Audiovisual Media and Identity Issues in Southeastern Europe

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Edited by

Eckehard Pistrick, Nicola Scaldaferri and Gretel Schwörer

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PREFACE

What I find so valuable about the volume you hold in your hands is its realization in and of a four-part harmony. It is a harmony of theory and ethnography, of media criticism and media practice. These four voices often weave in and out of each other, or merge together quite fluidly. So much so that it is seriously worth remembering that this is hardly, or, rarely the case. Theory and ethnography/history have often had different or disconnected agendas, rough complicities, or unintegrated outlooks. And media practitioners (documentarians and artists of numerous formations and genre orientations) have often enough proceeded outside an explicitly critical and reflexive outlook. What is refreshing in these pieces, therefore, is how much one sees and hears multilevel dialogues, conversations realized as a polyphonic articulation of theory, empirical and historical research, performance and media practice.

Not to mention the thematics of local depth that's all here: violence, neoliberalism, religion, power, heritage, language, festival, song, the state, institutions, conflict, performance, identities, folkloricization, gender, ethnic cleansing, politics, civility, emotion, citizenship. From village to trans-nation, from rewriting the Balkans to resisting Balkanism, the case study demonstrations are consistent. They argue that the multiple social and anti-social lives of images and sounds demand new critical engagement and critical media practice. And that means new kinds of research, new kinds of researchers, and new kinds of collaborations.

If, as Eckehard Pistrick insists, audiovisual media are simultaneous in their "ambiguity and contestability," it is now all the more important to imagine a new footing for research, where engaged critical theory of media representation meets engaged critical reflexivity in new forms of media production. This volume points forcefully in precisely this direction. Grounded in the acute necessities of regional politics and transnational history, here are the Balkans in media and their discontents.

—Steven Feld
Distinguished professor of Anthropology and Music,
University of New Mexico

INTRODUCTION

ECKEHARD PISTRICK

When in 1922 the steamship "King Alexander" left the harbour of Smyrna in Asia Minor, with hundreds of impoverished and uprooted Greek, Turkish and Russian women on board, virtual links guided it through the Atlantic Sea towards its final destination America. Among the passengers in third class were mail-order brides, who had been promised or sold by their parents to Greek men in the Diaspora who had only ever seen a photograph of them. They were engaged by their parents to a husband who existed only in the virtual form of a black and white image.

On board was also an American photographer, Norman Harris, whose activities followed the established scheme of duties expected from a photographer at that time: he photographed to represent, he photographed to aestheticise and to exoticise. He was asked to shoot a photo of the ship's captain for the newspaper of his island, Mykonos. For the captain, being portrayed such was an act of self-representation, affirming his social status and masculinity. At the same time the photographer secretly desired to portray the mail-order brides. The beauty of their faces seduces him to exoticise the women on board. But his main interest was to photograph the seamstress Niki, with whom he has fallen in love. The day the 700 brides gather in the ship's hold, festively dressed in their white wedding dresses, Niki appears in black, saying "I don't need your photograph". She offers resistance to the way her friends are taxonomised, forced to pose and to self-exoticise under the eyes of a foreigner. She refuses the occidental gaze and the medium of photography as such, which she considers a menace to their intimacy. Immediately after the photographs are developed they become charged with meanings and become objects of contestation. While the American photographer continues to consider his images as purely aesthetic objects, Mr. Karaboulat, the lecherous owner of the migration agency, sees them in terms of a virtual ownership over the portrayed women. He even corrupts the captain in order to censor the photographs of the Russian women. But who "owns" these photographs and who is allowed to dispose over them? The events depicted in the film "Nifi" (Brides) (2004) directed by Pantelis Voulgaris make us aware of only

some of the powerful roles media can play in building social relations, belongings and expectations. At the same time the events on "King Alexander" show the vulnerability of media towards private or public appropriations. The aftermath of the shooting session shows how media are used by different actors, resulting in the contestation of the ownership and meaning of the image.

This ambiguity and contestability of audiovisual media, shown here using the example of photography, is the main theme of this volume, based on the outcomes of the conference "Audiovisual Media and Identity in Southeastern Europe – Exploring New Approaches to Southeastern European Society and Culture", organised by the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg from 8.-10.4.2010.[1] This volume asks two fundamental questions: how are media used by scholars to approach their field and how are media used by people to build belonging and identities, giving meaning to their own local world. The volume therefore does not only refer to the multiple ways through which images and sounds are constructed, but also to the potential of media as sources of acting.

A first part is dedicated to the role media have played in approaching ethnographic reality and in changing the field and the perception of the field itself. The contributors comment on the "medial turn" in anthropology and on media as a way of gaining anthropological knowledge, coinciding with an increased role of a "sensuous scholarship" as called for by Seremetakis (1996), Stoller (1997), and Pink (2009). The articles comment on the multiple ways media have been used in representing realities and experiences, each of them guided by an individually motivated reflexivity. They document exemplarily the growing awareness on the use of media among scholars. It should be pointed out that this volume considers the visual and the aural sphere as complimentary aspects of one and the same reality. The classical distinction of sound and hearing within the studies of the anthropology of senses has been criticised by Ingold (2000) who states that such distinctions "reflect more upon the preconceptions of anthropological analysts than upon the actual sensory experience of the peoples" (Ingold 2000: 252). In nature, seeing and hearing often appear as complimentary or interchangeable actions. Holst-Warhaft (2005) supports this point of view, having examined the links between laments and memorial photography in Greece. She argues that both aural performance and visual media maintain different and ambiguous relationships to memory and are equally related to a local concept of "truth". Particularly the emotions experienced in the field play a crucial role for the presented researchers in a volume; the emotions

encountered in the field prompt them to also use and experience media in a sensual way.

Nevertheless, the media involved in approaching the field each have their own particularities. The presence of a video camera in the field, for example, is not comparable to a hidden recording device. Also the valuation of different audiovisual media has been different throughout the development of anthropology: The call for a "visualizing anthropology" (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2005) for example has been heard particularly in the last decades, coinciding with an increased focus on issues of performance and contextualization both in anthropology and ethnomusicology. The ethnographic film has only recently been regarded as being "capable of drawing us into sensory participation with its world" (Marks 2000), a participation that might be both psychological and corporeal and which might create a "virtual intimacy" with the subject (Biella 2009). The perception *of* and the involvement *in* medial representations is highly marked by the cultural background of the viewer and by its "cultural intimacy" with media content. Scaldaferri provides us in his double role as musician and ethnomusicologist in the films of Italian director Rossella Schillaci with important insights into how a complex and multifaceted audiovisual narrative can be created through a successful outbalancing of often overlapping insider and outsider perspectives.

Like the (moving) image, which has established itself only slowly in anthropological research, the call for an ethnographic ear (Erlman 2004) or a sound ethnography (Pink 2009) was also not answered immediately. Although the Canadian composer Murray Schafer had envisioned such a new direction in research with his World Soundscape Project[2] it took some time until was understood that understanding the world through its multiple layers of sound would mean also to reveal its contradictions, complexities and its identificatory meanings. Soundscape composing has been used since then even as an alternative way of writing field diaries in terms of representing field experience. Steven Felds' practice in "acoustemology" has shown how to approach sound in these terms (Feld 1996). All these attempts in the aural and visual sphere aim at re-exploring the neglected senses in anthropological research by creating a new visual and sonic sensibility in order to formulate experienced and "lived" truths. In revaluating these dimensions of reality, one approaches the natural interconnection of orientation in space and time through sight and natural and human-produced sounds. Panopoulos provides with his vivid sensorial and physically involved participation in the carnival on the Greek island of Skyros a good example of how the ideas proposed by Stoller and Feld can

result in a new way of "engaged" ethnographic writing.

Another crucial point of view in the first part of the volume relates to the processes through which media "translate" reality. Are sounds and images merely *representations* of reality or can images and sound convey *real experiences* and *emotions*?[3] The contributions of Bonini Baraldi and Ferrarini give answers on these urgent questions. The volume extends at this point the notion of sound as embodied experience from direct sound experience towards the experience of medialised sounds. Watching and listening to a medialised reality can have the same effect as being confronted with reality, as Bonini-Baraldi shows in his critical reflection on his own work filming funeral rituals in Romania.

Dealing with the use of media in the field also means to pose questions on increased media consumption and use by the locals themselves. New devices such as digital cameras, camcorders, or hard disk-recorders have given the locals an opportunity to investigate themselves and to reduce their dependency on "outsiders". The World Wide Web has provided a new platform for media presentation and exchange, marking a new benchmark in terms of reproducibility and accessibility of information. Such tendencies may result ultimately in a "medialised field" in which local identities are not constructed by outsiders but by locals themselves who actively use and manipulate media in order to construct their own regional identity based on a particular vision of history and memory. Here again emotions come into the play in activating memory and establishing subjective links with the past. A key concept especially for the countries of Southeastern Europe is "post-communist nostalgia" (Todorova 2010). Discussing the role of media in anthropological and ethnomusicological research reveals a high degree of sensitivity and reflexivity that exists among scholars with different backgrounds on the multiple ways in which media challenge and change their perceptions of reality and their own field. The awareness of media as methodological tools for research is backed by reflexivity on how to use them ethically. Issues of this kind are discussed in the articles by Pusceddu and Pistrick.

The geographical focus of this volume is on Southeastern Europe, a part of Europe that has been both particularly medialised by the West and been accused of abusing media for different political, cultural and racial agendas. The highly politicised use of media in Southeastern Europe has aimed most often to affirm or deny various forms of purity (Douglas 1966), national superiority or the very right to ethnic existence. Both aural and visual media as objects capable of "maintaining and representing the past" are particularly valuable tools for entering into and escaping from

history, for performing acts of selective remembering and forgetting and for negotiating between the multiple meanings of history.[4] Important roles in these processes have been played by the physical borders of nations, which have also affected the human senses.[5] It seems almost as if the senses cannot easily transcend these artificial borders without being possessed and appropriated. The borders become the contextual framework in which visual and aural representations become read exclusively. The appropriated visual and aural representations of "belonging" to a nation-state ultimately serve as tools justifying and supporting the legitimacy and homogeneity of the nation-state, reaffirming the borders and their ideological meaning. In this dynamic situation, which Bohlman and Radano (2000) refer to as a process of "racial imagination" that reinforces the competition for place, media have played an important role.

The persisting Western medial image of Southeastern Europe has been shaped particularly by the Yugoslav wars. Todorova argued that at least in the 1990s "the Balkans existed for the media only as moral stories about violence, victimization and vitriolic memories" (Todorova 2004: 17, fn. 33). Since then, numerous publications on the media perception of the Yugoslav wars both from inside and outside Southeastern Europe have been published (i.e. Allen and Seaton 1999, Iordanova 2001, Kolstø 2009). At the same time the role of the media in the maintenance of authoritarian socialist regimes and of the following nationalist regimes became an increasingly popular subject of research (i.e. Silverman 1989, Rice 1994, Bohlman and Radano 2000, Bohlman 2004). Re-evaluating the powerful role media have had in totalitarian regimes, tempted several authors to attribute to media a similar influential role in processes of political change and democraticisation (Keane 1991, O'Neil 1997, Buchanan 2006). But most of these authors also came to the sobering conclusion that the media, like the region as such, was and still is undergoing a long process of transformation (O'Neil 1997, Blankson and Murphy 2007). This volume shifts from the presented macroperspective on Southeastern Europe guided primarily by history and political sciences towards multiple complimentary microperspectives on issues of media and identity guided by research in anthropology, sociology, ethnomusicology and media studies. Such a shift means also to reject the outlined "meaningfulness" of Southeastern Europe in favour of a more complex view, bringing together "insider" interpretations, particularly of young scholars from Southeastern Europe with Western European scholars with their "outsider's view" on the region. Many of the contributions follow Severi's call for an "anthropologie des images" in which the aesthetic perspective and the ethnographic exploration

are reciprocally interlinked (Severi 2003). In this context the contributions deal with the *signifiance* of images and sounds understood as a dynamic struggle of meaning(s) (Barthes 1977).

The second part of the volume presents Southeastern Europe in terms of a laboratory, where the use of audiovisual media in processes of identity construction before, during and after the fall of the socialist regimes may be studied in detail. The articles show first how processes of "othering" and "Balkanising" have been supported and accelerated by diverse media. Images and sounds have been conserved, collected, preserved and exhibited as "cultural objects". This way of collecting and ultimately appropriating the aural and the visual sphere has been "tied up with nationalist politics, with restrictive law, and with contested encodings of past and future" (Clifford 1988:218). Every attempt at (re)presenting culture in terms of the aural and the visual is selective and strategic. Through their sensual authority the media are also able "to make sense" of the world, creating the self and the other and taking a role in powerful ideological strategies of building local and national identities. Marchetti, for example, explores how the Austro-Hungarian army produced in World War One contradictory images of the occupied countries as being "authentic/exotic" and "barbarian" at the same time. Anagnostopoulos uses Cretan postcards to reveal the multiple cross-references between image and reality in promoting a particular vision of an "occidental order" juxtaposed to an "oriental negligence". Hemming examines how similar images in his case construct a local "aboriginality" that still functions as an identity generator today.

Another focus in the second part of the volume directs to the long-term effects of state media instrumentalisation in the socialist and postsocialist regimes. Gilles de Rapper and Anouck Durand's article poses important questions on the interrelatedness of official propaganda photography and the private sphere in socialist Albania. Their contribution also examines the modes of production and the status of the photographer in a society obsessed by a fear of the "bourgeois". Another perspective on the socialist past is provided by the ethnomusicologist Veselka Toncheva in her analysis of the tropes through which folklore and traditional music was and still is represented in Bulgarian Television. Rombou-Levidi takes up this idea of sound representation in television, although with an emphasis on the impact of such state representations on local communities in the Greek-Bulgarian borderlands.

After the fall of the socialist regimes in 1990/91, media continued to play a major role in the ongoing transformation, in periods of disorder and turmoil often characterised by a thorough questioning of values and

identities, often resulting in new orientations. This aspect is developed particularly in the contribution by Šuber and Karamanić on the changing role and increasing contestation of the visual sphere in postsocialist Serbia. The work of Eran Livni and Ana Hofman on stage performances point in a similar direction, both considering such practices as the heritage of socialist cultural policy and as a new way to contest the use of sounds, images and bodies in relation to an often distorted vision of genderedness, "Europeanness" and modernity. In the last two decades, audiovisual media have increasingly stimulated counter-discourses and subversive discourses "from below". The numerous songs commenting on the tragic death of the Albanian migrant Flamur Pisli in 1999 for example, disseminated on pirate cassette tapes functioned as a powerful "low-tech counter-dialogue" (Papailas 2003: 1071) to Greek and Albanian mass media. Even rather "academic" products of multimedia creation such as the film "Whose is this song" (Chia e tazi pesen) (2003) by the Bulgarian director Adela Peeva have the potential to question established categories of the national origins of "cultural artefacts". This film comments directly on the common Ottoman heritage in Southeastern Europe in the form of a song that is shared by different Balkan people, but is appropriated (not at least spatially) by each of them in terms of a "pure" national heritage. The Ottoman legacy is continuously being reinterpreted, nationalised and appropriated, not in the sense of a variety of interpretations but in the sense of an exclusive claim on musical heritage. While this film still bears the mark of the Yugoslav wars, Peeva's controversial comments on the political instrumentalisation of music in Southeastern Europe have stimulated a wider audience to rethink sounds from the Balkans.

Visual artist Nela Milic ends this volume with a visionary approach, surpassing the world of scholarly ideas: Instead of a stereotyped medialisation of the Balkans she favours a tabula rasa approach, giving back to Southeastern Europe its quality as a place of projection. Rejecting the ideological pre-formed space of "Balkanness" she creates a new space to be filled with new associations and interpretations. Like the objects of her exhibition "Balkanising Taxonomy" her text plays hide-and-seek with the readers, questioning one-dimensional images and opening up multiple perspectives on one and the same object. By means of this approach, a traditional costume presents itself not with an authoritative and didactic message but as a subject of discussion.

This volume can also be seen as an attempt to combine different forms of (academic) writing on audiovisual media and the ethnographic field. Several authors (Panopoulos, Ferrarini, Milic) implicitly and explicitly refer not only to the text as a medium but appeal to our senses by

providing the reader visual, olfactory and aural sensations. In the case of Panopoulos this even results in a broken structure of the text, where the image and the written text appear as equal partners, relating and complimenting one another. Ferrarini evokes the mood of a misty morning in the Serbian village, where he realised his audiovisual study on a family of musicians. Although this leads to structured methodological thoughts these sensations seem to be the starting point for an increasing sensitivity and reflexivity for him as anthropologist.

Another dimension of this volume lies in the fact that it combines "insider" and "outsider" approaches. This must not necessarily be interpreted in terms of objectivity, a Serbian insider's view quite possibly being more distanced than one of a sympathetic "outsider". A meeting of researchers from Southeastern and Western Europe results necessarily in a multiperspectivity and polyvocality. One example is the protest against the Milosevic regime in 1996/97. While Šuber and Karamanić present a strict sociological-historical approach on these events, Milic sees the Belgrade revolution from an artistic and presumably subversive point of view. She asks in what sense art and media may be political, and how an archive of political protest may be transformed into a sensual experience – comparable to that of an ethnographic field. She also poses the provocative question: What would the protest against the Milošević regime have looked like without the use and reception of media? Although following two different lines of thought, both chapters reflect both in their own way about how media are actively used as a tool for being subversive.

Beside the enriching multiperspectivity, the collaboration between Southeastern European and Western scholars has at the same time resulted in all of us becoming conscious of common references and ideas, shared already during the course of the conference. Such common interests may include the importance attributed to the emic approach, in restoring the "human dimension" in the field and in giving the local people a forum for speaking back and becoming prominently visible in the text.

Throughout this volume, audiovisual media representations, appropriations and interpretations are primarily examined on a local level, often backed by extensive fieldwork in Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Greece, Slovenia and Serbia. Favouring the local approach, allows for the examination of the impact of media on the people themselves - producing or reproducing photographs and recordings is considered as a practice relevant for the production, reproduction and negotiation of their identities. Especially on the micro level it becomes clear that media have played and still play an important role in distancing oneself from an undesirable (Ottoman) past

and the suspect "other within". Such an "other within" may also be part of one's own national culture or of contradictory assimilation or minority politics, expressed, as in the case of Bulgarian Roma, in ambiguous performances relating to an imagined "modernity". The discursive medial self-construction increasingly takes place in relation to an image of the European Union, "modernity" and a "fictive Europe". While this search for new points of reference outside the Balkan Peninsula is remarkable, the media's role in re-constructing and negotiating national and local identities in the same time should not be underestimated. As Scaldaferri highlights in the case of the Arbëresh of southern Italy and Hemming in the case of the inhabitants of the northern Albanian Mirdita region, media have been used extensively in rebuilding traditions and ethnic belongings. In such processes, media are considered a bridge between a nostalgically remembered past and a "meaningless" present. The growing interest in media in this sense mirrors the growing interest in issues of origin, belonging and "authenticity". Sounds and images are considered in this volume not as externally predetermined entities but as actors in processes of identity-building, "cultural objectification" (Handler 1988), homogenisation and self-exoticisation in terms of a persistent "Balkanism" (Todorova 1997). They contribute to processes of inclusion, exclusion and "othering". Additionally, media may contribute to and accelerate at the same time dynamics of socio-cultural change. Audiovisual media both as an object of study and as a methodological tool are eventually considered as a key for a better understanding of the complex research field Southeastern Europe. Through media we approach the Balkans through our sensory perception, an alternative road towards anthropological knowledge which deserves to be explored.

In all these examinations, analyses and critiques of media we should be aware that not only the media themselves generate different meanings and appropriations, so does scholarly writing, as presented in this volume, attribute meanings to images, sounds and events.

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Notes

[1] I want to thank the Fritz-Thyssen-Foundation for their continuous support of the project "Aural and Visual Representations of Albanian Identity", Andreas Hemming for his efforts in the preparation of the conference and the resulting volume and all contributors for their insights and stimulating discussions without which this book would never been realised.

[2] For more information on the World Soundscape Project at the Simon Fraser University, Vancouver see http://www.sfu.ca/~truax/wsp.html; Schafer, Murray R. 1977. *European Sound Diary*, The Music of the Environment Series, Vancouver: ARC Publications; and Schafer, Murray R. 1977. *The Soundscape – Our Sonic Environments and the Tuning of the World.* Rochester (VT): Destiny Books (Reprint 2006).

[3] On the role of media and particularly of the human body in "recording

experiences" see Ferrarini, Lorenzo. 2010. *Registrare l'esperienza. L'uso dei media audiovisuali tra arte e scienza: Jean Rouch e Steven Feld*, MA thesis, University of Milano-Bicocca, Faculty of Social Sciences.

[4] On memory production – especially in the case of oral societies, see Severi 2007.

[5] On a more detailed discussion on borders in Southeastern Europe see Nitsiakos, Vassilis et al. (eds.) 2008. *Balkan Border Crossings*, Berlin: LIT; and Hajdú, Zoltán, et al. (eds.) 2007. *Southeast Europe State Borders, Cross-Border Relations, Spatial Structures.* Pécs: MTA RKK.

PART I:

THE FIELD, THE SENSES AND THE MEDIA

A Tool for Research, a Source for Identity Construction: Considerations and Controversies on the Use of Audiovisual Media[1]

Nicola Scaldaferri

Introduction

Video, photographs, and sound recordings, have been present in ethnographic research for a long time, and appear in publications often as attachments and documentary evidence. In many cases, audiovisual data have been the primary result of fieldwork, especially in some musical researches. However, only recently researchers have become more conscious that the use of the audiovisual media is modifying the way research is done. This consciousness has developed alongside other general changes in the perspective of the ethnographic work, and with issues introduced in the recent years; for example, the overcoming of the connection of ethnographic research with written discourse, the emphasis on the sensorial aspects of experience, and the emphasis on the centrality of the body of the researcher.[2]

The use of audiovisual media, and their combination in different forms, offers a surplus of sensory experience that in fact can multiply the points of perception; it can bring us closer to the idea of a real participation, with a stronger emotional involvement. Surely, it is a new way to deal with the topic of ethnographic experience, trying at the same time to explore and create a discourse beyond the rhetoric of the writing. Fields of study like Visual Anthropology - that sometimes should be more correctly called Audiovisual Anthropology, as suggested also by Francesco Marano (2007) - are not just a new adaptation of anthropological research; they also imply a different perspective that takes into account the use of photos, video and sound recordings as a tool for exploring, studying and representing in different ways real events.

Among the scholars aware of the importance of media and of their specific roles in the research, there is Steven Feld; he strongly supports the idea that media are equally a primary way of knowing and of organizing knowledge, and of exploring the intellectual terrain, like reading and writing. Feld has accustomed all of us to expressions and conceptual approaches that are currently in discussion, like Anthropology of Sound, Acoustemology, soundscape composition, dialogic editing, as well as the personal involvement in the field of research from different perspectives, including that of a musical performer. Moreover, he accustomed us also to sound and video publications of a high quality level, using special equipment like DSM microphones and worn like headphones for audio recordings that take into account the space and the movements of sound.[3]

In a conversation with Lorenzo Ferrarini, Feld speaks about the "border situation" of the audio-visual media among scholars and researchers, especially in the academic context that is today still dominated by the written approach, and where the result of ethnography is mainly supposed to be a written discourse. Feld stresses the hegemony of writings that has characterized scholarship for a long time, both in research and in representation, even when a researcher is using audiovisual support:

> I think there's a lot of technophobia in academia in general. For many people the technologies of picture, cinema, and sound, are part of the world of entertainment and the arts.
>
> There is a real desire to separate the acts of reading and writing, as the valid and high products of academic research and intellectual orientation, and to see there other media as secondary, more partial, less serious, less valid.
>
> The activity of reading silently is like a kind of religious sanctuary, and the idea of the book as the serious and valid form of intellectual work is just something you can't question.
>
> So, to work in sound, to work with pictures, to work with the cinema, has always been a threat within anthropology, even though we've had sound, cinema and pictures for well over a hundred years.
>
> And even people who think beyond the notebook and pen, they often think that a photograph is just an adjunct to a written description, [...] and they think sound recording is a transparent representation of the voice, and they think video document is a direct unmediated copy of a performance.
>
> So they say yes, we need video because we study performance, or we need pictures because we study material objects and we need to have records of them, we use the sonic media because we have the need to have an oral form of memory. But [...] this is really a betrayal of the potential and possibility of these media. It's as much a betrayal as would be to say the purpose of writing and editing is just to make lists of telephone numbers.

> When we work with sound and visual media, our first problem is that we are considered inauthentic or semi-authentic as scholar, and our second problem is that we are betrayed by other people who admit that these media are useful, because they only allow that utility to be derivate, adjunct, or secondary.
>
> They refuse, in the end, to understand that these media are equally primary and powerful ways of knowing and of organizing knowledge, and of investigating and exploring the same intellectual terrain that is otherwise only opened by reading and writing.
>
> It is bizarre that this has happened in the same era when you have anthropologists discovering the idea that anthropology is a form of writing (in Ferrarini 2008: 262-263).

One of the most authoritative and influential contemporary anthropologists, Michael Herzfeld, who has done research in Southeastern Europe and in the Mediterranean, has admitted in recent years (Herzfeld 2001) that audiovisual media are changing the way ethnography is practiced, and that there is at the same time a delay in the interest of anthropologists in discussing this issue. However, it is also important to note that Herzfeld himself, after several books following a "traditional" approach in representing ethnographic experiences, recently started to use audiovisual media, and particularly documentary film. In parallel with a book (Herzfeld 2009), he realized a movie about his research on Rome, *Monti Moments: Men's Memories in the Heart of Rome* (2007) as a particular way to go beyond the written discourse in the rendering of an ethnographic experience.[4]

The emphasis on the use of media as a different way to do and to represent ethnographic research is the first aspect of this chapter; it stems from the title of the conference in Wittenberg, that in fact put the topic of media in interaction with the geographical and cultural context of Southeastern Europe, and particularly with the issue of identity.

For a long time, identity matters have proved to be sensitive for this area; however, in the last decades, they have become more and more crucial. This happened especially after 1991, the year that marks the collapse of regimes in Eastern Europe, and destabilized situations that since World War Two were reputed to be stable. According to the long term perspective offered by Eric Hobsbawm (1994), this year marks the close of the 'Short 20th Century' and a turning point towards a new situation characterized by events and trends that are still in progress today.

The discussion about the Balkans and identity issues spans various perspectives, at times depending on the insider-outsider perspective, at times focusing on specific points. I will mention here only a few examples. One is the discussion of the Balkan concept offered by Bulgarian-

American scholar Maria Todorova, with her singular perspective of an insider-outsider, presented in her seminal book in 1997. Concerning the musical aspects, the concept of the Balkans was discussed beyond local ethnographies by scholars such as Mark Slobin (1996) or Philip Bohlman (2004) and, most recently by Buchanan (2007), introducing the theoretical concept of the 'Ottoman ecumene'.

According to my experience the Balkans in many cases require an effort to be more distant and neutral, especially in dealing with the identity issue, starting with the words and the terminology used in the discussion. In this perspective, it seems relevant to me that in the title of the conference, which served as the basis for this book, the term Balkans is avoided. Balkans is a thick word, very evocative, and becomes easily a matter of discussion. Therefore it should be best replaced with Southeastern Europe a term which relates to a more neutral geographic space and which incorporates a new European perspective.

Putting together the issues of media in this particular geographical and cultural context, I chose to discuss in this chapter some controversial cases in which technology and identity play their role and in which I had a personal engagement as a scholar, as a researcher, or simply as a witness taking part in a panel of discussion.

A 'Classical Research'

The landmark research of Milman Parry and Albert Lord presents some important implications that today can shed new light on the issue of identity and media. Milman Parry, a Homeric scholar and Professor of Classics at Harvard University, with his young assistant Albert Lord, researched the epic traditions of the area of former Yugoslavia, during the 1930s. His research provided fundamental evidences for the study of the textual structure of epics; it had an important impact on the Homeric question, and consequences in the studies of media and communication systems. [5]

The main impact of his research concerned the study of epics, thanks to the formulaic theory accomplished by Albert Lord after the death of Parry and presented in the book *The Singer of Tales* published in 1960. Many scholars like Walter J. Ong, Eric Havelock, Jack Goody and Marshall McLuhan, have recognized the importance of the research of Parry and Lord for understanding the relationship between literacy and orality, and in general for issues related to the media; however, the actual use of the media in his research has never been discussed in a specific way.

The starting point of Parry and Lord was to study the making of the Homeric verse; their work has been rightly seen mainly as a research on epic poetry, and had been considered especially for the results this perspective produces. Other issues, beyond the Homeric questions, rarely mentioned, require attention, and some of them have been fundamental in reaching these results; that of the media and technologies used during the research, is one of these.

Important aspects of the research done by Parry and Lord relate to the research methods and the use of a specific technology during the collection of songs. Parry did not only collect epics, like many of his colleagues or predecessors; his was a true fieldwork in the full meaning of the term, with both practical and theoretical implications. Moreover, he developed a specific technological apparatus for recording epics, following the suggestions coming to him directly from the field. Today, looking at their research from this perspective, it seems more and more evident that the results of the research are the product of an interaction between the scholar and the field; they are the consequence of an actual negotiation, and the role of technology used in collecting and fixing data, especially for sound recordings, is neither a neutral nor a secondary one (Scaldaferri 2008).

As early as in summer 1933, during his first Balkan trip, Parry started to collect materials from dictation, the usual, accepted way to collect epics. However, he soon realized that transcriptions or dictated texts would not be enough for his purposes, and that it would be necessary to use recording technologies. He started to use a mechanic phonograph with wax cylinders. His first field recordings had been done in a similar way than those by contemporary "classical" researchers such as Béla Bartók, Constantin Brăiloiu, or Gustaf Küpper-Sonnenberg.[6] But the phonograph was limited in the quality of recording and the length of the performance, and this point was crucial for epic songs. Parry found singers who were able to sing poems of hundreds of lines, therefore the phonograph then in use proofed to be unsatisfactory to record performances in their entity - that was a crucial point in analyzing this material under the perspective of "composing in performance".

To prepare his second and more important stay in Yugoslavia, lasting from June 1934 to September 1935, he planned carefully the use of his recording equipment.

Firstly, Parry moved to the needle-cut aluminium disc that represented the state of the art in audio recording in the 1930s.[7] The issue of the conditioning of recordings due to the physical limits of the medium has

been a concern since the beginning of the history of sound recording. Parry's solution for the issue of length was unusual at that time for fieldwork purposes. He used a special apparatus composed of two disc-cutters, built by the Sound Specialties Company of Waterbury (Connecticut); by switching between the two turntables, it was possible to record on a series of discs songs or conversation without interruption. Albert Lord was one of the persons, who were able to operate this machine and the discs, while Parry and his assistant Nikola Vujnović stayed with the singers.[8]

This system, and especially the results, attracted the admiration of Béla Bartók, the first (and for a long time the only) ethnomusicologist who studied Parry's recordings. Bartók has more than once written about the quality of these recordings, both from the musical and the technical perspective, describing them as excellent for that time.[9]

The core of the Milman Parry Collection is represented by the 3,500 aluminum discs with songs and conversations recorded in 1934-35. However, one of the most amazing documents preserved in the Milman Parry Collection is a short film of few minutes, made by Parry in 1935. The film is of Avdo Međedović, a singer from Bijelo Polje, whom Parry considered the most talented of all the singers he had worked with. Two of the songs he collected (one under dictation and another recorded) were 12,000, respectively 13,000 lines long. The 'Avdo Kino' is important to understand how crucial it was for Parry to correctly capture the moment of the performance. Unfortunately there are no details about the film camera used, but it is likely that the Sound Specialties Company in Connecticut provided it.[10]

Looking again at these materials from this perspective gives us relevant information not only about the relationship between literacy and orality, but also about the matter of how technology became considered as a means of exploring a new field. Technologies may be considered in this context as extensions of the body, independently from the technical progress, and the problems faced by Jean Rouch with his camera, or by Feld with his DSM microphones, can be in some respect compared to those faced by Parry when he tried to invent and modify the machines (and in fact to use them) to obtain specific results.

One of the most singular aspects is, that Parry, even when using recordings, did not stop to collect texts transcribed through dictation; he was conscious that transcribing and recording were two different ways to do research and to interact with the singer. They required a different performance from the singer and a different approach from the researcher;

they lead towards different results, which directly affected the core of the research of a Homeric scholar: the structure of the text. Even the singers themselves were aware that dictating a text to be transcribed on paper line by line, or singing a song for the recording machine, are different kinds of performance which lead to different results. From a conversation recorded between Sulejman Makić and Parry's assistant Nikola Vujnović, this consciousness emerges clearly:

> NV: Which do you think makes the better song, when it is dictated and written down, or when it is sung?
> SM: It can be written more correctly, but it can be sung more exactly.
> NV: So, then, do you think that it is finer when it is sung and better when it is written?
> SM: Yes, I think it is finer.
> NV: Why is it better when it is written?
> SM: Because you speak more slowly, more leisurely, but you can't write as exactly you can sing. (SCHS 1954: 263).

The technology employed in the research has important consequences, in the case of the Albanian epics, even in the structure of the versification: in fact the use of one metrical line or another depends on the type of performance and on its rhythmical structure. In the recited version, the line used in Albanian epics is octosyllabic, whereas during the sung performance the text is re-created in decasyllabic. Moreover, these aspects present a strong connection with the bodily involvement during the performance, and the main example is the importance of the bodily involvement in keeping the rhythm.[11]

Eventually we can verify, among the materials of the Parry Collection, the existence of multiple performances related to the technology used for collecting the songs: recited songs to be written down under dictation; recited songs to be recorded, and songs sung to be recorded.

But the goals of the research have been reached thanks also to the particular character of the analyzed area. The extraordinary density of local identities in the fieldwork zone directly affected the 'discovery' of some of the great epic singers. Talking about the issue of identity in the Parry Collection, especially that of the singers is a highly sensitive matter. In recent years, some aspects that had been of secondary importance for decades within the frame of the Yugoslav state, are now increasingly relevant; for example, songs performed by singers from Bosnia, Montenegro, as well as Albanian bilingual singers. They all had been subsumed before under the umbrella term of the Serbo-Croatian epic (Kolsti 1990, Scaldaferri 2011a). What is happening today in scholarly research is a remapping of singers and identities, occasionally resulting in