral Society's members, as well as the representations of their travels, the reports and travelogues published in contemporary journals. With this discussion I will attempt to approach the issues of nation and 'homeland' as performative assemblages dependant on creating communities of shared affective ecologies.*

With this paper I wish to engage in what could be termed a 'praxeological turn' in nationality studies.¹ Understanding nation not as an ideology, or as a set of ideas which people accept on the level of understanding, but as an assemblage of affective practices which shape humans bodies and everyday experiences, I will point to mobility as a key to understanding how this assemblage operates. Although seemingly intangible, mobility is one of the central human activities

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1 Cf. Kristin Surak: "Nation-work: A praxeology of making and maintaining nations", in: *European Journal of Sociology* 53 (2012) 2, pp. 171–204.

and its particularities often shape the given society, determining its dynamics and hybridism. In investigating the link between mobility and nationalism, I specifically want to bring forward two issues: affectivity and territoriality. The experience of mobility, paired with novel encounters and responses to landscapes, is regularly accompanied with the state of the heightened affect. This increased intensity gives mobility pronounced social significance as the locus of the inscription of the meaning compared to activities we could label as sedentary. As a perpetual line of encounters, mobility opens crevices, moments in which we are susceptible to inscribing meaning to social practices. In this sense, mobility is important in building the nation as the “imagined community”,² as it implies encounters with people one recognizes as its fellow nationals, building affective links between them. Mobility is also always territorial, not only in the sense that it happens in space, but also in the sense that it reflects the spatial order of power and is paired by one’s interpretation of the space. Issues of territory and ‘homeland’ are among the core issues of a nation, the defining items in its symbolic arsenal and the basis on which a nation formulates its demand of sovereignty. Mobility singles out as a crucial mechanism in embodying the idea of a nation and of representing a certain space as a nation’s ‘homeland’. It is also the realm through which the spaces are contested, and rival mobilities and nations are superimposed over the same territories. Ultimately, thinking about nations through the lens of mobilities leads us to a concept of a nation which is also more dynamic, hybrid, and more dependent on arbitrary events, recurring rituals and affective practices.

The case study for my paper is the activity of the Serbian Academic Choral Society *Balkan*, from its foundation in 1904 to the outbreak of World War I.³ The Choral Society *Balkan* is exceptional concerning the range of its mobility – the frequency and scope of its touring – as well by its position in midst of actual contested

2 Cf. Benedict Anderson: *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London, New York: Verso, 1991.

3 According to the initial report, the official name of the society was Akademsko pjevačko-tamburaški klub *Balkan* (Academic Choral and Tambura Club ‘Balkan’; cf. *Novi Srbobran*, 14 October 1904). However, this name was disused in favour of Srpska akademska pjevačko-tamburaška družina *Balkan*, Srpsko akademsko pjevačko društvo *Balkan* (most common), or simply *Balkan*. The historical information about the the Choral Society *Balkan* is given according to archival sources collected in a folder Dokumenta Pjevačkog društva *Balkan* 1904–1914 (Archive of the Institute of Musicology of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, collection Legacy of Svetolik Pašćan–Kojanov, SPK 129). Additionally to the contemporary journals *Novi Srbobran* and *Srbobran*, the data about the Choral Society are given according to Čedomir Višnjjić: *Srbobran 1901–1914. Srpsko kolo 1903–1914*. Beograd: Službeni glasnik and Zagreb: Srpsko kulturno društvo “Prosvjeta”, 2013. *Srbobran* and *Novi Srbobran* ran a double-date system policy, displaying both the dates in the Gregorian and in the Julian calendar, used by the Serbian Orthodox Church; for sake of brevity, I cite only the primary date according to the Gregorian calendar.

mobilities, as a Serbian music society with its seat in the capital of a Croatian polity in Austria-Hungary. In analysing how the ideas of a nation and ‘homeland’ were embodied through mobilities produced by the Choral Society *Balkan* I will refer to three aspects of mobility, defined by Tim Cresswell: “mobility as a brute fact”, “representations of mobility” and mobility as practiced, experienced, embodied.⁴ I will investigate mobilities produced by the Society *Balkan* from two different vantage points: the experience of the very members of the choirs, as their “brute” and “embodied” mobility, and the “representations of mobility” in reports and travelogues on the Society’s tours. I will examine how the ideas of nation and ‘homeland’ are being superimposed and produced in this tridimensional dialectical process.

THE CHORAL SOCIETY AND THE SERBIAN INDEPENDENT PARTY: THE ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUAL ELITE IN FORGING THE NATION

Founded in Zagreb in 1904 as the Akademsko pjevačko-tamburaški klub *Balkan* (Academic Choral and Tambura Club ‘Balkan’), the society was from its inception embroiled in a volatile political stage. Following Croatian–Hungarian Settlement signed in 1868, only a year after Austro-Hungarian Compromise which established the Dual Monarchy, the position of the Serbian nation in the newly formed Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia was highly contested, not least because of the dissolution of the Military Frontier which started in 1869 and ended in 1882. At the beginning of the twentieth century, two main Serbian political parties had radically different points concerning the new institutional framework: while the Radikalna stranka (Radical Party), led by Jaša Tomić, refused to accept the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia and required the territories which had formed the part of the Military Frontier to be recognised as Serbian, the Srpska samostalna stranka (Serbian Independent Party), led by Bogdan Medaković and Svetozar Pribičević, not only saw the opportunity to secure rights for the Serbian community through Croatian institutions, but was also inclined to mollify the differences between the two nations.⁵ The politics of the latter party was fully embedded in the Croatian-Serbian Coalition, signed in 1905, two years after the

4 Tim Cresswell: *On the move: Mobility in the modern Western world*. New York, London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 3–4. These “relational moments”, as Cresswell calls them, correspond to Henri Lefebvre’s tridimensional spatial dialectics of “spatial practice” (“perceived space”), “representations of space” (“conceived space”) and “lived space” (“representational space”); cf. Henri Lefebvre: *The production of space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.

5 Ranka Gašić: “Novi kurs’ u Srpskoj samostalnoj stranci 1903–1914. Promena paradigme nacionalne politike”, in: *Serbo-Croat relations in the 20th century. History and perspectives*, ed. Darko Gavrilović. Salzburg: Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation, Novi Sad: Centar za istoriju, demokratiju i pomirenje, Grafo marketing, 2008, pp. 14–16.

protest against Hungarisation policies of Károly Khuen-Héderváry and the ban of the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia. The coalition, which dominated the Croatian parliament after 1906, reflected the contradictions and contestation between Serbian and Croatian nations, which were being imposed over the same space. For example, the coalition agreement elided the term “Croatian nation” throughout, but referred instead to “our people of the Croatian and Serbian name”.⁶ However, the enthusiasm for creating a common political nation dwindled in the course and aftermath of the Velezdajnički proces (High treason process) in 1909, where fifty-three members of the Serbian Independent Party were indicted for charges of conspiring with the Kingdom of Serbia in agitating for the decomposition of Austria-Hungary and establishing a new South Slav state.⁷

In a decade preceding World War I the Serbian Independent Party acted as the main political representative of the Serbian nation in Croatia. Its political attitudes were mostly shaped by Svetozar Pribićević and his colleagues who studied in Prague where their understanding of nation and the aims of political action were influenced by the modernist views of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.⁸ Pribićević and his generation of Serbian politicians active in Croatia strongly clung to the concept of the nation as their main political instrument and framework of political action, and they were also very critical both of political concepts that excluded national perspective as dominant (such as emerging social democracy), and of their compatriots who, in their opinion were not doing enough for the national cause. However, unlike the previous generation of Serbian politicians, they did not perceive nation as a phenomenon existing per se and based exclusively on ethnicity and ancestral religion. Recognising the language as the main denominator of the nation, they also solicited for establishing national schools and free usage of national symbols, and they requested wider rights for the Serbian Orthodox Church. They believed in the importance of a national elite who would engage in active agitation, imparting ideas about the national culture from the top to bottom, proactively shaping the national identity, fostering and nurturing the “national conscience”. Their main hope lay in the new generation of educated elite that would adopt a realistic course of national action, practising their ideas in everyday life.⁹

6 Jure Krišto: “Croatian political turmoils in the dusk of Austro-Hungarian monarchy”, in: *Review of Croatian History* 1 (2005) 1, p. 78.

7 Gašić: “‘Novi kurs’ u Srpskoj samostalnoj stranci”, pp. 19–21.

8 Ranka Gašić: “Moderno u shvatanjima Srpske samostalne stranke 1903–1914. godine”, in: *Dijalog povjesničara – istoričara* 3, Pečuj, 12.–14. maja 2000, eds. Hans-Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac. Zagreb: Friedrich Naumann, 2001, p. 172.

9 Ibidem.

From its foundation, the Choral Society *Balkan* was linked to the ideology of the Serbian Independent Party.¹⁰ Its activities were minutely followed and approved of as “požrtvovana agitacija akademičara i drugova naših Balkanaca” (‘devoted agitation of academicians and our friends from the *Balkan*’)¹¹ in the pages of the Party’s journal, *Srbobran* (*Novi Srbobran* until 1906), which was its primary rostrum and whose chief editor at the time was Pribičević.¹² As a relatively small and mainly student organisation – even the posts that would have been normally held by professional musician were held by students – the Society *Balkan* embodied the idea of the new generation of intellectuals involved in national agitation. The choir membership was exclusively male and it was relatively small, usually performing with twenty to thirty members, both on tours and in Zagreb. The first line of rhetoric of the Society was in accordance with the Croatian-Serbian coalition agreement. Thus, although the Choral Society *Balkan* was unequivocally a Serbian music society, unlike the choral ensembles established in the nineteenth century, it did not carry any explicit national designation in its name. The verses of the the Choral Society’s hymn, written by Stevan Bešević, published in 1905 and later set to music by Josif Marinković, shared the same rhetoric: although the poet endeavoured to portray the future unification of Serbian lands, he did so in a highly metaphorical fashion, rendering his verses seemingly innocuous (“Kad zatutnje opet doline Balkana [...] Nek slobode pesma jekne sa svih strana”).¹³

The Choral Society *Balkan*’s repertoire politics were similarly oriented towards creating an image of a shared culture and creativity with the congenial south Slav “tribes”; as noticed by their contemporaries, when performing in small communities, the Society *Balkan* gave a dominantly Serbian repertoire, while when

10 They even encountered animosity by rival Serbian political movements in Austria-Hungary: the Radical party organised a boycott of their concert in Veliki Bečkerek on December 18, 1907, and the journal *Zastava* published an adverse report stating that their concert in Belgrade in August 1911 was a fiasco.

11 *Novi Srbobran*, 31 October 1905.

12 The first and only time the Choral Society *Balkan* got a scathing review in *Srbobran* was on the occasion of its inaugural concert, December 7, 1904, when the reporter expressed his strong disapproval with the favourable treatment given to Josip Šilović, university rector and purportedly an advocate of Hungarisation (*Novi Srbobran*, 9 December 1904). Petar Muždeka, the Society’s choirmaster, later described this as “a first stroke for the young society” (cf. Petar Muždeka, “Podaci o istoriji Srpskog akademskog pevačkog društva ‘Balkan’”, Archive of Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, SPK 129). For more information about the journal, its editorial policy, and its relation to the Serbian independent party cf. Ranka Gašić: *‘Novi kurs’ Srba u Hrvatskoj. Srbobran 1903–1914*. Zagreb: Srpsko kulturno društvo “Prosvjeta”, 2001.

13 ‘When the valleys of the Balkans thunder again [...] Let the song of the freedom resound from all sides’ *Novi Srbobran*, 30 November 1905.

appearing in larger cultural centres they tended to include pieces by Croatian and Slovenian composers as well.¹⁴ Importantly, when performing in Belgrade in 1910 at the competition organised to commemorate the jubilee of the Pevačko društvo *Stanković* (Choral Society ‘Stankovic’), they sang a composition by young Croatian composer (Stanislav?) Stražnicki, *Noć na Uni* (‘Night on the river Una’).¹⁵ The Choral Society *Balkan* also cooperated with other Croatian societies in Zagreb, such as Akademsko pevačko društvo *Mladost* (Academic Choral Society ‘Mladost’), and Hrvatsko pevačko društvo *Kolo* (Croatian Choral Society ‘Kolo’, in whose hall they gave several concerts, including the inaugural one), and they also participated in the National holiday celebration in 1911.

The activities of the Society *Balkan* reflected the realistic course of national action preferred by the Serbian independent party, which supported making small everyday efforts in building the “national conscience” and homogenizing the nation around shared cultural heritage through educational and cultural institutions. The Choral Society *Balkan*’s main line of action was travelling, visiting as many Serbian communities as possible, both in Austria-Hungary and abroad, and transgressing the class boundaries in order to superimpose the national identity. As emphasised, “to znači da je *Balkan* jedno čisto demokratsko društvo koje će tek onda odgovarati svojoj plemenitoj zadaći, ako bude što češće zalazio u niže slojeve srpskog naroda i među njima širilo srpsku nacionalnu svijest i naobrazbu”.¹⁶ Serving the practical purposes, the Society *Balkan* collected funds for the Srpsko akademsko potporno društvo (Serbian Academic Supportive Society) in Zagreb, which helped young Serbian students in their exigencies, and also supported local initiatives, collecting funds to erect a monument to Serbian Romantic poet Jovan Jovanović Zmaj while on their tour in 1906, for the Srpsko prosvjetno i kulturno društvo *Prosvjeta* (Serbian Educational and Cultural Society ‘Prosvjeta’) on their tour in Bosnia, and for the Society *Srpska zora* (‘Serbian dawn’) in Dalmatia.¹⁷

14 Cf. *Novi Srbobran*, 30 May 1906.

15 In order to understand how unusual this was, let it suffice to say that in a competition organised in Sombor in 1914, where the *Balkan* also participated, the rules were explicit that the composition a society chooses to perform had to be an “original Serbian song”. Srđan Atanasovski: “Savez srpskih pevačkih društava”, in: *Mokranjac* 9 (2007) 9, pp. 42–44.

16 ‘it means that the *Balkan* is a purely democratic society which will answer its noble task only by delving into the lower layers of the Serbian people and among them spreading Serbian national conscience and education’, *Srbobran*, 12 September 1907.

17 For the activities of the Society *Srpska zora* cf. Saša Nedeljković: “Srpska društva u Dubrovniku na početku 20. veka”, in: *Zbornik Matice srpske za društvene nauke* 58 (2007) 122, pp. 166–170.

EXPERIENCING THE SERBIAN 'HOMELAND':
BALKAN CHORAL SOCIETY ON THE TOUR

During the long nineteenth century networking was crucial in the culture of Serbian choral societies in the Habsburg Monarchy. Choral societies, which were themselves often at least officially linked to the Serbian Orthodox Church, depended on mutual exchange of music materials, but also visited each other, especially for the occasions of various celebrations, feast days and jubilees.¹⁸ However, even by the standards of Serbian choral societies, the travel routs of the Society *Balkan* are close to astonishing. From the very onset of its activities, the Society visited other choral societies, participated in competitions and jubilee celebrations, and finally, organised extensive tours which covered broad areas of the Austria-Hungary, as well as the Kingdom of Serbia and Principality of Montenegro. In its first year, the Choral Society *Balkan* already participated in the celebration of the Srpsko pjevačko društvo *Jedinstvo* (Serbian Choral Society 'Jedinstvo') in Banjaluka, and in 1906 they conducted an extensive tour visiting Novi Sad, Belgrade, and cities in Banat. Twice they visited Lika, part of the former Military Frontier in Croatia which was pronouncedly underdeveloped, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose status was disputed under Austro-Hungarian occupation, reaching even to cities in Dalmatia and Montenegro. The Society repeatedly visited Serbian communities in southern Hungary, and in the year preceding Balkan War I toured throughout the Kingdom of Serbia, including towns in the southern part of the Kingdom which were won from Ottomans in 1878. The number of the members that travelled was usually between twenty and thirty, which was also a standard number for performances in Zagreb, but it could range from as few as eleven, as in the first tour in Lika, up to forty, as for the competition in Sombor in 1914. The exigencies of these tours were diverse; in most of the tours conducted in Austria-Hungary they travelled by rail. Travels in Lika demanded carriage, as well as extensive travel in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia would also require carriage, whereas the arrival in Belgrade was regularly by boat from the river port in Pančevo.¹⁹ As advertised

18 Cf. Tatjana Marković: *Transfiguracije srpskog romantizma: muzika u kontekstu studija kulture*. Beograd: Univerzitet umetnosti u Beogradu, 2005, pp.134–135.

19 Extensive railway building in Bosnia started with the Austro-Hungarian occupation, but, for example, the route from Brčko to Bijeljina required a carriage. Hungary had the sixth most extensive railway network in Europe at the time, although many lines were scattered and disconnected. Serbia started important engineering projects after 1903, which might have added to the perception of the Society *Balkan* members in 1911 that the area was being rapidly industrialised. Ivan T. Berend: *History derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the long nineteenth century*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003, p. 152, and S. H. Beaver: "Railways in the Balkan Peninsula", in: *The Geographical Journal* 97 (1941) 5, pp. 282, 286.

in *Novi Srbobran*, the first trip to Karlovac in 1905 was carried out by train, and the public from Zagreb and fellow students were invited to apply to travel jointly with the choir members on a discounted group ticket; that initiative met a great interest, with a large number of academic youth expressing a wish to travel with the Society *Balkan*.²⁰

The group of the Choral Society *Balkan* members on the tour were the locus of intense affective practice which invested in their activities the meanings of the national enterprise. Through their tours they were twofold territorialised, as a part of specific national community, and as a group connected to a certain area as their ‘homeland’. The important aspect of the Society’s tours was always the sense of community with the local population, with whom they supposedly shared common national belonging and cultural values. This sense of communion was the main vehicle for the transmission of affects²¹ and it was regularly bodily expressed. As a reporter described, they were greeted with “Raskriljenih ruku – kao brat rođenog brata, koga je mlijeko iste Srpkinje majke othranilo, a sila prilika iz bratskog zagrljaja do tog časa otrgla – tako su primili Lapčani ‘Balkance’”.²² During their stay in a particular place they were most often accommodated in the private houses of their hosts, with whom they had joint meals, picnics, and spent days in revelry with music and celebrations, especially after the official concert performance was over. Particularly important for the sense of community were welcome and goodbye greetings, which were usually performed in larger groups with the local citizens. For example, in Mostar in 1907 they were reportedly greeted by one thousand people on the railway station cheering as their train was arriving, and when leaving Belgrade in the previous year “na Dunavskoj stanici izašao je svijet, a osobito mnogo kolega i kolegica da svoje goste isprate, već je lađa plovila u velikoj daljini, a s jedne i s druge strane lepršale maramice i čula se pjesma ‘jel vam žao što se rastajemo’”.²³ Music was often important in creating this sensual community, both as a part of revelry and in the encounters, and reports such as following are especially common from the tours in Lika:

Putem sretamo seljake i seljanke. Idu s rada umorni i znojni. Misliš: tima sigurno ne pada pjesma ni na pamet, ali na naše veliko čudo oni se osvrću

20 *Novi Srbobran*, 31 October 1905.

21 For this concept cf. Teresa Brennan: *The transmission of affect*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2004.

22 ‘open arms – as brother [would greet] his own brother, who was nurtured by the milk of the same Serbian mother, and was until then wrested away by the circumstances’. *Srbobran*, 30 August 1907.

23 ‘the crowd came to the Danube Station, in particular a lot of colleagues to say goodbye to their guests, and the ship had already sailed a great distance when from the both sides the handkerchiefs were waved and one could hear the song “do you feel sorry that we part?”’, *Novi Srbobran*, 9 June 1906.

na nas i vele, 'eto to su ti, što su došli da pjevaju'. Pa onda kao na kakav pozdrav počinju i oni pjesmu – običnu sa širokim i rastegnutim tonovima, koji su puni duše i srca. U tom času osjetismo, da se naša mlada srca stopiše u jedno, ogromno i veliko narodno srce, osjetismo, da smo i mi kao i naša kao njihova pjesma nikli na jednom istom parčetu zemlje, koju smo krvlju, suzama i znojem oblili. I odjednom kao da nestade sve razlike između tih naših crnih, uskih i utegnutih salonskih haljina i te njihove grube i široke bijele rubine.²⁴

As one can note, music was not only part of the Society's performances; it provided the soundtrack and shaped the whole experience of the landscape, inscribing meaning in the perceived space. The experience of music was paired with the experience of the space, the "representations of space", as conceived in music embedded in "perceived space". Patriotic songs were not only performed on the formal stage, they were sung on various occasions, often accompanying the physical experience of the "brute mobility", becoming the lens through which the travellers interpreted the territories that surrounded them:

U ponedjeljak krenulo je društvo 'Balkan' iz Pančeva i već oko 3 i po poslije podne vidjelo se na pristaništu u Beogradu mnoštvo svijeta, koje je goste željno očekivalo. Otpočеше pozdravi a 'Balkan' zagrmi 'Oj Srbijo mila mati', tek što su glasovi pjesme zamukli, udari muzika Kraljeve Garde lijepu pesmu dočeka. [...] S muzikom krenula je povorka, u kojoj je bilo najmanje trideset studentica u grad, gdje su gosti razmešteni u hotelu kod 'Srpskog Kralja'.²⁵

24 'On the road we have met peasants and peasant women. They return from work tired and sweaty. You're thinking they would certainly not think about song, but to our great wonder they look back at us and say, "that's them, they've come to sing". And then, as a kind of greeting, they too begin the song – an ordinary one with wide and stretched tones that are full of heart and soul. At this point we felt that our young hearts blended into one huge and big national heart; we felt that we, like our song and like their song have sprung up from the same piece of land, which we have trenched with blood, tears and sweat. And suddenly it is as if all the differences disappeared between those black, slender and tight salon dresses of ours and their rough and wide white clothing'. *Srbobran*, 25 August 1910.

25 'On Monday the Society *Balkan* embarked from Pančevo and already at about half past three in the afternoon one could see a large crowd on the pier in Belgrade eagerly awaiting the guests. Then the compliments started and *Balkan* howled "Oj Srbijo mila mati" ['Serbia, dear mother', a patriotic choir composition by Vojtěch Šístek], and just as the voices of the song had silenced, the music of the [military band] *Kraljeva Garda* started a beautiful welcoming song. [...] Simultaneously with the music the procession, in which there were at least thirty students, started into the city, where the guests were stationed at the hotel *Srpski kralj*'. *Novi Srbobran*, 2 June 1906.

The border was virtually non-existent between the formal repertory, performed on the stage, and the music produced as the soundtrack, the landscape glossing. Importantly, the repertory of the Society often encompassed patriotic songs which bespoke the metaphorical images of future unification of the Serbian ‘homeland’ (such as in the abovementioned hymn of the Society) or the omnipresent motif of ‘resurrection’, placing them in the specific landscapes or invoking spatial representation, both in verses and in music. Characteristic examples of such choir works include two pieces by Josif Marinković, one of the most celebrated Serbian composers of the time: *Narodni zbor* (‘National gathering’, 1876–1901) and *Junački poklič* (‘Hero’s cry’, 1907). As advertised in *Srbobran* in 1907, on the eve of the Society’s tour through Bosnia and Dalmatia, *Junački poklič*, written on Jovan Jovanović Zmaj’s verses, was a “new Serbian composition” for a men’s choir by Marinković, who had sent the manuscript to the Choral Society *Balkan* with a wish that the Society perform the song during their tour in Bosnia, which was particularly politically charged.²⁶ The composer unequivocally engages in spatial metaphors, using a march-like tempo and highly accentuated phrases; the culmination of this image is achieved with *forte ben marcato* unison in choir, used to accompany the verse “Junak do junaka gazi polje ravno” (‘Hero by hero treads the plain field’, cf. ex. 1).²⁷ Incessantly performing such repertory on their tours, the singer-travellers’ experience of the space was, thus, never solely “brute” and unmediated, but imbued with the national imagery and sense of community. The affective economies of the singer-travellers transformed the “perceived space” into the practiced, experienced space of ‘homeland’, the virtual space which was more vivid and “lived” than the real space.

26 The status of occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina was under constant dispute, and only a year later it was annexed by the Monarchy, setting off the troublesome Annexation crisis. Importantly, the Society had to wait until the last moment to be allowed to hold concerts and some of the patriotic songs on the repertoire were censored. Concerning Marinković’s composition *Junački poklič*, this information (*Srbobran*, 6 April 1907) might change the belief that it was performed for the first time in Belgrade by the Akademsko pevačko društvo *Obilić* (Academic Choral Society ‘Obilić’) in 1910, and that it was written shortly before that performance. Cf. Vlastimir Peričić: “Redaktorski komentari”, in: Josif Marinković, *Horovi*, ed. Vlastimir Peričić, Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 2003, p. 484.

27 Cf. Vlastimir Peričić: *Josif Marinković: Život i dela*. Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1967, p. 93. The verse carries specific, albeit tacit geographical association, as in folk epics “ravno” was a constant epithet connected with the Kosovo plain. For the depiction of movement in Marinković’s *Narodni zbor* cf. Srđan Atanasovski: “Savez srpskih pevačkih društava u Somboru”.

f a tempo, ben marcato

Ју - нак до ју - на - ка га - зи по - ље рав - но, мај - ка, де - ца
 Ју - нак до ју - на - ка га - зи по - ље рав - но, мај - ка,
 Ју - нак до ју - на - ка га - зи по - ље рав - но, мај - ка,
 Ју - нак до ју - на - ка га - зи по - ље рав - но, мај - ка,

Ex. 1. Josif Marinković: *Junački poklič*, b. 24–28, in: Josif Marinković: *Horovi*, ed. Vlastimir Peričić. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 2003, p. 24.

THE SPACE OF THE NATION AND REPRESENTATIONS OF MOBILITY: TRAVELOGUES AND REPORTS IN *SRBOBRAN*

One would say that while the experience of the lived space of ‘homeland’ was immediate in the case of choir members, the readership of the journal *Srbobran* could only get the mediated literal picture, a news report, at best information. However, we have already seen how the brute experience of the travellers was mediated by cultural products, their performances and social encounters. The act of reading travelogues and reports of their tours was also a social, affective, and, I would argue, *spatial* event. The difference between these two is not so much of a kind but of intensity: the reader lacks the bodily exposure to mobility which could generate an elevated affective state, but his experience of the text also produces affects, moves his body and shifts his understanding. It is also an embodied practice, as a reader peruses his body in site of memory in order to understand what has been written. In other words, the text exerts agency on its own, shaping the affective ecology of the reader. Finally, recognizing text as a spatial event is equal to recognizing it a social event: reader and writer share “a moment of text-based spatial interaction, a geographical event” and the social prerequisites of this encounter are at the same time unavoidably spatial.²⁸

28 Sheila Hones: “Text as it happens: Literary geography”, in: *Geography Compass* 2 (2008) 5, p. 1301. Cf. Angharad Saunders: “The spatial event of writing: John Galsworthy and the creation of Fraternity”, in: *Cultural Geographies* 20 (2013) 3, p. 286.

We can argue that these texts were not only a “representation of mobility”, they were conditioned by mobility, presenting reports and depictions of travels. They stand as an unstable, pronouncedly open text compared to pieces of canonical literature. What we have at hand is a series of reports and miniature travelogues, often published in sequels, appearing in the journal *Srbobran*. The interaction between the two genres of report and travelogue is important as it emphasizes the immediacy of the event of travelling: the news-like report supposedly written by a journalist usually gives the instant information and is afterwards followed by a travelogue written by one of the travellers, who usually stays anonymous.²⁹ This strategy pairs the sense of veracity, immediacy, even propinquity to the event itself, with the “aura of exceptionality” contained in the discourse of the traveller, as the one who has experienced the space through the purportedly immediate experience.³⁰ The texts are explicit in imparting the message that the reader actually belongs to the same community as the protagonists, which is delineated by the national and ethnic criterion, as “vrijedni Srbi” (‘diligent Serbs’)³¹ or “rodoljubivi Srbi” (‘patriotic Serbs’)³² who meet each other with “bratska susretljivost” (‘brotherly kindness’).³³ This community is then portrayed as superior to their fellow citizens and other nations, inasmuch as their “beauty and strength” is “unusually striking”, and “neobično upada u oči ljepota i snaga tog svijeta, rijetko je naći nešto kržljivo i slabo, nego sve kao divovi, ženske još ljepotom daleko prevazilaze muške”.³⁴ Special care is given to portraying this community as a community of shared affective experiences, especially when linked to the musical experience. In a fragment from a travelogue to Lika in 1907, one author spoke about the “suze koje su se caklile na očima vrljih Plaščana, kad je poznati Risto svojim krasnim glasom zapjevao *Avaj Bosno sirotice kleta*” (‘tears that glistened in the eyes of the virtuous people from Plaški, when the famous Risto with his beautiful voice sang the song ‘Alas, Bosnia, cursed orphan’), construing their reaction as “an expression of Serbian feelings” found in abundance.³⁵

29 Publishing such travelogues of choir society tours was not uncommon. Exceptionally, two travelogues of the Beogradsko pevačko društvo (Belgrade Choral Society) were published in Belgrade as separate books. Cf. Spira Kalik: *Iz Beograda u Solun i Skoplje s Beogradskim pevačkim društvom: putničke beleške*. Beograd: P. K. Tanasković, 1894; Milivoje L. Komarčić: *Na Adriju – sa Beogradskim pevačkim društvom kroz Bosnu, Hercegovinu, Crnu Goru i Dalmatinsko primorje: putničke beleške*. Beograd: S. Horovic, 1911.

30 Cf. Dean Duda: *Kultura putovanja. Uvod u književnu iterologiju*. Zagreb: Ljevak, 2012, pp. 133–135.

31 *Novi Srbobran*, 24 July 1905.

32 *Novi Srbobran*, 29 November 1904.

33 *Novi Srbobran*, 31 October 1905.

34 ‘it is rare to find something stunted and weak; they are nothing but giants, and women are even far beyond with their beauty than men’, from a trip to Kikinda, *Novi Srbobran*, 9 June 1906.

35 *Srbobran*, 10 September 1907.

Travelogues are also paradigmatic as they are written to provoke affects in their readers through their literary qualities, descriptions of mobility and landscape depictions. The descriptions are detailed, including weather conditions, descriptions of train on the move, but they are also immediately paired with the national and patriotic feelings, such as in an image where “muko stenjanje lokomotive i klopot željezničkih kila gubi sve u zvucima pjesme srpske”.³⁶ I will specifically point out two vivid travelogue images, one from the trip to Belgrade in 1908, and the second from the trip to Lika in 1910. They both refer to direct interaction with the landscape, which is in the first example emphasised by the mobility of the gazer, and in the second through his vivid poetic imagination. Landscape (Belgrade and the Plitvice Lakes) is unequivocally construed as national/Serbian and invokes an emotional response in the protagonists. Moreover, the poetic image of the landscape in both cases results in physical motion which aims to unite disassociated ‘Serbian lands’: in the first example it is the real action of the protagonists, who in their patriotic fervour cross the border notwithstanding administrative obstacles, and in the second it is the phantasmal portrait of a dormant hero who will break through the mountains and resurrect Serbian statehood (which was a common topos in contemporary patriotic literature):

Plovismo plavkastim Dunavom. Vjetar popirkuje, a sa vedrog neba rasplinuše se sunčane zrake po njegovoj površini. U sjeni njegovoj pojavi se najednom malo nepotpuna slika Beograda. Grudi bukne, srce poigrava, osjećaji buje. Teško ga je mimoići. ‘Priateljska’ policija austro-ugarska nastoji obuzdati i ugušiti te ‘veleizdajničke’ osjećaje. Nije nam u Pančevu nikako htjela dati certifikata za prelaz, ali ipak nije uspjela. Približismo se beogradskom pristaništu austrijskih lađa kad se u isti mah, čisto spontano zaori – ‘Oj, Srbijo, mila mati!’ Lađa stade, a ‘Balkanci’ se za čas nađoše na tlu mile majke. Jednaki osjećaji ne traže legitimacije.³⁷

Jezera! O, jezera, Vi pitome gorske oči, što ste ispresjecane s tom svilenom i mekom mrežom bjelih slapova, što poput najboljih čipaka obrubljuju vaše obale. Zaronio sam pogledom u vaše azurne dubine i evo slušam, dušom

36 ‘the heavy groaning of the locomotives and the clatter of railroad weights is lost in the sounds of Serbian song [performed by the choir while on the train]’. *Srbobran*, 22 January 1908.

37 ‘We sailed the bluish Danube. Wind breezes, and from the bright sky the sun’s rays dissipated onto its surface. Suddenly in its shadow appeared a somewhat broken image of Belgrade. Chests bursting, hearts thumping, feelings teeming. It is difficult to bypass. “Friendly” Austro-Hungarian police are trying to restrain and suppress these “high-treason” feelings. They did not want to give us the pass certificates at any costs, but they didn’t succeed. We came close to the Belgrade quay for Austrian ships when, at the same time, [the song] bluntly and spontaneously burst out – “Oh, Serbia, dear mother!” The ship stopped, and the members of the ‘Balkan’ were at the same time on the soil of the dear mother. Congenial feelings do not ask for certificates’. *Srbobran*, 12 February 1908.

slušam pjesme, jezerkinja vila. A bila je to pjesma o začaranom junaku, što tu već vjekovima u velebnom kršu počiva i sniva o – vaskrsenju. I zaista, kad će se stresti taj krš, kad će se taj junak probuditi i kad će se ta elegična balada preliti u veličanstvenu himnu, Himnu Vaskrsenja?!³⁸

Besides creating highly poetic images, both out of reality and imagination, the authors of the travelogues were particularly interested to document the places they had visited as Serbian, or as belonging to the Serbian nation, based on facts they could provide. This was highly important as most of the places that the Society *Balkan* visited, especially in Austria-Hungary, were contested and several national communities vied for supremacy. For example, when reporting from Pančevo, the author noted that Serbs are not only “well off”, but that they had seen that in the city “practically everything is in Serbian hands”.³⁹ Often the Society members with their visit themselves map the place as Serbian, supported by the locals: on the road when visiting Bijeljina in 1907 they were given a Serbian flag with which they entered the city, coming to the building of the Serbian school similarly greeted with flags.⁴⁰ This network of reports and travelogues thus connected with the readership as a part of the same national community, stirring the sense of pride; it spoke of the journey as a matter of documented facts, mapping the routes of the Society’s travel through lands perceived as Serbian and describing the kindred local communities, but it also spoke with poetic and affectively charged rhetoric. This text was strongly spatially situated, producing through its connection with the readership the image of Serbian ‘homeland’ on the brink of its ‘resurrection’.⁴¹

In the preceding pages I have attempted to show how nationalism works not as an ideology, a set of ideas which can be accepted or rejected, but as an embodied practice which permeates one’s affective ecology through the fissures of encounters, set in motion through incessant mobility, whether “brute” or “represented”. Notions of nationalism and ‘homeland’ appear not as givens but

38 ‘Lakes! Oh, lakes, you tame mountain eyes, who are intersected with the silky soft net of white cascades, which as the most beautiful lace circumvent your coasts. I plunged with my gaze into your azure depths and now I listen, with my soul I listen to the songs of lake fairies. And it was a song about an enchanted hero, who has for centuries rested in the ravishing karst and dreamt of resurrection. Indeed, when will this rubble come off, when will the hero wake up and when will this elegiac ballad pour into a magnificent hymn, Hymn of the Resurrection?!’, *Srbobran*, 26 August 1910.

39 *Novi Srbobran*, 30 May 1906.

40 *Srbobran*, 19 June 1907.

41 For storytelling as spatial practice cf. Michel de Certeau: *The practice of everyday life*, trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 115–130.

as constantly fluid assemblages through which we interpret the lived reality. Implicitly, what I also want to argue against is the idea of nationalism as a monolithic and mass movement. Construing nationalism as constantly shifting, dependent on one's bodily encounters also means decentring social agency and recognizing the importance of each and every affective practice. Nationalism as an assemblage has been put in motion through the intensities of encounters and not through the sheer number of participants; its strength lies in performativity rather than in cognizance, in agency 'on the move', through which the communities of affective ecologies are engendered.

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APPENDIX:

LIST OF PERFORMANCES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES OF
THE CHORAL SOCIETY 'BALKAN' FROM ZAGREB, 1904–1914

1904

- Founded on October 13 (president Milan G. Đuričić, head choirmaster Dušan A. Đermanović – soon after replaced by Petar Muždeka, head of the Tambura Section – Fedor von Božanić Injski)
- Zagreb, December 7

1905

- Petrinja, February 4
- Glina and Karlovac, no date
- Zagreb, June 1
- Karlovac, November 4
- Zagreb, November 30
- Vinkovci, December 15

1906

- May–June tour (24 members): Novi Sad, Pančevo, Beograd (concert with the Akademsko pevačko društvo *Obilić* [Academic Choral Society 'Obilić']), Vršac, Velika Kikinda

1907

- Ogulin, February 10
- Zagreb, March 9: performance at the manifestation of the Srpsko akademsko potporno društvo
- March tour: Belovar, Šid, Irig, Sremska Mitrovica
- May–June tour: Brčko, Bijeljina, Tuzla, Dobož, Derventa, Sarajevo, Mostar, Kotor, Cetinje, Dubrovnik, Lipik, Pakrac
- August tour (11 members): Plaški, Plitvička jezera (The Lake Plitvice), Korenica, Udbina, Donji Lapac, Gospić

- Zagreb, December 3: performance at the manifestation of the Srpska akademska omladina in Zagreb (Serbian Academic Youth in Zagreb)
- December tour: Osijek, Sombor, Stari Bečej, Veliki Bečkerek, Bela Crkva, Vršac

1908

- Prague, June 4: participated on a concert dedicated to Croatian and Serbian émigrés
- new elected president Vladimir Kostić

1908–1909

- pause in activities
- in 1909 Uroš Jov. Trbojević elected president.

1910

- new head choirmaster Branko Bijelić
- Zagreb, March: participated on the Party of the Srpska akademska omladina in Zagreb, organised by the Srpsko akademsko potporno društvo
- Belgrade, June 27: participated at the celebration of Pevačko društvo *Stanković* (30 members); at the competition organised on that occasion won second prize
- August tour: Plaški, Plitvička jezera, Korenica, Udbina, Gračac, Gospić
- new elected president Nikola Ćurčić

1911

- Trieste, April
- Zagreb, July 4
- August tour: Beograd, Valjevo, Arandjelovac, Kragujevac, Jagodina, Vrnjačka banja, Kruševac, Niš, Leskovac, Vranje, Pirot, Šabac
- new elected president Branko Manojlović

1912

- Ogulin, February
- Zagreb, May

1913

- new elected president Vidoje Muhaldžić

1914

- Zagreb, February: participated on a manifestation of the Srpska akademska omladina
- Zagreb, March: participated in a jubilee celebration of the Srpsko akademsko literarno društvo *Njeguš*
- Sombor, June: participated on manifestation and competition Prva slava Srba pevača (The First Celebrations of Serbian Choral Societies), which was at the same time the Choral Society *Balkan's* celebration of tenth anniversary; won the first prize for men's choir at the competition