

T'Ga za Jug – Waiting for Macedonia
The Changing World of Young Female Engineers
in the Republic of Macedonia

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PhD Thesis in Social Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

My thesis is concerned with the social changes a group of young female engineers experience in The Republic of Macedonia during the break-up of Yugoslavia.

From my studies, I infer that this group of informants is representative of those most affected by their country's changes: they represent the young, urban educated elite that is influenced most directly by the political changes of independent Macedonia.

The work has two major aims. First, it provides a detailed ethnography of the search by my informants to understand and define the new circumstances of The Republic of Macedonia. I conclude that the Fall of Yugoslavia and Macedonia's 'forced' independence created a vacuum of meaning for its population.

The second objective of this work is to examine critically a group of young female engineers and to contrast other works written about Macedonia and the Balkan region which primarily emphasised continuity and tradition.

With their aim of recognition by Europe, Macedonia tries to establish itself as a European country. Consumerism and body culture emphasise this. However, some Macedonians seek to retain aspects of the recent socialist past. Macedonia, during my

research, was still governed by a democratically elected socialist party that adhered to socialist values. In their search for what Macedonia could be, the past, the world of the grandparents' generation and the village and the differences between the Albanian and Slavic populations gain new importance. This search is introducing some previous members of the elite, female engineers of Yugoslavia, to a new idea of what Macedonia could be, while incorporating elements of a modern, global society with Macedonia's socialist and pre-socialist peasant past.

This group of informants shows that Macedonia is in the midst of creating a new, and rather different, identity for itself which incorporates socialist ideology, a peasant past and a modern European dream.

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of
Nikola (Koki) Smilevski
who was brutally murdered in June 1997.
From your loss I will not recover.

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INTRODUCTION

T'Ga Za Jug

Longing for the South

If I had an eagle's wings
I would rise and fly on them
To our shores, to our own parts,
To see Stamboul, to see Kukush;
And to watch the sunrise: is it
Dim there too as it is here?

If the sun still rises dimly,
If it meets me there as here,
I'll prepare for further travels,
I shall flee to other shores
Where the sunrise greets me brightly,
And the sky is sewn with stars.

It is dark here; dark surrounds me,
Dark for covers all the earth,
Here are frosts and snows and ashes,
Blizzards and harsh winds abound.
Fogs all around, the earth is ice,
And in the breast are cold, dark
thoughts.

No, I cannot stay here, no;
I cannot look upon these frosts.
Give me wings and I will don them;
I will fly to our own shores,
Go once more to our own places,
Go to Ohrid and to Struga.

There the sunrise warms the soul,
The sun sets bright in mountain woods:
Yonder gifts in great profusion
Richly spread by nature's power.
See the clear lake stretching white-
Or blue darkened by the wind,
Look at the plains or mountains:
Beauty everywhere divine.

To play the flute there to my heart's content!
Ah! Let the sun shine, let me die.

(1861)

Konstantin Miladinov

Defining the Setting

Longing for the south. This poem is dearly remembered in Skopje and, not surprisingly, many cafés in the capital city of the independent Republic of Macedonia are named: *T'ga za Jug*. The poem speaks of the yearning for a country that is far away and seems to promise all that is missing. Miladinov talks about beauty and darkness,

about the wish to fly freely wherever the wind directs, about ultimate death. When asked to define Macedonia it is *T'Ga za Jug* that springs to my mind.

It was in another café that *T'Ga za Jug* was put to me as "Waiting for Macedonia" with a meaning similar to that of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. "Nothing to be done" is the starting sequence. Dialogue has no function. Macedonia as non-subject of action, from neither the inside nor the outside, the story of Macedonia neither creates nor resolves conflicts, does not develop either ethical or political programs of reform, and it does not offer meaning for its human existence. Every interpretation is null. There is no direction and no aim. This is how a great number of people from different backgrounds and in differing circumstances in Macedonia have described Macedonia to me over and over since its independence. It is in this situation that the group of graduates feels that people in Skopje are waiting for Macedonia, waiting for their country to come, *to be*. It is this world I will write about; though I believe that Macedonia is 'becoming,' I nevertheless have to use this perception of Macedonia as my vantage point in order to understand what Macedonia was, is and will be about for my group of friends.

It was a warm July weekend. Zenia and I were sitting in Café Ciao in the afternoon, waiting for our friend Boris to come. I was taking my notes and Zenia was laughing and

suggesting that I should call my thesis "Waiting for Boris" as we spent so much time waiting for him. Then she looked at me seriously and said: "Ilka, maybe you should call your thesis 'Waiting for Macedonia.'" I did spend much time waiting in Macedonia but, more importantly, I spent a lot of time waiting with my friends. *Waiting for Macedonia.* Later in the evening a stranger in Café ZZ-Top said: "We are waiting, always waiting, all our lives waiting, as our parents and grandparents have. Our parents once thought they had found it, but now they have lost it and we are waiting again." What he referred to was a version of Macedonia's past, present and future. Today, both children and parents believe that in socialist Yugoslavia Macedonia had found what it had been looking for: an identity. They had an identity as the socialist Republic of Macedonia, an integrated part of Yugoslavia complete with pride and freedom. With the disintegration of Yugoslavia, this vanished. However, Macedonia did retain its independence, of no interest to Serbia at that time but of interest to the international community. Macedonia could have been the explosive barrel in the Balkan conflict that could have involved Greece and Turkey. Macedonia declared independence in 1991 and it seemed easy enough to create an independent democratic Macedonia on the foundation of the socialist republic. Institutions, the legal and political apparatus were retained, privatisation was initialised through great economic help from a wary Europe

and an eager U.S.A. Nevertheless, how could Macedonia be defined on a personal level? How did the citizens of the newly independent Macedonia deal with the changes around them? What did Macedonia mean for them, what did it mean to be Macedonian, how could it be redefined?

Anthropology of the Balkans

Much has been written about economic and political changes in Eastern Europe but a consideration of how these changes construct personal lives has been neglected. Much of this work is historically oriented (i.e. Halpern 1972) or deals with specific cultural traditions (Rheubottom 1971). More prominently, studies have been conducted in, for example, Hungary (Stewart 1987), Poland (Pine 1987) and Romania (Kligman, 1988). Several anthropologist have worked in Yugoslavia in the context of the anthropology of kinship, primarily, although not exclusively, on the *zadruga* system¹ (Baric' 1967a; Denich 1974; Halpern & Anderson 1970; Hammel 1972; Mosely 1976; Rheubottom 1980; St.Erich 1966). In social anthropology, Macedonia itself has been studied by Rheubottom (1976a,b; 1980 and 1993 [1985]), Ford (1982) who deals with the adaptive character of traditional culture, Brown (1995) who looks at the issue of nationalism, and

Brailsford, whose work dates back to 1906 (2nd ed. 1971). Brailsford gives us the following information about Macedonia:

"I have heard the French consul declare that with a fund of a million francs he would undertake to make all Macedonia French. He would preach that the Macedonians are the descendants of the French crusaders who conquered Salonica in the twelfth century, and the francs would do the rest. [...] The Macedonians are Bulgars to-day because a free and progressive Bulgaria has known how to attract them." (Brailsford 1906 [1971]: 103)

This does not apply to today's Macedonia, however. The general perception of Macedonia, by Macedonians and the outside world alike, as something that has to be filled by others, prevails. I argue that the recent developments in Macedonia might very well show that Macedonia can be politically and socially viable on its own.

Despite some recent works, Bringa (1991, 1995) on Bosnia-Herzegovina and Karakasidou's work on Greek-Macedonia (1997a), the only time Yugoslavia or Macedonia seems to have been under anthropological investigation was during the 1960s and 1970s when rural adaptation, kinship and tradition, were under consideration, although currently the field of Yugoslavia is under greater political scrutiny. I believe that The Republic of Macedonia offers an interesting field of anthropological research in relation to change and crisis.

The Republic of Macedonia presents an unusual and unexplored field of research in that it relates to the specific circumstances of Yugoslavia: Tito's socialism, the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the circumstances of the war that has shattered the lives of so many in Former Yugoslavia, as well as presented its own specific case through the current rapid and profound changes in a society which belonged to the former socialist Yugoslavia Republic. The nationalist integrity under Tito, the challenge to its identity and existence as the Republic of Macedonia by its neighbours Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Albania, the animosities within Macedonia and fighting in Kosovo that could bring Macedonia to the brink of civil war between the Slavic-Orthodox Macedonians and the Albanian population, the historical inheritance of 500 years of Ottoman rule, and a strong patriarchal and agricultural past in the midst of its present unusually high level of urbanisation, renders Macedonia a highly complex and dynamic site of social change.

In view of these circumstances, I will concentrate on the urban environment of Skopje. There have been studies about the urban environment of Yugoslavia though the data has dealt exclusively with the adaptive character of traditional culture or has focused on the role of kinship, linking rural and urban sectors of society (see Baric' 1967a,b; Halpern 1963; Hammel 1969; Hammel and Yarbrough 1973; Simic' 1973a,b, 1974). In Macedonia Spangler points out that urban anthropological research is almost

non-existent, because the rural population of Macedonia has traditionally been viewed as more interesting (Spangler 1983: 91). In respect to the present situation of Macedonia, I wish to challenge this perspective and draw attention to the specific cultural environment of a new state in the city of Skopje.

Another argument which is predominant in the literature about Yugoslavia is one that leaves the impression that kinship is one of the most important features in Yugoslavia (i.e. Baric' 1967b: 266; Rheubottom 1980: 222). I believe, however, that in urban Macedonia kinship can be far more related to the concept of David Schneider's investigation on American kinship (1968) than to any *zadruga* system. By considering the circumstances of young female engineers, I wish to challenge the classical perceptions of women as passive receivers of change as seen by Lockwood (1975) who writes about peasantry and the marketplace in Bosnia and about women solely in the context of marriage; or Ford (1982) and Brown (1995) who do not discuss women in any sense. Boehm's *Blood Revenge: The Anthropology of Feuding in Montenegro and other Tribal Societies* presents a good example of male-centred ethnography. Boehm seems to assume that in a world of feuding there is no place for women. Women again are only seen in their reproductive kinship terms. Women receive little attention from Rheubottom as well, however, Rheubottom (1993[1985]) offers a perspective of

Macedonia that my group of graduates choose consciously or unconsciously to contradict. Women in these accounts do not seem to have a life of their own. How do women relate to the feuding in Boehm's account? It is not mentioned if there are spaces occupied by women in society other than in the realm of kinship. Although published in 1984, Boehm's research dates back from 1963 to 1966. In his and in Rheubottom's and Lockwood's accounts, the element of possible change in this region is almost not worth mentioning.

I want to reach beyond these accounts and try to bring about an understanding of women and men in regard to the changing society in Macedonia. I will not reflect on women merely in the context of kinship for I do not believe that this is the reality of the women in the Balkans. Even though there might be a cleavage between rural and urban perceptions, today's urban and rural communities have been drawn so closely together that it will be hard to find an isolated mountain range where men feud and women procreate. I would like to follow Dubisch's approach:

'[...] for a true understanding of gender we must move-paradoxically-beyond gender, seeking out its relationship to other aspects of social life. Gender, sexuality, private and public, inside and outside are elements of important and powerful symbolic systems. They are ways of talking about society and individuals' experience in society. But they are more than simply an expression of social order. They are the means of creating and interpreting that order and, beyond that, of ordering and talking about life itself.'

(Dubisch 1986: 35)

Using this approach, I discuss current change as the dominant aspect of social life in Macedonia through a gendered perspective without looking at gender issues specifically. It is social change that gives new ways of talking about society and individuals' experiences in society. It is the situation of profound change that offers new means of creating and interpreting social order and, beyond that, offers new ways of ordering and talking about life itself.

Why Female Engineers?

I concentrated on young urban educated women and their life in relation to the men in their lives, their parents and grandparents and looked at different phases in their lives: love, marriage, education, work and social life in order to give broader insights about how social change is perceived and perpetuated. In such a setting, a gender-based analysis of the political and economical restructuring will provide a deeper view of how this change is configured and point to future developments. I am assigning social change to the arena of one sex and include the assumption that the excluded sex is

always there by implication. Similarly, although I look at change from the perspective of the women in Macedonia, I do not exclude a male perspective.

The history of socialism in Eastern Europe originated from a revolutionary change of social relations, including gender relations. In the aftermath of socialism, the question remains as to which direction the new states will venture. In many former socialist countries (i. e. Poland, GDR, Croatia), the resurgence of a Catholic inheritance depicts the image of the woman as 'The Mother.' Feminist programs have been sacrificed to the cause of progress and liberation. Women have been 'reassigned' to their formerly domestic roles. I want to assert that to look at social change through a gendered perspective can illuminate and evaluate such processes of social change. Women's status in society is not static: it is both influenced by and has an effect upon the process of social transformation itself (Einhorn 1993: 2-3). Despite some pessimistic undertones in the accounts on the current situation of women in Eastern Europe (see Phizacklea, Pilkington & Rai (eds) 1992), I believe Macedonia could offer a different picture. Although the Republic of Macedonia is in desperate need of a new state ideology which separates it from any claims which could be made on its sovereignty by Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece or Albania, it does not choose to condemn the socialist era, nor its inheritance of social reform. It was Tito who gave Macedonia a nationhood by forming the People's

Republic of Macedonia. This aspect, as well as the incident of nationalist-inspired war in former Yugoslavia, gives Macedonia a very different outlook on its own definition and on any re-definition of women's roles in society. I argue that there are other discourses within Skopjan society that do not point towards re-definition of women's position in either way.

It is the younger generation which has to be studied, along with their reflections on their parents and grandparents, to understand future developments of change. Certain aspects have to come under closer review. A high proportion of female university students was common in all former state socialist countries. Despite this, there seemed to be a tendency for them to look for training in areas deemed 'suitable for women' (Einhorn 1993). I, therefore, chose as my informants, young students of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering at the University of Skopje, which has a high proportion of female students despite the electrical engineering field's traditional male dominance. I observed their life and discovered how they make their way into the employment, social and family lives. I also questioned if there is a search for new political and social values, how they are constructed and what relationship they have with the past. To understand the conflicts and the environment of change in Eastern Europe, one has to validate women's subjective contradictory experience of continuity and change.

My research setting is in the urban environment of Skopje, the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and a group of friends. It is this group which seems to be extremely exposed to the current change in Macedonia. By connecting these women and men to the dramatic and profound changes in their lives, as they experience the loss of one national identity (Yugoslavian) and the creation of a new identity (specifically Macedonian), I hope to understand how they construct their personal and gendered identity within this specific setting. There is much evidence to indicate that this specific group, young, urban and highly educated, contains the early innovators. They are motivated to distinguish themselves from the rest of the population and create a cycle of innovation and diffusion. Social change is and was a dominant force in the last forty years of Macedonian history. Macedonia moved from being a strong patriarchal, agricultural society to a modern, industrial society and today social change again might lead Macedonia into true independence.

Entering the Field

I went to Skopje, Yugoslavia for the first time in the summer 1988. During the next few years, I visited Skopje, Macedonia, Yugoslavia many times from 1988 until 1993 and lived through the intensive changes and fears my informants and friends lived

through during this time. I lived in Skopje from August 1994 until August 1995 in my own flat in the centre of town but very close to 'my family' which I saw daily. I revisited Skopje in the summer of 1996. 'My family' was the centre from which I learned to know Skopje and Macedonia. The daughter of the family is a computer engineer and it is her circle of friends with whom I grew very close. Her friends extended into my own network of friends, and friends of friends. Sometimes I was prone to believe that any person I met was an engineer and, because I had my 'affiliation' with other engineers, it was very easy to make friends with them. They treated me with a courtesy and warmth that I have rarely encountered anywhere else and which made my research very special. I still have close contact with many of them and because of the close relationships I developed, I have gone to great efforts to disguise their identity in the following pages, as sometimes research information and friendship were difficult to distinguish. Sometimes very personal information was given to me. Any quotation or information in the following chapters has been given with full consent but with the understanding that I would not disclose the identity of the informant.

My research methodology was based on participant observation. I visited my friends on a regular basis and my flat became a central meeting point. Friends would drop by to talk, to read, to complain, cry, philosophise or just to simply watch television. Parents

and grandparents took a great interest in my well-being and I encountered them many times when visiting their daughters. A close friend of mine lived right across the street from my building and her family became my second home. When my friends went to work I spent hours visiting them at their workplaces, a possibility at most of their workplaces. We would drink many coffees or cokes and have many *muhabeti*, conversations. Some of them, I would even join on a daily basis, and I became a common sight for co-workers and bosses alike. In this manner I gained great insight and knowledge into the workings of work. I would join 'my family' at lunch, have a nice talk and then would visit friends or have them over, seeing them casually or having organised interviews. In the evenings I would go through the lengthy preparations of getting ready for the night while I was at a friend's place. We would leave by about ten, meet other friends at the bus stop or in the chosen café, an event that followed a great amount of time on the telephone with several people. Between seven and ten o'clock at night it was close to impossible to get a free line in Skopje and many times it just happened that we ended up with on a conference line with people we wanted to talk to and some we did not. The night would be spent in several cafés meeting different people in different cafés, either planned or by serendipity. Throughout the night, the

group of friends would become greater until people dispersed by one or two o'clock, with some holding on until 4 or 5 a.m.

I also spent much time outside Skopje and visited relatives in villages or other towns in Macedonia and participated in personal celebrations or national festivals. The summer was either spent in Greece (until 1990) or in Ohrid, when Skopje was deserted and virtually every young person from Skopje would be in Ohrid living in groups together in pensions, or at friends' houses or flats.

I conducted 102 formal interviews with three generations of women in Skopje, Ohrid, Bitola, Prilep and villages in the Skopje, Ohrid and Prilep area. They were long term interviews with friends, their mothers and grandmothers, several of them repeated over the years from 1992 to 1996 as well as interviews that were organised officially with different institutions in Macedonia. I also compiled individual household data, including data on kinship, family history, spending and earning. I had access to the archive and census in Skopje; however, the ethnographic detail comes from my own observation and most historical details are drawn from the memories and life stories of the many people I spoke with during my research.

Outline of the Thesis

In Chapter 1, I explore the Macedonian context and identify important political issues. Chapter 2 deals with the changes in The Republic of Macedonia that become visible when looking at how the graduates enter the world of employment under the current circumstances. I explore what is changing and what persists in the Republic of Macedonia. Within this framework I discuss social and physical mobility and status and lifestyle expectations. In Chapter 3, I discuss the symbolic inscription of the bodies of my informants. Their body management represents security in a world of uncertainties. In Chapter 4, consumption is presented as a communication with the world outside Macedonia. Chapter 5 introduces the 'Essence of Being' and the world of the grandparents and the village. The grandparents and their lives serve as a reference point for my young urban informants. It creates a connection with the past and their roots. As such, it deals with procreation and gender. Chapters 6 to 9 explore changing features of weddings and marriages. I discuss the meaning of marriage for my informants through three generations. I infer that marriage has gone beyond exchange and proves to be a medium for creating personal, more than kin or national, identity. Chapter 10 looks into the mapping of urban identity and connects specific themes that have been introduced in the previous chapters. This I do by exploring the landscape of the city of Skopje and its

role in shaping a discourse on identity for my informants. The city comes to stand in opposition to the village and within the city the north and the south of the city come to stand for the difference between the ethnic groups of Albanian and Slavic Macedonians. The construction of Skopje becomes a discourse of the past with the future.

CHAPTER 1

MACEDONIAN CONTEXT

Who can be called Macedonian? Is there a Macedonian past and history? Is there a Macedonian identity that the people of today's Republic of Macedonia can claim as theirs? "Who are the Macedonians?" (Poulton, 1995) and "The Macedonian Conflict" (Danforth, 1995) are intriguing book titles that point towards the dilemma within The Republic of Macedonia today. There is no doubt that Macedonia did, and does today, exist in a geographical and historical sense, although with the fall of Yugoslavia, Macedonia's geography and history have been called into question. This situation, namely, suddenly being unable to describe or know who you are and what your people are, results in a void I call a vacuum. *"Who are you, if other people tell you that you do not exist?"* I heard this question many times during 1991 and 1995 while I was in Macedonia.

The path to independence for the Republic of Macedonia was direct. A popular referendum was held and Macedonia seceded from Yugoslavia and became a sovereign state on September 8, 1991 when the majority of voters chose independence. The

constitution was declared on November 17, 1991. On January 25, 1991 Macedonia was declared an independent state. During the following month, The Republic of Macedonia was recognised by about a dozen states. However, not until April 8, 1993 was Macedonia accepted within the United Nations as Macedonia and, bowing to Greek pressures, was then accepted only as *de facto* by the European Community. The Greek hesitancy to acknowledge the Republic of Macedonia, was based on its calling itself Macedonia which was seen as exercising territorial claims upon the Greek Northern territories. Greece alleged:

1. The Macedonians should not be recognised as Macedonians because the true Macedonians have been of Greek nationality since 2000 BC.
2. Those so-called Macedonians, whose language belongs to the Slavic family of languages, must not be called Macedonians since, 4000 years ago, the 'true' Macedonians spoke Greek and still speak nothing but Greek.
3. Macedonia has no right to call itself by this name because Macedonia has always been, and still is, a region of Greece. Greece claimed that Macedonia intended to exercise territorial claim on Greek soil by appropriating Greek history.

The EC, only in private individuals' accounts, never openly², declared Greece's fears unwarranted, as Macedonia was too small and dependent on the international

community to be of any serious threat to Greece. Today Macedonia has met Greece's demands, namely to change the flag, to recognise the borders as permanent and to accept the issue of the name.

In 1993, two years after becoming a sovereign state, Macedonia was viable as an independent state, despite economical-political difficulties and the pervasive fear of being pulled into the Yugoslavian civil war even though Macedonia was protected through international forces, in particular the USA and UNPROFOR. It is a miracle that Macedonia has not been involved in the war, as Macedonia itself has a variety of ethnic and religious groups with their own issues within its borders. A dominant sentiment that prevents major inter-ethnic tension is the positive attitude towards the socialist past and the fear of a catastrophe like that in Bosnia.

Macedonia has, as other post-communist eastern European countries also have, a highly plural government; 40 parties soon formed 3 government blocks. The dominant political force is the middle-left, a union between social-democrats, socialists and liberals. Other parties: the rightist Macedonian and Albanian nationalist block and the Macedonian nationalists, VMRO have dwindling public support, in part because they lack a political and economical program for Macedonia.

A general poll examining in 1993-1994 the issue of political support within the population, illustrates the general trend toward a social- democratic system 3:

Political Party	November 1993	June 1994
Social Democratic Union	22.8%	18.8%
Party of Democratic Prosperity	18.4%	15.9%
Democratic Party	6.3%	8.3%
VMRO/DPMNE National Party	11.2%	8.2%
Liberal Party	3.2%	3.9%
Socialist Party	3.3%	2.8%
Labour Party	2.9%	1.6%

While Greece and the European Union are concerned that Macedonia shows a tendency toward nationalism, I note that the government is formed by relatively young and generally highly-educated people. President Gligorov is a very moderate and pragmatic political force.

Today, economically, Macedonia faces a mild crisis in that its links and routes to the outside world, and their food and imports for instance, are severely restricted. In order not to cause any ethnic conflict Macedonia is supported in its slow and moderate economic changes by the international community. Its legitimisation as an independent state is based not on the glorious past of Alexander the Great, but on the last fifty years as part of the former Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia and Macedonia

During the Second World War, the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) endorsed a Macedonian nation in 1943, and gave it equal status with the other five federal units of the future Yugoslavia. The Stalin-Tito split marked the end of any Yugoslav-Bulgarian co-operation and the end of any plans to unite Varder, the Yugoslavian part of Macedonia, and Pirin Macedonia, the Bulgarian section. It was under Tito that a distinct Macedonian consciousness developed and during Tito's rule that the terms 'Macedonia' and 'Macedonian' were used to represent an identity and to convey concepts which had no connection with Greece.

Macedonia and 'Others'

Macedonia differs from other former republics and post-communist states because it has held onto its socialist values. Macedonia looks positively at its socialist past and attempts to integrate this socialist past into its current political process. As Macedonia aims for a socialist democratic system, Macedonia has kept many of its social laws, changed its economy to a market economy and its politics to democracy as it moves slightly away from socialism. Macedonia seeks stability in inter-ethnic relations in order to prevent itself from a fate similar to that of other ex-republics of the former Yugoslavia. Because Macedonia adheres to CSCE standards and is monitored by many human rights organisations, it is in a position to be recognised by the EU. Since 1991, the international community has guaranteed Macedonia's external security and co-ordinates internal reforms. Macedonia's economic transformation as Macedonia has pursued a policy of disarmament, conflict avoidance and international co-operation.

In 1994, the ruling coalition in Macedonia won enough support to amend the constitution. Most importantly the coalition changed annexing laws that could be interpreted as encouraging the annexation of external territory. This paragraph of the constitution had been drafted without much foresight, likely with the intention of rejoining Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, Greece had, with justification, protested loudly,

especially against this constitutional amendment in consideration of its Slav minority and expatriates of its Macedonian territory.

Expatriate Macedonians had influenced the discussion about Alexander the Great being the 'Ancestor of all Macedonians,' as they were the fervent nationalists appropriating Alexander the Great's symbols. The rhetoric of the expatriates was picked up by Macedonian nationalists within the Republic but was not well-supported for two main reasons. The Macedonians see themselves as descendants of the Slav migration that in 678 A.D. moved into the Balkans and Macedonia. Secondly, Macedonians within the Republic of Macedonia felt they would be in grave danger of repercussions as rhetoric could quickly lead to war. Returning émigrés with their romanticised understanding of Macedonia's history have made little contribution to Macedonia's successful 'non-extremist' policies and are met with much suspicion in Macedonia.

The largest national minority in Macedonia is the Albanian one, who, because of their numbers, claim official status as Macedonia's second people. They boycotted the independence referendum and census as they felt they did not receive enough recognition. There is the perception in Macedonia that the Albanian minority constitutes a threat that could result in civil war.

Independence

On September 9, 1991, Macedonia held a referendum on its sovereignty and independence and on November 17 of the same year, a new Constitution was adopted. By April 8, 1993, the Republic of Macedonia became a member of the United Nations. On September 13th, 1995, Greece and the Republic of Macedonia signed an agreement regarding the Star of Vergina, a symbol found on the tomb of Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, that had been included on the Macedonian flag: Macedonia agreed to remove this potent symbol and Greece responded by lifting the economic embargo that had severely disrupted Macedonia's economy. Further, it was agreed that negotiations over the issue of Macedonia's name in the future would take place, as Greece felt it had the exclusive right on the name and Alexander the Great's historical presence.

Who are the Macedonians?

Macedonians as a people consider themselves Slavic and Christian Orthodox. Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania understand Macedonia as a particular geographical region and not a nation: they do not believe the people of that area have a specific 'Macedonian' identity. In the Republic of Macedonia, a large minority of Islamic

Albanians refuse to identify with the Macedonian state because of their differing religion and culture. They entertain the notion of the separation of West Macedonia and its joining a greater Albania, unrealistic though this may be. As a state, the Republic of Macedonia currently considers people who have lived within the boundaries of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the last 15 years to be citizens. I argue that Macedonia as a nation is contested and there are overlaps between the self-definition of Macedonia as a state and as a people. This contention arises, not through external competition, but through internal conflict within the Albanian population.

From my perspective, within the boundaries of the Republic of Macedonia, there are Albanian, Vlach, Rom, Serbian and Macedonian citizens all with equal constitutional rights. Because of this, I make a distinction between citizens of Macedonia and Macedonians. I consider Macedonians to have an ethnic identity, as there exists amongst them a definite sense of themselves. This sense of group identity has been acquired over the past 50 years while Macedonia was the Socialist Republic of Macedonia within the Yugoslav federation.

Geographical Macedonia

The etymology of the country's name is still unclear. Macedonia is a term known for the last 3000 years. During 500 years of Ottoman Rule Macedonia, at that time an area of 67,500 km², with about 3.5 million people, mostly of Slav origin, was considered an important part of the Ottoman Empire. In the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, Macedonia was split amongst Greece, which acquired over half the territory called Aegean-Macedonia; Serbia, which acquired the economically viable Vardar-Macedonia in which most of the Macedonian population lived; and, Bulgaria, which gained a small area called Pirin-Macedonia. After World War I, Albania gained some Macedonian territory as well, specifically the west shore of the Ohrid lake, with a population of approximately 100,000 Macedonians.

Today's Republic of Macedonia is Vardar-Macedonia, the area Serbia received in 1913 as South Serbia and which they called the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. The republic has an area of 25,713 km², with 2,033,964 inhabitants, who declared their ethnic identity in 1991 as follows (the numbers are taken from the publication of the Office for Statistics):

Macedonian	65.3%
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Albanian	21.7%
Turkish	3.8%
Rom	2.5%
Vlach	0.3%
Others	6.4%

In the last 50 years Macedonia has experienced rapid urbanisation and the Macedonian population is now concentrated in cities⁵:

City	Population
Skopje (capital city)	448, 229
Bitola	84,002
Prilep	70,152
Kumanovo	69,231
Tetovo	51,472
Tito Veles	47,326

Ohrid	42,908
Stip	42,826
Strumica	34,396

Macedonia Connects to the Past

Macedonia initially wanted to remain part of the former Yugoslavia. In 1991, Macedonia's President, Kiro Gligorov, and Bosnian President, Alija Izetbegovic, in trying to avoid a disastrous outcome in the disintegration of Yugoslavia, suggested a loosely organised community of former Yugoslavian republics, similar to the EC model. Macedonia fought to remain within such a system and to remain within Yugoslavia. However, because of the war in the former Yugoslavia, the only option at that time would have been to join in a Greater Serbia, a possibility the Macedonians declined. However, once independent, Macedonia regained an image of itself that was celebrated extensively in 1993 through several anniversary celebrations:

1. 100 years since the founding of the inner Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO);

2. 90 years since the Illinden-Uprising of 1903 (August 2 is the religious name day of St. Illija – Illinden);
3. The remembrance of the ASNOM (Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia) meeting August 2, 1944, in which the fate of post-war Macedonia was decided.

These three anniversaries have fundamental meaning for Macedonia. The Illinden uprising originated as a short-lived uprising against Ottoman rule, with the Krusevo Republic being declared for 10 days with a, then unseen, modern manifesto which announced democracy, human rights, religious freedom and ethnic tolerance. These ideals are to be found in today's constitution. The ASNOM meeting is celebrated in Macedonia as an emphasis on the Macedonian language and national identity, without which today's republic would have been unthinkable. Historically there was another event of importance for today's Macedonia: the celebration of 1100 years since St. Clement had been announced bishop. St. Clement was a famous student of the Slav apostles of Kyrill and Methodius. St. Clement founded the first Slavic university in Ohrid and through that institution, began the study of Slavic-Macedonian language and culture. The archbishopric of Ohrid existed until 1767, when Greek clergy in

Constantinople insisted that this church was illegitimate. Only in 1958, with the co-operation of Marshall Tito, was the Macedonian Orthodox church founded again, but it has never been recognised by the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Those events have provided an opportunity to remember that Macedonia's current national sovereignty did not emerge in a void, but that the groundwork was laid during its Yugoslavian past. Nevertheless, despite those national events, the fall of Yugoslavia left a personal void for many people within the Republic that could not be easily filled. The following pages are about defining the personal vacuum people felt and about the strategies to fill this gap and understand who they are.

Within: Macedonian Identity

In 1991 there was confusion and fear: people were concerned that war would erupt at any moment. In 1992 some normality returned and people started to accept the changes around them and settle into a routine again. There were two irritants: 1. they were not free to travel where they wanted to; and, 2. Tito had become discredited.

In the summer of 1992 we took a bus to Ohrid. It was hot, the bus was winding its way up the rocky mountain roads and was full of young people going on holiday, not to Greece as in 1990, but to the small tourist town of Ohrid which was to become so

populated during the summer that the lake became contaminated and a health warning was issued. The windows in the bus were open, a breeze was blowing through and some young men were playing guitars and singing old Yugoslav pop songs:

*"I have dreamt last night, that I don't have you,
that I lie awake on a snow sheet and quietly
some other woman is calling my name through the night - a bad dream.
I have seen in my dreams a white lily, black horses and wedding guests
without
a song and quietly, without a sound going somewhere,
are some dear people, but where?
A bad dream...."*

(Bijelo Dugme, 1976)

Spirits were low: friends and colleagues from Sarajevo were not going for a holiday. Life was different this year.

Summer had been the most important time in their lives for as long as my friends could remember. As soon as the summer holidays were over and the young people returned to their faculty or jobs, they would begin talking about where they planned to go next year, and share stories of great holiday spots and those to be missed. This year everybody would be in Ohrid even though the people in Ohrid were not happy about the invasion of *Skopjanici*⁶. There would be no foreign tourists this year. Anja whispered in my ear: "I would like to travel very, very much." When asked if the political

circumstances made her afraid that she would not be able to physically or financially leave the country, she turned to me and said: "If the standard of living was the same, not travelling wouldn't be an issue. Maybe I would like once or twice in my life to go somewhere and see the world. Not somewhere too far, not too expensive."

My friends in Macedonia define freedom as having possibilities. With the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Macedonians felt that more possibilities had been taken from them. Looking at their lives with this loss of freedom in mind, people within Macedonia slowly gained an understanding of what Macedonia was without Yugoslavia. As Anja recalls, in 1992 there was still the very real threat of war:

"There was a time, I don't know if you remember, when we could hear shooting and I thought that I should go into hiding. In the hiding place, there are cockroaches and rats and the darkness is disgusting. You can imagine how it feels to have a cockroach on your skin: It is terrible in the darkness. I don't watch the news at all and when they show all those pictures[of the war in Bosnia] I do not want to watch it. I cry a lot. I cry when I see these things and think what may happen to me. And if I think about all those things, what would it change if they recognise us. Nothing would change even if they [EU] recognise us, I think I could not feel anything, but maybe with time it would change."

(Anja, 1992)

Fear overshadowed any concern about being recognised as a country. For my informants, the question of whether or not Macedonia existed was too abstract, it was

not real to them. Everyday life involved surviving another day of real fear, anxiety and bleakness.

"My life has always been the same I think: we have always lived in an unstable country. During certain periods of time life is more difficult and then there are periods that are less difficult. Our life is still unstable, especially the economic situation. There were times when the economy was better, but there would be periods of crisis and life would be more difficult. Now I think the only things we find difficult are not being able to travel and having to hate people."

Although the people of Macedonia had difficulty understanding it, hatred was all that could be used to rationalise the war that had erupted between people who, it had previously been believed, were brothers. It was understood by most people in Macedonia that the nationalistic party, VMRO, promoted the hatred and caused the outside world, particularly Greece and the European Community, to reject Macedonia. It was well known that one of the ways to please the EC was to present one's country as liberal and tolerant. Although actions and attitudes within the country, particularly towards the Albanian population were far from tolerant, every effort was made to demonstrate the efforts put into avoiding ethnic conflict and how Macedonia was the best example of a liberal, tolerant social democracy. " I think we are the only ones in the world that can live with other nationalities and that is how we have survived. We have

no outstanding feeling of nationality. That's just our life," a middle-aged mother of two and teacher, told me.

Interestingly, it was not the American system of democracy which they sought to emulate, but the social democracy of Sweden and Germany. The American system of democracy was understood as "survival of the fittest." Macedonia, though, was too weak to fend for itself, so decided on the model of an encompassing European social democracy. Appeals were made to the European Community to take responsibility for helping the country. The choice of political system was natural and was made through a personification of Macedonia as a fellow European democracy, within the social democratic system of the European Community. It was not "fend for yourself," but "fend for the weak." This socialist sensibility became more important throughout the years as it preserved self-worth and an identification with socialist Yugoslavia.

Socialism was not banned, rather it was seen as a superior social tool that only had to be improved in two ways: firstly, any totalitarian sentiment had to be eradicated from the political, legal and economic arena; and, secondly, a modern European market economy had to be introduced to replace the weakest points in the socialist system. The question: "What do you prefer, socialism or VMRO?" was answered in 1994 with: "We have Turkish and Albanian neighbours and all of them are living very well, helping each

other. And now a few men lead people in the wrong direction, to hate each other. I really do not know why. You know if your stomach and pocket are full, there is no need for hate." In this atmosphere, nationalism was seen as the wrong force for the time. One's own survival was linked with the fate of Macedonia in Europe. A woman in her late fifties describes how she saw the relationship between Macedonia and Europe:

"We are used to a poor life. When Europe condemns us to such a life we must not fight them. I still believe in civilised Europe; today or tomorrow they will have to understand that although few people live here, we are in no way inferior to other civilised people in Europe. We are Macedonians: that's first. But we are international, refined and educated."

In day-to-day life, people constantly reflected on the difference between educated Europe and the uncivilised Balkans. It is this preoccupation, this fear of being seen as inferior to Europe, that is the determining force for independent Macedonia. Within this preoccupation lies the dominant feature of the Macedonian search for self-identity - they want to decide both who they want to be and who they don't want to be. To the question: "Do you feel Macedonian?" Ana, a 45 year-old engineer, answered:

"What's the point of it? The feeling of nationality doesn't matter, when I don't have anything to live on. I believed in Yugoslavia, but now I don't. What kind of country is it, if it doesn't care for us? We are university-educated, we are civilised and informed. We are not children."

Education is important in Macedonia: it distinguishes the uncivilised Balkans from the European countries. It was Tito who brought education to the Macedonian people and the old people remind the children of this. It is education's transformative powers that give self-worth and transform an uncivilised Balkan country into a European country. Macedonians are considered well-educated, especially by my informants, most of whom have finished university degrees in engineering. During the Yugoslav years, Macedonia was considered part of a wider scientific community but, with the political changes of 1991, this ended and many felt excluded from the rest of the world. Books were not readily available and neither was current knowledge of the surrounding world. A cosmetician⁷ told me: "I am Macedonian, but I feel European. It is very hard for me when they separated us and put us back, but we should be in Europe: our place is there." 'Putting us back' was a phrase used mostly by older people to refer to the idea that Macedonia had been elevated from a typical peasant society to the status of a European country because of the Yugoslav years. Many people felt that the attitude of the outside world, evident in the refusal of Greece and other countries to recognise Macedonia, was directly linked to attempts to return Macedonia to its status as a backward peasant Balkan country. It did not help that Turkey was the first country to recognise Macedonia, since their acceptance was seen as their playing the role of Ottoman masters

again and reducing Macedonia to its peasant past. A bitter saying, repeatedly quoted, even before 1990 was: "What do you expect, we were peasants for 500 years under Ottoman rule," which suggests that Macedonians feel that period when they were ruled by the Ottomans was part of a dark history that had kept Macedonia separate from Europe for so long, and it was therefore ironic, and somewhat unwelcome, that Turkey was the first nation to formally recognise Macedonia. The fact that Turkey recognised Macedonia deepened the negative and chauvinistic feelings towards the Islamic Albanian population who were seen by the Slav population as holding Macedonia back: the Islamic Albanian minority with their backwardness was seen as an obstacle in attempts to join Europe.

Over the years, issues of self worth, both personal and as a nation, dominated many of my conversations in Macedonia. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia, there seemed to be a struggle to reassess feelings of self-worth.

"I am sorry that Yugoslavia is gone. I personally recognise the old Yugoslavia but I am also a typical Macedonian in the sense that I was born in Skopje. Macedonians are worth something. I come from this country and I am not ashamed that we are seen as backward in comparison to some other European countries. I am Tito's child and he was the man who taught us that we must withstand, we must avoid temptations and go on. We studied, we were children of average parents, but we made an effort and we went ahead. We believe in education: this is the weapon with which we can get out of the

poor life. This we learnt in Yugoslavia. We have to continue to progress and learn things even if they are not ours. We have to learn to accept."

In this context, I understand 'accept' to mean 'being accepted and accepting' and, as such, feelings of hatred for the Albanian population are to be suppressed at least in official discourse. And so, Macedonia presents itself to the outside world as being worthy of a place at the heart of Europe. "If Europe accepts us it will be very easy for us to immediately feel we are Europeans because for 50 years we lived as Yugoslavian. We have no inferiority complexes."

The ideals which are understood to be distinctively Macedonian are directly related to Tito's achievements. Macedonians feel that Tito brought their country into Europe and it is considered necessary to uphold his ideals in order to stay within the larger European community. This is the primary reason why Macedonia, unlike Slovenia, Croatia and Poland, has not turned its back on socialism while seeking European recognition. The ideals that Tito planted in Macedonian society are seen to legitimise Macedonia's desire to be an integral part of Europe. Nevertheless, in 1992 Tito became discredited and the leader of the government, VMRO, which advocated nationalism as a solution for Macedonia, took action to remove any overt association with Tito. It became one of the

VMRO's policies to take down Tito's pictures in all public buildings. This action angered the Macedonian people:

"I regret that the nationalists took Tito's picture down. I consider him very important for Macedonia, no matter how others neglect him. While he was our president, Macedonia became a legally recognised state for the first time. He was an exceptional person, rare and despite the totalitarianism, a legend of his time."

A 23-year-old engineering student told me:

"I liked Tito. Well, I was a child and we waved at him - now they attack him. I don't like this. He did good things, now they present him as having never acted for the public well-being. They associate sordid stories with him to sully his name, fabricating stories that he had 16 children and so on. To do this is not good for us. We waved at him, not only us children, but everybody waved at him and now they act like we had no association with him."

Her opinion was widely shared amongst other young students, as well as by their parents. The mother of a friend, who was married to a Yugoslavian diplomat, said:

"I do not miss Tito or Yugoslavia. It is over. I do not even think about Tito. But we are very grateful to him, as he changed our life very much. For the first time, we had our own country and our own identity. Before we were nothing and now they try to do the same again to us, to make us nothing. Somebody said you are Greek, you are Bulgarian, you are Serbian, but now we are Macedonian. And Tito said: 'You are Macedonian, you are a nation.' If you still see his pictures on the walls it is because we are grateful for that. If not for him, we would not have our own country. We would be still Bulgarian, Serbian or Greek."

Many shop owners started putting up pictures of Tito in their shops, thus combining the new privatisation policy of the market economy with old socialist ideals. It was the widespread reaction against the VMRO discrediting Tito and its nationalistic rhetoric, combined with the failure of its anti-Communist stance, which led to the eventual downfall of the VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity). Macedonian rejection of the VMRO illustrated Macedonia's commitment to Europe and its distaste for nationalism.

The issue of Macedonia's political inheritance and its current and future allegiances became a concern for all, because, as an informant, Biljana, points out:

"You know, after all that happens here, I am totally confused. Now I do not know anything about our history, because something that is told about Tito three years ago, is said differently now. Maybe it is true, maybe it was true, maybe now it is true. Today everybody is interested in politics not because of politics, but because of life. It affects everybody's everyday life".

All my informants were aware that Macedonia's fate depended almost exclusively on its political future. President Kiro Gligorov was understood to be a decisive figure - and nearly a father figure as Tito had been. Macedonians believed that Gligorov had prevented war in Macedonia and when there was an assassination attempt in September

1995, allegations surfaced that the Bulgarian Mafia and VMRO- nationalists were responsible.

Suse summed up the general understanding of Macedonia and being Macedonian:

"I feel Macedonian now. I felt Yugoslavian two years ago because somebody told me that I was Yugoslavian since I lived in Yugoslavia. Now I am Macedonian, not only because I live in Macedonia, but because there is no Yugoslavia and there never can be again, ever. You know, when Yugoslavia fell apart I thought the best solution would be to be in an economic-political confederation. Now there is no way for that, and I hope the war in Bosnia will calm down soon. After the war, we have to make connections with the other republics, simply because we have to live together."

With the events in Bosnia, Macedonian nationalism was regarded as a negative force that would eventually bring war:

"Just as there are bad Albanians who think about a greater Albania, there are also nationalistic Macedonians who think of a greater Macedonia. That would lead us to the Bosnian situation. I think of Macedonia and I have had enough of it. I have only one flat8 and I am not interested."

Nationalism was not the solution for Macedonia; in order to survive Macedonia had to be redefined along other lines. The determination of these lines, however, is still under dispute essentially because the redefinition of Europe is also underway.

Macedonian identity is directly linked to the imagery of Europe and the Western World and although people have quite different memories of the past, they always want

Macedonia's future to be in Europe, in order to recover what they felt they lost with the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The loss of economic standing and their inability to travel, have had a direct impact on the way Macedonians feel about themselves and how they think others view them. Lydia, a 25 year old engineering student says:

"I miss Yugoslavia. We had a better standard of living. Now, wherever I go, people look at me as a potential refugee or someone who will cause trouble: a lunatic Balkan person. But when we were in Yugoslavia, people respected us and we stuck together. I miss Yugoslavia, I miss the music, I miss the people, the relationships we had. I was in Austria this summer and we met people from all over Europe and the first day we met we discovered that we are now Croatians, Slovenians - former Yugoslavians...we stayed together until the last day. I felt these people were closer to me than, for instance, people from Bulgaria. We love the same sports, the same sport heroes, the same music, the same dances and we went on holiday in the same places. I have never been to Bulgaria, for example, but many times to Slovenia. I know so many places in Slovenia and that is what I miss. Now it is all different, they study their own history, their own way of living, they have their own money. We do something else. Now I cannot travel."

A colleague of Lydia's, Sonja, says: "I would like to go abroad, anywhere, to gain some work experience. I have always had the chance to travel, it is in my blood. I would like to continue to travel, to meet other people, learn about other cultures, see their architecture, learn about their history. That is one of my biggest dreams in my life."

Her mother reflected on the changes:

"I cannot comprehend what is going on and I am really sorry about what is happening. I grew up and lived in Yugoslavia. I studied in Ljubljana. I have friends from Dalmatia, Bosnia, Serbia, there was no difference between us, we had so many things in common. I felt nothing could separate us and I can't understand what happened. It is awful, terrible, nothing more devastating could have happened. I am sorry even now that Yugoslavia fell apart. Yugoslavia was small to me, not to mention Macedonia now..."

A Turkish woman from Berevo, who had worn the veil until her husband tore it away from her against her will after attending a communist league meeting, said:

"We older people will never forget Yugoslavia, but the younger will. But we won't forget that we could go freely wherever we wanted to go, and now you have to be scared to cross the borders of even Macedonia. One travels with fear. Now it is not free. Tito was an influence for 40 years and we lived in freedom. We were proud of Tito, but Yugoslavia is gone now and it should have been better for the young people. Our life is over, but it should have been better for the young."

The fear that the children will suffer, even though the parents have worked all their lives to give them a better life than they themselves had, runs deep in Macedonian society. An old woman from Prilep says:

"This will just impoverish us again. The young people do not know what poverty is, but I grew up before Yugoslavia existed and I know what poverty is. Now the young people will go where we came from, that is what Macedonia was about. Macedonia is nothing without the old Yugoslavia, but we do not want the Serbians here again either. I am too old. I cannot say anything anymore."

Her young niece comments on this as well: "I am not interested in politics but before, under socialism, we had more opportunities. We were given the opportunity to learn, it opened our eyes, unlike the changes we are now undergoing. Everyone was employed, had a flat, a car, furniture, money for living, for holidays, clothes, now it is not like that..."

The near impossibility of obtaining a visa and the concomitant inability to travel is an especially traumatic experience: "Not to be allowed to go somewhere and see something, there is nothing more difficult than that," Jasmina, a 25 year-old engineering student from Ohrid, confessed.

Conclusion

The personal void many Macedonians felt after independence is directly related to the fact that Macedonia's identity is strongly connected to Yugoslavia, despite a thousand year history. Some nationalist and expatriate Macedonians tried to fill this void with nationalist rhetoric and a glamorous ancestor, however, such trappings did not find popular support. The most I would hear regarding the nationalism was:

"Perhaps it is because of the present political situation but recently I have become a greater patriot. I am sorry that our country is unrecognised by all, but I am part of my country. Otherwise I have not been thinking a lot about

what makes me Macedonian: I was born here and I live here and I feel that they are wrong about us."

Others expressed their beliefs in what is, ultimately, a desire to be European: "If we all get together again, then I will be Yugoslavian again. Now I am Macedonian because this is my country," and "I think what makes someone feel Macedonian is when you feel you are part of it. I felt part of Yugoslavia and I was Yugoslavian. When I am part of Europe, I will be European." Essentially, their quest for identity is a quest to be European.

Brown (1995) and Danforth (1995) agree with Poulton who argues that nationalism determines Macedonians very being:

"The impact of modern nationalism on Macedonia and its peoples has been momentous. It is one of the prime reasons for the area becoming the 'apple of discord' in the Balkans and the centre of such intense controversy.... Nationalism... is seen as an activist ideological movement which aims to unite all members of a given people on the basis of a putative shared culture. As such it claims to represent the whole collective, however defined, and is antagonistic to competing cultural claims on the totality or parts of this collective, which is deemed by the adherents to constitute an actual or potential nation." (Poulton 1995:6)

The everyday life I discovered in Macedonia does not in any way support such a statement. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia people in Macedonia concentrated

rather on their individual lives than political events which does not mean that people in Macedonia are apolitical. On the contrary, people in Macedonia have appropriated politics into their everyday life and given it their own distinctive meaning, leaning, as they do, on the hope that one day they will be full members of Europe, accepted, not as a nation, but as a people. I have arrived at this conclusion by living in Skopje during the decisive years. In the next chapters I undertake to give you the quintessence of this everyday life.

CHAPTER 2

GETTING ALONG

During the times that tore Yugoslavia apart and swept the world with images of atrocities and stories of friends and neighbours killing each other, the idea of 'getting along' seemed aeons away from everyday reality. Macedonia, fortunately, has been able to stay out of the civil war in Yugoslavia and also prevent civil war within its own borders. Understanding what it means to live in these times of uncertainty and change requires consideration of daily life in Skopje while the former Yugoslavia is drowning. On the surface, life in Skopje seems the same as usual, but maybe it is not. The circumstances of the young female engineering graduates after a worry-free adolescence in Yugoslavia, and who are now entering the work force and adult life, illustrate clearly the trials of daily life. Vital to this discussion is the difference between what my informants termed 'Western' and 'Balkan.' The 'Balkan' was seen as the cause of the Yugoslav civil war and 'Western' was, by definition, in direct opposition to everything 'Balkan.' Tone Bringa discusses the same notion in her book *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way* in terms of being civilised and uncivilised, *kulturni* and *ne kulturni*, cultured and

uncultured (1995:58ff). In Skopje, these terms, *kulturni/ne kulturni*, existed on the same local and global scale in the form of 'Western' or 'Balkan.' Whereas Bringa's discussion of these terms focuses on the difference between the city and the village, in Skopje at the time of my research, their world and its constituents were categorized as 'Balkan' and 'Western,' which also established the scale of culturedness with 'Western' at the top and descending to 'Balkan.' The culturedness was assessed in relation to people's behaviour in social interactions with others (Bringa 1995:58). In creating a partial picture of daily life, elements of social change within Macedonian society are revealed. I do not claim to represent 'the truth.' 'Truth' cannot depict life with its ambiguity and shifting perceptions, as it is lived by people. But one of the 'truths' I was told in most of my conversations during my fieldwork, was the 'truth' about the difference between the Balkan and the 'West.' For instance, Goran identifies his specific understanding of 'Western' work ethic, precise and organised assignment of tasks for the workforce and a punctual and early start of the work day and contrasts it with the 'Balkan' attitude of his supervisor.

"When I got the job as music editor at Zatex I did not really know what I was supposed to do and I still do not know. I do a little bit of this, a little bit of that and, basically, I can do whatever I feel like doing. The boss is never there anyway and he does not care. When I started, I always came at 8 in the morning. One day my supervisor came and told me I was making others feel bad. Why couldn't I come a bit later, like 11 am. Now I come around this time. I talk to my colleagues and then we go to the café. Only when the boss is in do we not want to be seen sitting in the café."

(Goran, 1995)

Although, perhaps because, Macedonia lies in the heart of the Balkans, there are many negative associations with the Balkans' in Skopje⁹. However, when Macedonia was a republic within Yugoslavia, its physical boundaries were extended towards Northern Europe or 'the West.' With the disintegration of Yugoslavia those boundaries have been redefined and Macedonia has been thrust back into the Balkans. My informants feel that this has had very real impacts on their lives, the greatest of which has been the alteration of their expectations of their adult life. In their attitude towards work they were, as they said, highly ambitious and oriented towards 'the West.' They were heading for a 'career' and wanted to work, improve their knowledge in their field and do something useful. They also wanted to earn money, but this was secondary. What they got in independent Macedonia, contrasted with their 'Yugoslav' expectations was, not a career, but a job, and a poorly-paid, dead-end one at that. For many of them,

their jobs did not offer the possibility of promotion and more rewarding and challenging positions. Furthermore, their way into work was facilitated by "connections" their parents had and thus created a new dependence. This situation was termed 'Balkan' by my informants.

The low wages of many of my informants was not an issue in terms of contribution to the household as they used what they earned as pocket money. Some of the more entrepreneurial, all male, tried to do some consulting work which was directly connected to NGO's and foreign investments in Macedonia and promised, eventually, more money because most of those enterprises were subsidised by foreign capital and expertise. However, to be solely involved with these enterprises was considered too insecure by most parents and therefore seen as a relatively poor choice. The perceived inferiority of these endeavours was based, I believe, on two factors:

1. Parents preferred the traditional, secure employment in state organisations;
2. The feeling that the foreigners could pull out of Macedonia at any time, due to lack of interest, economic reasons or war.

My informants are being initiated into their new role of 'making a living'. They are trying to perform in a work culture however that neither gives them the experience of

'really making a living' nor develops them to fit a role they would like. In this context, what does work mean to my informants and, if they see themselves working, how do they respond to the specific limitations their new society poses on them? By relating three cases, I wish to give a picture of the elements that have made the working life of my informants so different from that of their parents. This depiction will also outline what Yugoslavia may have been able to offer them a few years ago. When considering the situation experienced in Western Europe after the world wars, it seems that people believed life could not get worse, only better, whereas my friends carry in their heart the thought that things can only get worse or, at best, remain unchanged.

The Change

Before considering how my informants experience the challenge their changing society poses for them, an account of the world around them is necessary. This information is based largely on an informal interview¹⁰ in May 1995 with Nane Ruzin, Member of Parliament of the Macedonian Assembly, who sums up the current situation of Macedonia with such insight that his thoughts mirror those of most Macedonians I have met. For many people, the dissolution of Yugoslavia has meant rethinking what they had believed during Yugoslavian times and discovering what to believe today.

What Macedonians could believe in was not clearly defined for most people, including Minister Ruzin, at the time of my research.

Upholding socialist values was becoming increasingly difficult as the all-encompassing framework of Yugoslavia had disappeared and nationalist identity was defined relative to the contrast between 'Macedonians' and 'Albanians'¹¹. The redefinition of the state boundaries, no longer reaching toward Austria or Italy, was greeted by Macedonians with a partial glorification of what they perceived as 'Western,' that is, what had been close to the physical boundaries of Yugoslavia and accessible to them through travel. However, an important Macedonian feature of this glorification was that the legacy of Yugoslavia was not forgotten and was also glorified. Such perceptions melted into an interesting amalgamation of a Yugoslav past with some Western ideals versus a Balkan identity in people's minds. People feared that they would lose the connection they had with the West and regress to being Balkan again, rather like the Albanian minority is perceived as doing. The economy of Macedonia is, despite financial aid, battered since it relied heavily on the Yugoslav economy. As Mr. Ruzin rightly points out, it is specifically the economic situation of Macedonia that has the most impact on the lives of my young informants. Macedonia's industry has ground

to a halt despite an abundance of workers, while there are not enough farmers working the land.

My informants entered university while there was a Yugoslavian state. They were to become Yugoslavian engineers, 'intellectual' workers and an elite of the socialist state. Until 1994 the number of first year engineers exceeded other faculties at the university of Skopje, when more first year students registered for economics. When my friends graduated, they were leaving a university in The Republic of Macedonia. The boundaries of their state had shrunk and their freedom of movement and work opportunities had been greatly curtailed.

In the spring of 1991 there had been a meeting called by the union of all engineering students of Yugoslavia in Sarajevo to follow-up similar meetings held in different Republics every year. A week before they were to go to Sarajevo, to meet old friends, the siege of that city began. Many of the friends from last year's meeting in Ljubljana who they were looking forward to seeing, they never saw again. Some of them were killed or went missing. The security of the socialist state had fallen away, the jobs they had anticipated in the industry evaporated. Many had hoped to continue with postgraduate studies and possibly study in other republics of Yugoslavia or abroad, a possibility no longer. Because the nature of their study demanded current knowledge in

computer science and technology, the isolation of The Republic of Macedonia proved to be a heavy burden and many have given up dreams of scientific enterprise. In their minds they had nothing to contribute to the scientific community and their state offered them no support in that direction.

Entering the 'Workforce' and the Liberal Market Philosophy

My young informants knew they did not have the same security as their parents had had when they started their adult life: there was no longer a workforce or working community to enter. But not only is their choice limited through less work, at the same time Macedonia is undergoing changes towards a free-market economy which has a great impact on how many young people perceive the world around them. "So the western economy is about everybody fending for themselves and trying to gain as much as possible at the expense of others?" (Informant, 1993). Even though the ideal of 'Western' was embraced, people were aware of the social consequences and distrusted efforts to turn Macedonia into a copy of Western Europe.

In a café with friends, we saw three girls burst in, one girl in tears, all of them obviously upset. As often happens in Skopje, my friends knew these girls from the faculty and asked about their distress. It turned out that the girl in tears had just finished

university and had started work with one of the private computer companies that were springing up very quickly. She had been very happy to get this job and, as the factories were closing down, it was private businesses or ministries that were hiring. She had worked for three months for this company and banked much over-time. No contract had been signed and payment had been promised after observing her work performance for three months. She then was laid off without any payment and someone new was hired. This is not an isolated case. Another informant, a mechanical engineer, was offered a job installing alarm systems into cars. He was a specialist in Turbines, a much more skilled occupation, but he needed money quickly as his father had just died and his brother had just married and there was another mouth to feed. He was offered 100 DM, around £40¹². When he started working, his manager also employed another man on the same job. After observing them for a month, he told them that he would hire the better one who would start getting a salary from the third month onwards. My friend quit.

Few jobs my informants hold today give them sufficient income to make a great change in their financial situation and they remain largely dependent on the earning of their parents. Important benefits of working, like status and self esteem, cannot be achieved by this group. During socialist times, it was commonly believed that changes to the political and economical structure of a system would form a new society, a belief

again prevalent among my informants. What they are searching for however are new values drawn from what they see on American television, values that they do not see in their own society. They believe that if these were the values in Macedonian society, their success would depend only on their own strength and knowledge: they could earn appropriate wages, recognition and afford the happy life they seek. They feel this life can only be attained by emigrating to New Zealand, Canada or Australia, or holding on, interminably, for a better job.

Survey

Mr. Ruzin describes the common expectation of a free market economy held by those in post-socialist countries: a free market will solve their economic problems and lead directly to a Western lifestyle. The disillusion after such expectations is common. For the Republic of Macedonia, according to BRIMA (British Macedonian Social Surveys, 1994):

"[In] June 1994 32% of the surveyed people indicated that, generally speaking, they and their family's living standard had decreased significantly, 32% answered it had somewhat decreased and 30% said it remained the same; 1% stated that it had increased a lot and 2% did not know."

The free market was clearly not a system to covet. In the same report, "42% of the surveyed people agreed that the privatisation of state companies is the wrong step, 42% said it was the right thing to do and 16% did not know." To the question "Do you think you will lose something if you don't participated in the process of privatisation?" (direct quote, including error), "23% surely felt this, 15% thought it probable, 41% thought that they would lose nothing and 21 % did not know." And to the question, "Do you think that the creation of a market economy which means the ending of state control is right or wrong for the future of our country?" "32% thought of it right in November 1993 as well as in June 1994; in November 1993, 51% thought it wrong as compared with 49% in June 1994 and 18 to 19% did not know."

Politics in a 'Post-Communist' Society

My informants certainly associated a better life with a 'western style' of living and in the summer of 1990, Macedonians thought this would result, believing that with the reform program of Ante Markovich: "Yugoslavia will soon be able to join the EC." (Informant 1990) By 1995, many of them believed that a desirable future could only be achieved outside their own country. Immigration forms were filled out. They did not live with the hope of a better life, since it was regarded as a 'post-communist' country

and seen as lacking the quality of life that could make it comparable to other European countries. Macedonia was missing what Mr. Ruzin detailed: capital; tradition or a history to relate to and be recognised under; and democratic and civil 'knowledge' that would form a society in which to live. Sonija describes this in her account:

"...This is the Balkans, you will never get any civilisation here. I have been to Australia, the Netherlands, these are civilisations, but not this. Germany has a history, you have kings, lords, writers, musicians. We are peasants, we have been illiterate peasants for hundreds of years, a wild bunch of primitive people who lived scattered in the mountains. We don't even know where we came from or who we are: Slavs, even the gypsies are more interesting. And we are still peasants in our minds. You see it, men spitting on the street, or your hallway, it smells like urine, you know what I mean, all the broken mailboxes and demolished bells, the windows broken and everybody throwing garbage anywhere, basically out the window. This would not happen in Germany, would it? The Netherlands was so nice, everything was so clean...And here we are and supposed to make politics. We don't know what democracy is, how could we? I was not happy in Belgrade; they were laughing at my brother in school. This is my home, but I would like to go to Australia. There are many Macedonians there."

(Sonija 1993).

People discussing politics were regarded as a nuisance and if politics were discussed, the focus was not so much on history, economics or democratic development but on the Albanian minority: "that they were getting too many rights, that the government was too afraid of them, and 'spoonfeeding' them." Particularly after the shooting in Tetevo in

February 1995¹³, feelings were intense about the issue of Albanians wanting a separate university: "The next thing they will demand is their own country." The Albanian insistence on being recognised as an autonomous group by Macedonia was a political issue that overshadowed everything else in those years, including the war in Bosnia and the economic crisis in Macedonia.

One evening I sat with friends in a crowded café called 'ZZ-Top.' One of my friends had chosen not to come because she feared terrorist attacks; her friends were laughing: "Oh, she sees everything so dramatically, she even told us to tell you, you should make sure to leave the country. And she sells petrol to the Albanians!" Even though they were afraid of violent vengeance, having seen it in pictures of Sarajevo many times, my friends refused to acknowledge politics in their lives. Even Jana's breaking of the boycott against Serbia by selling petrol to Kosovo-Albanians was not seen as a political act by her or by her friends. I believe that this thinking presents itself as an active defiance of politics. By not acknowledging the political situation in Macedonia, my friends feel they can protect themselves from its consequences. When asked about political parties and choices at the election in winter 1994, I heard recurring themes. Here I questioned a friend about her boss:

" Question: How could you get so rich in a socialist state?

...I don't know. I think he has power, and then you have a whole town behind you, they are supporting you.

Question: *Are you scared of such people?*

...I do not have contact with him, so I don't mind. I don't know.

And in the parliament he is on the right side so I am not worried. At least he is not for VMRO, so it is fine.

Question: *Does VMRO¹⁴ scare you?*

...It does not scare me because most of the people there are terribly ignorant but I would not like them to run the government. They are too aggressive. That's mainly why I do not like them because they think they should fight with everybody: with Serbia, with Greece. They want to fight with Albania, fight with everybody. Stating in Greece that they are Macedonians and we are Macedonians, come on...! ¹⁵That's ridiculous.

In the democratic party they have some clever people there, but I do not much like the president of this party, he is too arrogant. He thinks he knows everything.

Question: *So you voted for the communists?*

.....: Yes I did, I admit. But come on, they are not really communists. It is ignorant to say that, because the leaders of all the other parties were in the communist party before. Now they call themselves a Socialist-Democratic Party. That's what they are actually called, not communists. And they are all young people, they are 30 years old, they could not be communists, real communists since they are all younger; a new generation. Okay, Kiro Gligorov was a communist, he doesn't deny it. But who wasn't? Every director had to be in the communist party. You had to be in the communist party if you wanted to be a director or a chief or something. You simply had to."

Many people were distrustful of politics. A friend explained in 1995:

"We have not developed a real social, economic or political life. We are just moving all over the place. The main problem with the political parties, and it's probably the same everywhere, is power. The problem is that we are only three years away from separating from socialism. Many of the same people were running enterprises, still running the same things. Running our lives. I mean, it's normal."

Question: *Are these really the same people as before?*

... Mainly the same people. Mainly. Maybe not all of them. I don't have anything against the communists or, I don't know, against which one. I'm not a member of any political party, I never was. I never had problems on that score even in communist times. It's not a real social or political life as it should be. We're just floating nowhere, trying to grab what we can. We're always calling on the West. The West should recognise Macedonia. The West should help Macedonia, but I don't believe we are presenting ourselves well to the West.

...In my opinion, there is no legal contract, I mean, no legal system. The laws are not functioning. Maybe by starting with the laws, we will improve things. I don't mean by that that we need more police or restrictive laws, but bringing order, you know. Especially in business. To stop these, not quite crooks, but a lot of these companies working now they are ...corrupt.

Question: *Why do you think that is...*

...Allowed? Because someone has an interest in it, probably. Because the legal system doesn't function, you know.

Question: *Why doesn't the legal system function?*

...I can't explain that. Many things are okay on paper but in reality they fall apart. For example, if somebody owes you money, as a company, to another company, there is no way for you to...

Question: *Get the money back? There's nobody who can go and take their stereo or their car?*

...There were some trials of people organising debt collecting agencies. You pay them to beat this guy up or force him to pay, but that is not the legal way. It's not what we need. Maybe it works in the West also, but it's not the real thing. I don't know, maybe someone has an interest in that. Maybe we still need time for changes, maybe we cannot change the circumstances. There are a lot of reasons for how things are. You can't just blame the government or the people. It functions like that. If you see our surroundings: Serbia is at war, Greece is blockading us, Bulgaria is in a worse state than we are with much more crime or corruption, not to mention Albania. We are living in a..., I don't know.

Question: What kind of people are determining the direction for Macedonia?

...Despite everything that is said against this government..., I will repeat to you, I'm not a member of any party, I don't even sympathise with any party. But at the moment, maybe it was not the best choice but maybe the most reasonable choice was this government. You know the talk is around that they do everything [being corrupt- manipulating the elections]. At least from all the parties around that were in the elections, they showed that they knew what to do. It is because of what they managed to do that they got elected a second time. I tell myself: "Everything is okay as long as it is peaceful," but I must mention the circumstances once again. If you know that only a few hundred kilometres away there is a war going on, that we are in the middle of two blockades, that we have these neighbours, it could be even worse. Maybe it's not only the government."(1995)

In contrast to Pine's assessment (1996:134) that the socialist system in Poland was popularly judged by its omissions rather than by its achievements and that these judgements were formulated both in reference to an historical past and a contemporary

contrast to the West, in Macedonia the socialist system was upheld for its social achievements, but elements that were seen to be reminiscent of Macedonia's pre-socialist, peasant past were contrasted to the West. Those elements, seen as 'Balkan,' existed before and during socialism and exist yet today: only the reference for these 'Balkan' elements has changed. The connotation of 'Balkan' has changed over the years. Initially, 'Balkan' suggested a peasant past and oppression, then 'Balkan' became the contrast to the ideal socialist, industrial state and today it is contrasted to what is seen as the West. I would argue that as a political consequence, it was the Albanian minority that came to stand for this 'Balkan' element within Macedonia and that politics was seen as a subject to be avoided since politics cause war and conflict. As another consequence, the socialist government was seen as the most stable political force for Macedonia at the time of my research. And finally, the political hope for Macedonia was vested in becoming closer to the West.

Insecurity and Unemployment

It was common for an engineer still at university to become employed full-time. A friend of mine had to leave university to work because her father, despite having the same training as she did, had been laid off, her mother was a lower income earner and

her father's drinking was expensive. Her most employable skill, however, was her facility with English and not her engineering abilities. Others left before they graduated for other reasons: family issues and, "...war will come, so why should I study?" (1992). As engineers they were not filling the need in their own society that put all its economic effort into trading, mostly with Turkey or Germany and illegally with Serbia. The factories that once employed engineers were closed. Often the fathers were laid off and the mother would solely finance the family on her income as an economist, a common choice in the parents' generation. This made the mother and sometimes the daughter, with her language ability able to work for one of the foreign agencies that are flooding Macedonia¹⁶, the only income earners in the household, in addition to their responsibilities of running that household.

"Yesterday my mother and I did the weekend cleaning; my sister had to study. I asked my father to help me to put up the curtain as I could not reach and he screamed at me and told me that this was my job to do and not his. He sits there all day and does nothing. Watching television all day. He would not touch a thing in the household. My mother is working overtime at the company to get some extra money, comes home and then has to do the cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing. I cannot understand how she can take this. And then she wants me to marry!" (1994)

In considering these various factors, I would argue that the social life of my informants is directly linked with the economic and political transition of the Republic of Macedonia. In the past few years, The Republic of Macedonia experienced an increase in marketing and sales and a decrease in production. The decrease in production is related to the closure of factories that produced parts for assembly elsewhere in Yugoslavia. Since this union does not exist anymore and Macedonia does not have the capacity or the capital to build an independent infrastructure, the factories are closed and the unemployment rate is 30%. Funds offered by the EC and the USA are used to subsidise large programs of government spending. Often this money is spent in ways that are far from useful, and the work created is neither demanding nor rewarding. In the administration, the young engineers work at the level of technicians and their intellectual potential and acquired skills are not well-utilised. For instance, I was told about one of the ministries that was subsidised by a foreign aid program of 10 Million DM. A computer system was bought with this money. The deal was made between the ministry and a private computer company that belonged to the brother of a very high official of that ministry. This computer system was the newest on the market and offered opportunities of which some of my engineer friends could only dream.

However, this computer system was never put to use as none of the responsible staff had the expertise to work on such a system.

With their potential unfulfilled and the society making limited demands on them, my informants respond with a growing demand for leisure goods and services that promise them some reward and will bring them closer to their dream of a new society that closely resembles what they might have seen in western European countries and on American television. A good life is equated with buying things that seem to represent images of happiness.

Living Arrangements

Nearly all the young women in Skopje live with their parents, with virtually no chance of having their own place, even if the family owns another property¹⁷. They cannot become independent in this structure and remain 'the daughter.' This situation arose during this time of transition. After 1945, in socialist Yugoslavia, most young people left their homes in the villages or small towns to move to Skopje to work in state organisations and to move into their own flat supplied by the state:

"They treat me like when I was sixteen, they ask me all the time what I am doing and where I am going. I do not feel like telling them what is going on at work, but they want to know everything. And my mother is really worried because I mentioned Stefan so many times and he is married. I hate it when they control me like this. I think this will only change the day I am married and it may not even change then. You are lucky, you can do whatever you want and nobody tells you what is right and wrong. You are your own person. I would like to find out things for myself. I would like to make my own mistakes."

Another friend describes her situation:

"It is not a feeling of being controlled; I cannot describe that feeling accurately. I do things because I want to do them. They complain that I haven't done things correctly or my mother says: 'Oh, you came in so late last night,' and they say, 'that is the reason why you feel like this.' When they know things, when they know why and how I should be, and I am not that way, then it is not a feeling of being controlled, it is not... I don't know, I would do the things anyway, like that. I see unnecessary quarrels with my parents and this just puts more tension in our house. My mother starts screaming, I start screaming, my father starts after a while as well, trying to calm me down. If he is trying to calm me down, he makes me even more nervous; it is just unnecessary. I do not like the way we get into fighting and that's how it is for a while at home now. It is too much, staying up late, going to work - I have obligations at home, and yes: going out too much, staying out too late, yes. I am not getting enough sleep and then you are not really ready to do what you should do."

Parents see their daughters spending most of their money on things they feel are unnecessary and they see them coming home very late. They were concerned about their daughters' lack of sleep and most of all they had conflicts over their daughters finding a nice boyfriend but wanting them not to get 'in trouble'¹⁸ and having people

'talk.' They knew they were supposed to be 'Western' parents and tried their best; their daughters, however, felt strongly that their private life was not their parents' business and was their own responsibility. To the daughters, this thinking identified them as 'Western,' modern and individualists. They insisted on the right to make their own mistakes. Nevertheless, it seemed that those young women demanded autonomy but only on their terms. Few of them took this autonomy further into more uncomfortable areas of life that demanded effort on their part: moving out, finding a job by themselves or emigrating. They relied on their family for support and it was at this point that the family exerted influence over their decisions. A more complete independence from the family could result in social exclusion, as the example of a young female informant shows. She took her life into her own hands and taking her two children, left her husband. While her sisters supported her, the rest of the family turned away from her.

Money

Economically my friends were not able to fend for themselves and were dependent on their families. Even though they had their own salaries and were not expected to relinquish them to the household, they nevertheless did not have complete control over their own finances. They were expected to supply their siblings with pocket money and

'extras,' for example jeans, sweaters or shoes. This was far from being a duty and it was regarded as part of 'sibling' affection. Nevertheless, there was subtle influence on their spending through little comments about wasting money: "You go out every night. Are we rich? And the new sweater, and the new shoes!" The daughter's perspective was somewhat different:

"My mother is always telling me I should not go out because it is so expensive and I should stay at home and learn to cook and help her in the flat. She goes on and on about how lazy I am and that I am not doing anything useful. Yes, I am lazy, but when she is getting so upset saying that all the work is hers and everybody is just going out and leaving all the work to her, this only makes me want to go out more. I know this is not fair. I just cannot stand her nagging. She wants me to stay at home and then she complains that I have no boyfriend, and asks me why I don't have one. She says that I should stay home and learn how to cook. Well, either I go out and look for a boyfriend or I learn how to cook, but somehow this does not make sense. And she goes on and on about the money. She wants to exchange all my money into marks and then she hides it."

Some time later, this same friend decided to spent most of her salary at one of the beauty salons. It was very expensive and she kept quiet to everybody about the exact cost. Friends of hers who had been frequenting the same beauty salons also concealed the real prices of these places and how much money they were spending. Nevertheless, Stefanija's mother one day went through her wallet counting the money and started to

scream about where the salary had gone. The ensuing argument was about 'household responsibility.' Stefanija came to my place very upset:

"I know it is not right to spend all this money and hide from everybody how much I spent. I was telling my mother that it is not her business what I do with my salary. But my mother went on that it is very much her business as she is saving money for me, buying Deutsch Marks for me! Then my father tried to calm us down, saying that he thinks for sure I will tell them where the money is, later. Really, I never would have thought that my father would care about these things, that he actually thinks as well that it is my parents' business where the money goes, but maybe he was only trying to calm my mother. When they will ask me later I will just tell them that I loaned the money to someone."

Then she borrowed £25 from me to buy a pair of underpants for her boyfriend¹⁹. She went on saying:

"I know I am not right. I know my mother is right in saying I am still dependent on them and that in some ways it is their business what I do with my money. But I think I have the right to be treated like an adult. I told my mother this and she told me she will only see me as grown up when I am a married woman. Wonderful. Of course my mother at my age had long since been married and had a child of four; nobody told her anything. She never had problems like I have. It is really sad that I fight with my mother like this; it can be so nice with her sometimes, but we make each other more and more nervous."

Such dependency is not unusual in times of economic crisis. The parents of my friends had it, in some senses, easier than their own children. After 1945 and after the earthquake in Skopje in 1963, Skopje saw a great influx of young people from small villages and towns. These young people came to build up the fledgling socialist state.

They took responsibilities that their children today would never consider. Stefanija's father left his small village in Eastern Macedonia when he was 16 years old and came to the city to be a teacher. He got married, his young wife moved with him into their own inexpensive flat provided by the state, and she started to work as an economist and took the responsibilities of the household. Their parents were far away and too inexperienced with urban life and with socialist society in general and could not provide advice. The young people who came to Skopje were employed by the socialist state and did not need to seek employment through connections, not that their parents could provide those connections anyway.

If Yugoslavia had continued to exist, one can speculate on how the situation would have been for my friends. They may very well have been in the same situation they find themselves in now, but it is important to note that they had not expected this. In their thinking, their life should not have been very different from any middle-class German or English student. For their postgraduate studies, they might have gone to a different university in Belgrade, Ljubljana or Zagreb or perhaps even abroad, and gained further independence from their parents. They might have been able to get a cheap flat and they felt that certainly they would have had their 'own place' when they got married.

Marriage or postgraduate studies would have been their way to greater independence, an

independence they felt their parents had been given while they were refused by a situation not of their own choosing. In comparison to many other post-communist societies, Macedonia came to independence not as a matter of real choice, as people in Croatia, Slovenia or Serbia might have felt, but rather had independence thrust upon them when Yugoslavia fell apart. Their only real alternative was to be swallowed up by Serbia, who had once been an occupying force in Macedonia.

Connections

In Skopje no one I know got a job without connections although sometimes these connections were concealed. Some of my friends tried to convince me that it was solely their credentials that got them employment. However, even with their credentials they still needed connections to beat other candidates who might not have had the credentials but had the connections. The nature of the job determined the extent to which connections were a factor. It was easier to get into private business with credentials as sometimes expertise, in particular facility with foreign languages and being a specialist on a specific computer program, could outweigh the 'connection factor.' According to BRIMA (British Macedonian Social Surveys, 1994) and my own knowledge which can affirm this, to the question "If you want to have success, you must have 'connections,' in

our country?," 90% of respondents answered "agree," 4% answered with "Don't know," and only 6% did not agree.

I asked a friend who was running a music store some questions about connections:

Question: "How important do you think connections are for being able to have a business?"

...Here? Oh, I could talk a lot...

Question: Is it possible to have a business without connections?

...Probably not. Many of these rich people around who have big companies now use their connections from the socialist times. Many of them were managers in state enterprises and they just transferred the capital with their connections to their private companies. Connections are very important. I have many friends, lots of connections, but I never use them for my job because it's a special kind of job, you know. I have friends everywhere, but people cannot really help me with my business. As I told you, we are probably the only people who deal with this material in a legal way²⁰. So, it is important to have connections, especially here in Macedonia. Probably everywhere, but here in these circumstances nothing would even work without them."

In addition to getting a job through connections, it seemed that knowing someone ensured that one would not be laid off so easily even out of economic necessity. That had the strange effect that some engineers became teachers or economists as these were the connections their parents had; the serious issue of relevant expertise for these jobs was irrelevant:

"They do not care what you are, the only thing that counts is, 'who you know.' In my mother's ministry, they employed a woman who was in her eighth month of pregnancy. Nobody has ever seen her since she is now on maternity leave - and she is getting 80% of the salary from a job which she has never done! And you ask if women are discriminated against! What kind of job I get depends solely on the people my parents know."

In summary, these young engineering students leaving university and entering a different phase of their lives were far from becoming the self-determined agents they had once dreamt they would be:

"I want to be independent, to have a job that is challenging, colleagues who are fun. I do not need a boyfriend. I will have my own little place, or Ane and I will move into her flat together. It will be so nice to do whatever you want. I would like to have my own room, decorate it as I want to, have my own stuff. On the weekends I will go for lunch to visit my parents or maybe invite them over. This would be nice."

Instead, they were thrown into greater dependence than they had ever expected from their perceptions within Yugoslavia or their ideas about Western Europe. They even saw their parents as having more freedom than they themselves had. While the importance of *vrski*, connections, was running through all Macedonian social life before and after the fall of Yugoslavia, today *vrski* cannot guarantee security, money or living space, the lack of which has become the hindrance to what they aimed to achieve. There is no employment security anymore, 30% of the country was believed to be unemployed

at the time of my research, and my friend's fathers and mothers were losing their jobs too.

This is what my friends faced when they started work:

"My father had to change his job because his company was completely run down. He and his colleagues went to work just to keep their jobs, although there was no work for them to do. They did not get paid anything. He is now working for an electric company. He has a very low position, like I have. He had no other choice: he had no social security, no health security. Such things theoretically existed, but his factory did not have the money to pay for that. The state does not pay either. He needs his social security payment for his pension which is another reason why he changed jobs. People are very scared to lose their jobs. We hope it will become better, but they said that this year it will be very, very bad. There will be an enormous number of people who will lose their jobs. Everyone is afraid that they could lose their jobs. The government is supposed to pay unemployment insurance, but the government does not have enough money. The money which is in the country is not regular, not for taxes²¹. The money one can see is not money which is put somewhere, in an account or something, there is only cash in hand. The taxes are up to eighty percent. That's why the private companies do not pay any taxes. And the government is not strong enough to enforce such laws. It is very easy for the private companies, they pay 3000 or 4000 DM to some official in the government instead of paying 10000 DM tax. It is simply the way things go here. There is an organised Mafia in the government. And people are afraid, they are afraid that they will lose their jobs. That's why nobody does anything about it. My father is the same. He only talks and talks. I do not like this about people here, they only talk and never do anything. People are afraid. We would not have been 500 years under the Turkish empire if people had been different". (Informant 1995)

This is the world that Nela, Ane and Beti stepped into when they graduated in 1993 and the beginning of 1994. At this time, they were around 24 years old, had been born in Skopje and lived there all their lives. Their parents had come from other towns and

villages in Macedonia. When they started working they had no boyfriends and the support of the friendship group was great, although it weakened later. Some of their friends were still finishing their last exams or graduate work or were looking for jobs. Besides the conflict of having to balance time for sleep with going out to the cafes in the evenings as they did as students, they felt uncertain about what they wanted. Nela and Beti were sure at that time that they wanted to continue their studies with postgraduate work. They saw their work only as a filler to gain experience and some money to help them pursue future studies and find an appropriate dissertation topic. Nela and Beti at this time were still paying graduate fees to the university and saw themselves as students and not different from the full-time students at university which implied going out a lot and taking part in the 'student games,' similar to student Olympics. Ane took her time finishing her graduate work. She then refused to have her father organise a job for her at the television station where he worked because there were only "old people there."

The Case of Nela

Nela graduated in the summer of 1993 and then applied for a few jobs that were advertised in the newspaper in a *Konkurs*, competition. I was told that her application for these jobs did not make sense as these jobs were only in the newspaper because the

law required that they be publicly advertised, and the positions had already been given to 'friends.' Nela applied for a job in customs where the pay was supposed to be very high, in order to reduce the prevalence of bribery. There was another job at the post office at that time, but as she told me later, an Albanian got the job due to the policy of 'positive discrimination,'²² even though I was told that the Albanian's credentials were not as good as Nela's. As her job applications failed to result in employment, her father took action. He organised a job teaching computer science for Nela at three different high schools: agriculture, art and medical. The school of agriculture lies on the outskirts of Skopje and draws those students that could not qualify for any other high school, so they are educated to become farmers. In the Yugoslavian school system, high schools specialise in future professions: there are the technical (engineering), the language, medical, art and agricultural schools. The brightest students or those who had bribed their way in were supposed to be found in the medical school.

Nela enjoyed her work in the agricultural school particularly because her colleagues were young, whereas in the medical school older people were working. The more respectable and rewarding jobs were held by older people whereas the less rewarding ones were given to younger people. In Macedonia, as a post-communist republic, this was commented on many times by my friends as they felt more competent than those

from the 'old communist times.' They felt that those older people had only been hired because of their party membership and not because of their abilities, especially in the field of computer science. My friends rather liked working with young people and did not feel they could learn from older colleagues, who they feared were not really interested in work but only in enhancing their own power and interest. My friends often said these people evaded work and commented that this was a 'Balkan attitude.'

In opposition to such 'Balkan' attitudes was a woman of forty who Nela admired. The wife of a priest, this woman had many young lovers and was enjoying her life, living it the 'Western' way. Even though she was considered vulgar, for Nela she was honest and full of life. Nela contrasted this woman and her younger colleagues in the agricultural school with her older colleagues in the medical school who were accepting bribes from their students for exams, following the 'Balkan way'.

Nela also felt that there was another difference between these two schools. She felt both schools reflected two different work cultures, one she considered Balkan, the other Western. Whereas in the agricultural school, business was more relaxed, in the medical school there was an emphasis on performance. In respect to Nela's salary, these differences became apparent. The agricultural school still owes Nela one month's salary, though she has been there to see the director many times. Her father, a 'friend' of

the director, had even rang a few times to see about his daughter collecting her pay. The school was always ready to give her the money, but every time she rode the bus forty minutes to collect it, one of the people required to sign, arrange and give her the money was 'not in.'

In contrast, at the medical school she was disciplined for not reporting marks for her students on time and her salary was deducted by 10%, which occurred for most of her colleagues. In both places she found the work very boring, as she had to teach students the basics of communications and computer science without any computers at hand.

Whereas Nela felt that in the agriculture school there was a Balkan work attitude which she herself detested, she felt more comfortable in the atmosphere in this school and with her younger colleagues, which she felt were more 'Western.' In the Medical School she enjoyed the work attitude that was directed towards performance, but did not approve of the 'Balkan way' of accepting bribes. The principles of 'Balkan' and 'Western' overlap in these schools and illustrate the contradiction many of my friends felt at that time:

whereas the younger, more 'Western' – oriented teachers were working in an old socialist working environment, the 'Western' working environment was occupied by the older socialist elite.

Though Nela liked her students, she felt that teaching was not a challenge. She did not take her work very seriously and we helped her mark the essays. What she liked most about her job was the free time she had, though she complained about having to get up so early. However, she still believed that she would continue her postgraduate studies as she knew that another degree would be helpful when the time came to leave the country.²³

This difference in the two schools is significant as it demonstrates the dilemma my young informants felt. They felt that they had been the elite of Yugoslavia as the young generation that had finally overcome the stigma of 'the Balkan' and were worthy of living in 'the West.' Given the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the proximity to the West taken from them, there were significant changes in The Republic of Macedonia, especially in the economic sector. Foreign aid was freely handed out to any sort of enterprise, to schools and universities and to the government. Many foreigners had come to Macedonia and were living and working there. However, if these graduates did not work in one of the private agencies with the foreign companies and opted for the more secure jobs in government, they were faced with the socialist elite mismanagement, as they termed it, and the squandering of the possibilities given to Macedonia from the 'West.'

While Nela finally got a job in the Ministry, it was not always clear that her father had the strongest connections and he had to contact a number of people to ascertain that his connections were, in fact, stronger than the competition's connections. They had a 'friend' in the Ministry who then let them know that Nela was suggested, but everyone was still unsure about whether the other woman who was short-listed would get the job. The other candidate 'knew' another very important person in the ministry. So Nela's father made some further contacts and Nela finally got the official offer. Two months after she had started she was already complaining that her bosses would not give her any interesting work. She thought this was due to her department head being disappointed that his 'friend' did not get the job. Even though she began to get work to do, she found it boring as well and began looking for another job. This decision was highly criticised by her parents and the family who told her she could not switch jobs like shoes. Nela decided to emigrate to New Zealand and was busy making the necessary arrangements. She gave up the idea of continuing her studies in Macedonia and decided to do her postgraduate studies in New Zealand after she had earned some money there. She was still periodically checking the newspaper for *konkurs*, job advertisements, but was disillusioned as they were 'fixed' already. To actually get a new job she would have to again draw on her father's connections. She felt that outside Macedonia life would be

very different in many positive ways, but also realised how difficult it was to obtain a visa that would allow to leave Macedonia. She has resigned herself to her job and claims to be used to the situation of not actually working. Nela has learned to use the time at work for private endeavours as everybody else does. She claims not to feel guilty because of this anymore as she explains:

"I don't know, things are somehow slow here, not only the ministry, this is the case for others as well, but that is the way it works here. I still would like to find a different, more fulfilling job, but it is difficult. Some people here do what they feel like doing, some people work."

To find pleasure in what one does is seen by all of my young informants as a 'Western' attitude. Unrewarding labour or a way of working that is distinguished by its inefficiency is seen as 'Balkan'.

The Case of Beti

Beti took the initiative of finding employment for herself. She had worked abroad in Germany and England a few times over the summers and had a clear idea of what it meant for her to work. She applied for jobs in foreign embassies and relied more on her language abilities than on her engineering experience. She was unsuccessful with the embassies but managed to find work in a private computer company where she was to

design programs. Although her salary was not high, she was satisfied since she saw her work as experience that would get her further in her studies. She subsequently applied for a job at the post office, but then decided that it would not be challenging enough. She then applied at the defence ministry and got the job as a computer technician, as she said because of her knowledge of German and English and some good 'connections.'

She also told me that she was sometimes not treated well because some 'friend' of her boss did not get the job. They owed her money for the trial period of two months but she had to accept no payment for these two months in order to avoid stirring up trouble. She told me that she felt that companies now do not like to employ women and that she had been very lucky.

Beti has no female colleagues. Her immediate colleagues are nice and friendly but she has some difficulties at the ministry because she is not married and some men are making unwanted advances of a romantic nature. A friend told her that the men who are acting overtly are only very outspoken since basically all her male colleagues felt similarly about her. For a long time this disturbed her enormously, although she took pride in being the only woman working there and was flattered by the attention she received. She dresses up for work, though she emphasises that she does not act like the 'pretty women' since she is an engineer and she walks around in jeans. Nevertheless she

likes her work and the aura of importance that working for 'internal security,' with its special rights of the police force, gives her. The situation is not stable in her ministry though and a few times there have been salary cuts. Consequently, she is looking for another job without her parents' knowledge. Beti feels that her parents only wanted her to be employed at anything then get married to fulfil the proper destiny. She tries hard to be rebellious.

Beti was short-listed for a Swiss company that wanted to open an office in Skopje even though they were mainly interested in people for banking business. Beti was interested as they offered a much better salary than an engineer could get. Again it was her knowledge of languages that allowed her to be considered for better work with a foreign organisation. For a long time she felt it would be to her advantage to take a job with the Swiss company if she were offered one. However, she decided against it because she felt more secure in the ministry where she already had a job and the chances that she would be laid off were not high. She noted that the situation of unemployment was disastrous and that she would not know what she would live on if she became unemployed. She was in a secure situation though since her parents, at a great sacrifice years ago, had bought, against the will of her father, three flats. Her mother, who worked at a bank, had insisted on this investment for her two daughters. The last flat

was bought just a few days before all bank accounts in Macedonia were frozen. At that time, her father was unemployed.

There was virtually no social security for unemployment and people had to rely on their own family resources. Times could be very hard for some families, as in the example of one friend whose parents both became unemployed and were renting out their flat in Skopje to UNPROFOR (United Nation Protection Force). They moved in with their grandmother who was living in a small town and the daughter had to quit university because she had no place to stay in Skopje. All five of them were living on the meagre pension of her grandmother and some savings. Talk of this particular situation made Beti reconsider her decision for the Swiss company as she feared that a foreign company could pull out of Macedonia at any time. She nevertheless felt that she was again giving up a chance that she may, one day, be employed in a western country.

Her decision did not take into consideration that her life-situation would not have changed dramatically if she had become unemployed. If however, her mother, were to be laid off, the consequences would have been dire for Beti's family since her mother earned enough money to support the entire family. To acknowledge this situation required Beti to recognise her own dependence which she did not easily accept. She felt superior to her parents who had never been outside Macedonia whereas she had worked

and travelled abroad and knew what 'real' life was about. Still, she was not satisfied with her salary, despite the fact that generally people could not earn much in Macedonia by honest means, as people kept saying. She felt she was not valued highly enough in her work as an engineer and believed that technicians, the socialist 'working class', were still valued more highly. When asked about her university education, Beti said she still wanted to continue her post-graduate work, although that would bring her no financial advantage in the long run in terms of a better job or promotion. Besides being eager to learn, she secretly hoped that further university education would increase her chances of working abroad, as well as give her more work experience. She complained many times that education was not valued highly enough. She pointed out that there was a law designed to give her department head, who only had a high school education, the same salary as a beginner with university degree. But she doubted that such a law would ever be enforced. For her, too many people with low education were sitting at the top:

"That's what is left from the old times. They were good party members and that's how they got their positions and the same for their children. They use their positions to get high positions for their children. They have good connections and they do not do anything; they barely come to work and they get the same money as I do. Who has the most money? It is the people with low education. They use illegal ways to get so much money." (Beti 1995)

She constantly dreams of leaving Macedonia as she feels that her country, in the present transitional situation, cannot give her the support she feels she needs:

"The young generation is the lost generation. They have the knowledge the new times need, but they are missing guidance. The older generation is only busy securing high positions, they are not interested in work and they cannot be fired, they determine the rules of the game. With them in power, we never will manage to change our country."

At the moment, however, she has a secure job and earns an average income of 300 DM. Her parents are renting out two flats. Her father has a new job, though he has the same position and payment as his daughter after being employed over 30 years. Economically her family is better off than before, as her mother had planned with foresight. Beti's biggest concerns are the arguments she has with her parents who want her to be married now. Beti does not want to marry a Macedonian man because of the 'Balkan' attitude toward women. Being a 'Balkan' man for my informants means to be chauvinistic and having women do all the work. It also means not showing emotions and going out with many women, driving fast cars and drinking a lot. They are seen not to care for women, or if they do, only in a sexual sense, but do not regard them as friends or partners. Men, however, accuse the women of only caring about money and fast cars.

However, since Beti hopes to leave Macedonia she feels she must not be alone since immigration officials in Canada, New Zealand and Australia prefer couples and because she would be scared to be alone. She is applying for immigration to Canada now as another friend of hers has just had his visa granted.

The Case of Ane

One Saturday, Nela and I went to visit Ane, a fellow engineer, at the television station. She was sitting on the desk enjoying the warm April sun streaming through the windows. It was spring, people were moving around, coming in and out of the building. Lela who has her own office, since she is the daughter of a good friend of the father of Ane's boss, had visitors as well. I went to Lela's office to look at holiday pictures and Lela was complaining that she was bored. In the winter she had still wanted to find work as an engineer, but now she had become a businesswoman. She had settled for this, in response to the pressures from her father. She could come and go whenever she wanted and complained that even though she was hardly seen in the company, nobody cared and she felt that nobody needed her. All of us had a nice chat and then went to sit with Ane on the couch in the entrance hall. We were drinking coca cola and joking with the porter across the hall. We talked until Ane could go home and, although she left

slightly early, the work she had to have done for this day had been long done. She was arranging the television programming and had to fit the programs and advertisements together and time everything. Sometimes we would work together subtitling a movie for some extra money. We strolled home and went to the pizza place to have a huge ice cream. In the evening, we all met again in the cafés. It was like a normal weekday, except that it was a Saturday and spring; there was a weekend ahead.

What made Ane different from her friends was that she enjoyed her job and did not 'live for the night' as some of her friends did. Her work demanded no special skills or an engineering education. In reality anyone in the company could do her job, she would say. However, she had discovered that she was very talented in organising. Everybody in the station could, and did, rely on her. She used her spare time to keep a supervisory eye on everyone else. With her education, she had a special position in the station and her immediate supervisor would often consult her about serious work. She started to read, learned a lot about music and took advantage of the free tickets and entrance to all sorts of cultural events a television station had to offer. She felt she had missed something in her education as an engineer, a view she liked to underline to her friends, who took it as an insult since they interpreted Ane as saying engineers were *ne kulturni*, uncultured. Ane enjoyed the freedom the station offered but took her tasks extremely

seriously. Most of all, she enjoyed working with her colleagues, all of whom were young and enthusiastic, even if there was not much to do.

When Ane started to look for a job, her father, who had not managed to get her employed at the television station where he worked, organised a voluntary job at a private television station for Ane. At first, Ane did not want to work there, because the boss of the station, of the same age as her, was known to have a very violent reputation. Her father did not show any understanding of Ane's feelings and thought she should be happy to have a job. At the time, Ane did not feel she had a choice and decided to gain experience at this television station to prepare her for 'real' work at the National television station. She spent much time in the cutting room and was eager to learn about technical support. She is the only woman in the division and the supervisor of this division is her father's friend. She points out proudly that it is she, a woman, who is doing the 'real' work to keep the television station successful, whereas her male colleagues are cleaning the machines. Despite the fact that Ane is popular, some people are jealous since she has a diploma and is so young. Ane though, despite her diploma, has no job security and has never signed any work agreement, does not earn much and, most of all, does not have a 'real' job that qualifies her to be registered for a pension. She works voluntarily at the whim of her boss who can decide to pay her or not or fire

her whenever he wants. This is why Ane is still looking for a different job and hopes that by performing well she could be promoted to actually have a contract and to get more demanding work, suiting her education and knowledge.

In the meantime, Ane applied for work at the post office at the urging of her parents. Her parents did not have the best connections, but a good friend, who was *kum*, godfather, or in this case, best man, at her parents' wedding, is a very rich business man who made considerable money in Switzerland. Her parents hoped that he would have enough influence to help Ane get the job at the post office. Ane was not very happy about this situation as she liked her work, liked her new interests and her new friends. Most of all, Ane feared that the job at the post office would be boring which would be harder to bear than a lack of security in her present position. Ane felt working at the post office would be so boring because there were many older people working there. The same argument surfaced when her father suggested that he might arrange some work at his own company. In May she had an awful fight with her mother who could not understand why Ane refused her father's offer to look for a job at his national television station and wanted to stay in the current insecurity of the *mladi raboti*, youth work, working scheme. In tears, Ane complained that she and her friends cannot make their own decisions:

"I am 25 and my parents determine my life as they want. I have no say. I told them that I like the job and that I am good at it and I would like to wait until they give me a better job opportunity - a real job. In my father's company, there are only older people and at my station everybody is young and I love the atmosphere. Aneta [a colleague her age she befriended] is there as well, though this argument I could not give my mother. My father is upset because he is retiring soon and then he won't be able to exert much influence on my getting a job there. But I don't want to have security now. I am young, so many things can happen, why do I have to arrange everything for the rest of my life now, why can I not wait until life comes to me and offers me something? My parents only feel that I am acting irresponsibly, that I am not taking the responsibility they expect from me: I do not have a boyfriend and I am not looking for one. They also blame themselves that they could not offer me and my sister a better life. This is why they try to arrange our life so it would be safe; they try to save us from their worst fears: insecurity and instability. I want to be independent but I cannot be. I would like to make my own decisions, but my parents insist that they know what is the best and that it is a luxury to make one's own mistakes."

Ane was unhappy about her parents' decisions but did not dare insist on her desires.

She spent many hours thinking what she would do if she really did get a job offer from the post office. She knows that one day she will have to accept something more than voluntary work, but for now she does not feel threatened by the insecurity. Friends, a bit older than her, do leave the private television station to work in more established companies but Ane feels that for the moment she is doing the right thing. She enjoys her work and she learns new things; she does not want to think about tomorrow. Tomorrow

there are things that are still unimaginable for her: love, a family, her own place, a career. Today she enjoys what she can experience in the present. Security is not an issue for her as she feels that there is no security anywhere and that one depends only on the goodwill of others. Her dream would be to become the technical director and, as she says, there is plenty of time. Ultimately, Ane's ability to help everyone and her likeable personality are her only guarantees to keep the job, to be paid and to get holidays, all of which are dependent on connections and not on a work contract.

"I like my colleagues and would like to keep them as colleagues. I am also not sure about what kind of job I should look for. I definitely don't want to work in a post office or some ministry. I also don't care if I work as an engineer. I think I am best in organising things and a job like that would fulfil me most. The problem is that my parents will try to find me a secure job, a job they want me to have and I just want them to leave me to find a job that I want. I will look for a job with security, but I want to find it and if they can help me with that, that's fine. I just don't want them to decide for me and I know that's how it will be."

The boss's father puts restrictions on the budget and does not allow Ane to be employed regularly. She was scared to tell her father that her promotion was rejected on these grounds. He listened calmly and finally took the position that Ane should learn as much as she could and, in the meantime, watch for a better job. In May, Ane hoped that she would find work in other private television stations that were to open soon. She

hoped that the friends at work would know people and could organise a job for her or would even transfer with her. There was another television station, an International News Organisation for Eastern Europe which would transmit their programs across Europe via satellite, that considered opening an agency in Macedonia. Only ten people would be employed and the salary was expected to be very high. Ane was scared to talk about this as a job like this would fulfil her wildest dreams. With such a job, she might even have the opportunity to work outside of Macedonia.

Conclusion²⁴

I have presented only three cases at some length but all of these young informants are in very similar situations. The informants eagerly anticipate change but feel they are being held back by the transitional state of their country. They oscillate between optimism and pessimism. Social change may generate great anxiety because the future is suddenly much less secure, but there is also the possibility of experiencing this change as 'the meaning of life' and not only as loss (Marris 1973:148). On the one hand, my friends hope for a better future and are looking forward to being given demanding tasks that would allow them to further their ambitions while, at the same time, they are reluctant to believe that the society they are faced with today will change dramatically.

They still see the same attitudes towards work, which never met the official socialist picture of the working class and corruption is still prevalent. Their reaction is to hope for emigration to a classic capitalist country where their dreams of freedom, independence and consumption promise to be satisfied. Today people in Macedonia do not face the typical capitalist quotation 'no pain, no gain,' but experience instead 'pain without gain.' In addition, the Republic finds itself in an ideological void.

The Republic of Macedonia is still governed by a democratically elected socialist government, and did not want independence out of a feeling of oppression but out of necessity following the 'Fall of Yugoslavia.' Writing about 'getting along' touches on many aspects of my informants' lives: how they 'get along' in their transforming society, with their parents, through adolescence into separation, with the world around them and with each other in a time of dramatic changes and terror because of the vast unknowns in their lives. There is loss, but also hopes and dreams. Macedonia has been able to avoid direct involvement with the Yugoslavian conflict and despite internal ethnic tension has withstood the anticipation of civil war. A new society, one that people want to believe in, has been formed. The memory of the socialist past through monuments and Tito are neither hidden nor are there attempts to rewrite socialist history. The Republic has experienced transitions from 'feudalism' to 'socialism' to something that has not yet been

defined. It is not correct to speak of post-socialism, but neither is the country socialist.

Macedonia is evolving and its definition lies in the future.

There are specific changes in the social life of Macedonia that are directly linked to its political fate. My informants entered a new phase in their lives, finished university and started employment in a time that coincided with the political changes from Yugoslavia to The Republic of Macedonia. In comparing the 'coming of age' of my informants to their parents' in their adolescence, thus one comes to the understanding that both groups see themselves as 'the elite.' Their parents had come to play an important part in Macedonia's society after 1945 through hard labour and the responsibility of transforming a peasant society towards an industrial nation. The graduates in their time, in the last years of Yugoslavia, saw themselves as the elite through their advanced knowledge and 'Western' attitudes, bridging the gap, in their eyes, between Northern Europe and the Balkans. As their parents changed their society through socialist ideology, my friends intended to change their society through qualifications. They saw their parents generation still bound to the Balkan principles through Yugoslav socialist ideology. In the same way their parents wanted to better the lives of their parents whom they viewed as downtrodden and oppressed peasants who had to be brought into modern, industrial Yugoslavia. My friends wanted to change their society away from

this notion of Balkan, the backward, non-European, *ne kulturni*²⁵. This is a typical generational conflict, where the younger generation wants to improve the world of the older generation and both generations had a specific ideology about employment. Whereas the parents' generation saw employment as labour and received power through access to employment that could change society through party membership, my group of graduates viewed employment as a career, in which one would advance oneself and thereby society by improving oneself through several jobs and gaining power in the process of it. For both generations, post-war Yugoslavia and 'pre-mortem' Yugoslavia, the younger generation had been the generation of change. In post-war Yugoslavia, power to change had been received through ideology, while in 'pre-mortem' Yugoslavia through knowledge. In the parents' generation, security was granted by the state and they expected their lives to be secure through knowledge.

Today this situation has drastically changed. Young people do not have the same influence on changing society as external politics is taken out of their hands. Today it is not socialist ideology or qualification that holds the key to success in Macedonia but connections, an element that was identified by all my informants as 'non-western,' as 'Balkan.' Today employment is seen as a 'job' that holds no power. The older generation is seen by my young informants to misuse knowledge and assistance from 'the West,'

again pointing towards their definition of 'Balkan.' In this world the young generation see themselves as unable to change their society, as it is only through connections that they can obtain the means and security that would enable them to change their society. But aside from 'loss', I will examine the many ways this specific group of young female engineering graduates are understanding and altering their lives and thereby 'taking charge' of it.

CHAPTER 3

SILHOUETTE- THE SCULPTURED BODY

In trying to understand my friends' motivation to carry on during the difficult adjustment to a new country and to new political and economic circumstances, I noted one central theme: the symbolic meaning attached to their bodies. It was not politics but the design of their bodies that moved them strongly. I have come to believe that their efforts to change their bodies were directly linked to the changes their country was undergoing. Their position in society differs from the position their grandmothers and mothers held and it differs also from the expectations they had for themselves when Macedonia was part of the former Yugoslavia. In my conversations with these women, they often described their lives as lacking personal autonomy, a term and a meaning that derived from the American and Western European television they viewed and which had become a part of daily family life. There were changes in their country that affected them directly but over which they felt they had no control. They see many beautiful women on television and these women appear immune from the normal female bodily processes. My friends are certainly not so naive as to believe such representations are

real, however, they do accept the general idea that life in the West provides perfect ways of concealing bodily processes and that it offers ways to alter the body to fit the images on television. When I arrived in the field with a set of 'Always' sanitary napkins²⁶, they provoked great interest and I was asked if I could spare one or two. The shortage in sanitary towels had, however, ended and what was really wanted was the experience of a Western and therefore superior method of hiding bodily processes. Soon all sorts of Western pads were found in the duty free shops around the city and in other import stores. In this chapter I will argue that the changes in the daily routine of my friends, changes that are directly linked to Western images of the slender and fit body, suggest a way of managing their bodies. It is through managing their bodies that the group of graduates I will introduce are making their inner intentions, capacities and dispositions visible to themselves and others (Benson 1997:123).

1995

Silhouette is a 'Body Sculpture Studio.' Prominent signs displaying the stylized black silhouette of a slim female body against a purple background guide you to this studio on the 3rd floor of one of the apartment buildings that are reminiscent of the buildings at the epicentre of the 1963 earthquake. The street is dusty; downstairs people sit in a café

or go shopping in one of the old supermarkets that has only recently begun carrying western yoghurt. The hallway is dirty, the elevator squeaks and is full of messages written in the Latin alphabet. There is no sign on the door, but the clientele show you the way. A loud doorbell announces your arrival. They let you wait. Eventually a beautiful, slim and young woman opens the door. You might have seen her at the university faculty or in the cafés in the evenings. She recognises you and smiles. The leather seats are inviting. The goddess of the temple is sitting behind her desk facing you and looking at you with her eyes half shut. She is sizing you up: how much do you have to lose? how could we tone those legs? those arms? She gets some of her index cards out, makes some phone calls on a cordless phone. Glossy, shiny magazines from Germany, France and Italy are laying out the ideal: the women pictured in them are very beautiful. They smile at you, measure you, you measure them. The owner is 50, but looks older: she has lived a full life. A tower of false blond hair piled on her head with the escapees surrounding her fake, dull face, she wears tights and a tight T-shirt.

You are given a diet plan in which you are instructed to drink only water and some soup for the next ten days. You are measured with measuring tape strung loosely around your too ample waist and thighs. You will pay an average monthly salary for the ten-day program. This program includes exercise on 8 automatic exercising machines which

force you to move your legs up and down and left and right. You sweat. The last bench is heaven, you can lie there for 3 minutes as the machine gently shakes you. The next day you experience a different kind of shaking: electricity is passed through your limbs and stomach. In the same room there is a big mirror and a pair of scales. Every newcomer is weighed in this room and her weight announced to the girl who writes the index cards. Everybody lies there shaking together. At the same time, you are forced to look into the mirror, forced to face your own unwilling flesh. One treatment uses electrical current to cramp your buttocks so hard that for a few weeks you have a perfectly shaped backside. For ten days you are beautiful. Then you are measured again and this time the measuring tape is pulled as tight as possible, showing all the inches you have lost. But you could have lost more if only you had kept to the diet. Every day you were reminded by the lady at the front desk: "Stick to the diet." A sip of milk was your reward for the day. It was too hot to eat anyway. At the end you were told to come back soon so you could erase your sins. It is summertime and the truth will be revealed at the beach: everyone will see...

The above passage describes my own experience at the fitness studio when I accompanied my friend Ina. Recently 10-20 new body studios opened in Skopje due to demand and the freedom of privatisation. Most of them are in private apartments or in

institutions like the public swimming pool often combined with activities such as body-building and aerobics. They have come to replace the semi-private cosmetic studios that offered body hair removal and facials in socialist Macedonia. The differences between these studios is explained by a cosmetician, an enterprising woman who had the first private cosmetic studio in socialist Macedonia perhaps in part due to her husband's position as an important politician with the former socialist government: "Women come to me to be treated nicely and with care, even the waxing. I do this for them. They come to me to be spoiled. Those body studios make you work hard and they punish you, they put you down all the time, they look down at you."

In Yugoslavia, the socialist system offered planned comfort and allowed for semi-private beauty studios. In today's Macedonia however, it is not comfort that is sought but firmness and shape in order to compete with the images from the West. This different objective is one of the central differences in the world of beautification today and in socialist Macedonia. Yugoslavia offered comfort and self-confidence. Looking at today's body cult Macedonia offers more restraint than comfort.

1988 in Socialist Macedonia

In 1988 my friends were entering university. After they had passed the university entrance examinations, a group of these friends and I went to Greece for a holiday. The days were hot and at night they danced at the local disco to the songs of Madonna. For some of my friends she represented what they wanted to be: 'She does not care' was the most complimenting comment about Madonna. Susan Bordo (p.268) depicts Madonna as a heroine who refuses to be constructed as the passive object of patriarchal desire. '*Nema gaile*,' roughly translated as 'it doesn't matter' or 'I don't care,' was the phrase used to express this sentiment. It was this kind of sentiment that made them feel very much at the centre of things. They felt they did not need to care about old traditional ways of their grandparents or about the ideology of their parents. Yugoslavia supplied them with everything they needed, economical and professional, and with the freedom to want more. Life was interesting and revolutionary. Many of my friends joined the prestigious engineering faculty in Skopje. They knew they would eventually meet the man for them and, in the not too distant future, they would have a family. This family would not look like the families in which they had been brought up. Instead they would have an open relationship with their partner and their children would be their friends. They would have their own flat. Their friends would live nearby and would always be

available for a quick chat. Leisure time would not be limited by housework as housework would be shared equally with partners and there would be less of it anyway as there would be microwaves and frozen food and a cleaning lady once or twice a week. Then there would be a career and challenges at work and travel abroad from time to time. There was a lot of talk of such matters that summer and in the following two years and it seemed just a matter of time before these dreams would become reality. These dreams were at hand and that was what they celebrated in the summer of 1988.

These women felt they were defining themselves: who they were and who they wanted to be. They were young women ready to face what life had in store for them, and they assumed it would be good. In those years my friends had discussions with their parents or families in which they declared that they did not intend to marry, that perhaps instead they would live with their female friends, until they met the man of their lives and decide to move together with him, married or not married. In these discussions they willfully stood against what they saw as the past: the lives of their mothers and grandmothers. Their declarations prompted mild laughter from their kin. Nevertheless, it was a time of protest against what my friends then considered the dullness of their mothers' and grandmothers' lives.

Madonna, the heroine of MTV (Music Television) and youth culture, stood as a symbol of beauty and assertiveness for my friends. The world surrounding Madonna gave them social clues as to how a world could be. By watching MTV my friends experienced the world outside Macedonia as one big television transmission and as recipients of this transmission they were part of this world. People from all over Europe called in to MTV with a specific music request, and many callers were from Yugoslavia. Through television my friends, 'us', 'we' and 'Europe' intersected. The word most commonly associated with the years 1988-1990 is 'freedom' according to my informants. This period of time had its peak in the summer of 1990, when Ante Markovich, through drastic economic reform, tried to help Yugoslavia's economy. The Dinar was bound to the Deutsch Mark and, that summer, people in Macedonia had never felt closer to Germany. The next year they were further away than ever and my friends had difficulty identifying with Madonna and those like her. These symbols of the West became a subject of longing, something my friends felt they once had had and now was lost to them.

1990 in Socialist Macedonia

One morning at the faculty of engineering, while the hot air stayed outside with cool fresh, sunlit air in the hallways, there was much activity: it was election day for the student union. The election boxes were positioned in the classrooms. While people handed in their votes, there was friendly chatting in the background. There was a feeling of belonging. Exams had already finished, the stress was gone, the summer holidays were starting. However, at this moment nobody seemed really to want to leave. The effect would not last long, but at that moment everything which was good in life was there. Surrounded by friends, there was a sense of security and of being in control.

Some of my friends ran and were successful in the elections for the student union which gave them a sense of being wanted. They enjoyed the feeling of being voted into a job in which they had confidence they would do well. Ina became the foreign secretary, and arranged contacts with other student unions both inside and outside Yugoslavia. Her duties included arranging a Student Olympic Games for engineering students. Suse took up the task of organising the exam schedule and negotiated with teachers on behalf of the student body. In all these activities in and around their faculty, my young women friends experienced a time of personal freedom.

Going into the summer of 1990 there was an atmosphere of exaltation. Shops carried goods that had not been seen for a long time and many western goods arrived which brightened the previously bleak shop windows. New shops opened: pizza places, croissant shops. Yugoslavia was very close to being 'European.' In 1990 everyone kept telling me that soon Yugoslavia would join the EC. The iron curtain had fallen and removed the darkness from an expectant Macedonia. One often overheard and read in newspapers: a new millennium of European enterprise and peace lay ahead.

1996 in Independent Macedonia

Today it is more difficult to know the right action, since social rules have changed. Today one is not in charge, but instead more dependant on others because the world has become smaller. It is now the time my friends anticipated in 1990, in the warm summer of Yugoslavia, but their dreams have been altered drastically. Now they are deciding whether to stay in Macedonia or to leave. Many think of going, but very few actually leave. In all this, my friends express their feeling of being caught and compare this to the past when they felt free. Let me return to Madonna.

Since the summer of 1988, the idea of 'the body' has changed its meaning for my friends and, consequently, they treat their bodies in a different way. As the Hans

Christian Anderson fairy tale goes, the Mermaid trades her tail for feet in order to love her prince. In doing so, not only does she lose her tail, but she suffers the pain of a thousand cutting knives in the process. Rather like the Mermaid, my friends, specifically the young graduates, experience the pain of living and achieving their goal. Most of these recent graduates have boyfriends. Many of them have found jobs or are looking for one and few have decided to continue their studies at university. They are thinking of marrying their boyfriends of two or three years.

The World They Lived in - Yesterday and Today

Who are these friends of mine? They were Yugoslavia's young generation. While studying engineering or economics, they took classes in Marxism and Atheism. They did not believe firmly in socialism but in capitalism and democracy instead. They saw the lifestyle they wanted in Germany and in America through television. Many skipped Marxism classes. Their experience of the communist party was restricted to the experience of being a 'pioneer,' which was a youth club organised by the socialist party, similar to Boy Scouts and singing songs of partisan heroes defeating the Germans.

These songs are also sung as entertainment on a Sunday walk to the top of Vodno, the mountain range overlooking Skopje. This walk, taken by many people in Skopje on the

weekend, still corresponds with a socialist body culture. In Skopje, politics has not been a topic of discussion for most people, not in 1988 or today and the associations of corruption and self-serving politicians still dominate. However, most of my informants when they looked back at Yugoslavia, felt that despite its political system, its economic stress, and the resultant high prices in the eighties, they were able to buy most of the things offered in the shops. Of course, at times not even necessities could be found in the shops. Nevertheless, they could always buy consumer goods on the Green Market²⁷ where goods from Greece, Turkey or Western Europe, often imported through Slovenia or Croatia, (their proximity to Austria facilitated the flow of goods through their borders), were placed next to vegetables and household articles. While my friends had little money to buy these goods, some were given pocket money by their parents and others had scholarships worth approximately DM 50 (£ 18), from which they could buy a set of pens or perfume. They remember Yugoslavia as not always easy, but generally improving, peaceful and always offering a way to get by. Today the financial situation is a great deal worse, even though many more consumer goods are available and my friends are earning their own salaries of about DM 300 (£ 100).

Despite the worsening financial situation, in recent years a number of more expensive foreign shops have opened, including two Benetton shops, one Stefanel shop, many

Levis Jeans shops and one shopping mall called Yukan offering Hugo Boss, Stefanel and other designer names. In Yugoslavia, jeans were bought either when travelling in Greece or Germany or designer copies could be bought at the bazaar for DM 15 (£5). One could buy clothes at the market, take them home, try them on and if they did not fit properly, return them. There was a friendly atmosphere in the market and traders remembered their customers. Today one can go to the many shops offering the authentic articles. The differences between the old way of buying and the new can be explained through the concepts of what is 'ours' (Macedonian) and what is 'new' or 'modern.' In 'our' store one can buy a coat for example, and agree with the sales woman that payment will be made in three monthly instalments without an interest rate being charged. However, many of the 'new' shops do not allow payment by instalments and, therefore, only a specific clientele with a large disposable income and the ability to make cash payments can frequent these stores. With greater frequency, my friends are made aware of that they are not this clientele, but still they dream that one day they too will be a part of this world and they are making every effort to prevent the gap between themselves and 'modern' Skopje from widening.

In 1988 we went to a shop that sold household goods as we wanted to buy shampoo which was behind a counter. In order to obtain such goods, we had to ask the

saleswoman to write a note for us which we would then take to the cash-point. There, we would pay for the shampoo and return to the saleswoman who would take the paper from us, wrap the shampoo in rough paper and then hand it to us. The first ~~task~~ however, was to gain the attention of the saleswoman. She was smoking a cigarette. Once she finished, we told her what we wanted. She listened, then began a second cigarette. Having finished her second cigarette, the saleswoman gave us the note and we went to the cash point where three saleswomen were engaged in a heated discussion about one of their husband's passion for younger women. We waited patiently until it seemed we were a nuisance to the saleswomen, one of whom finally took our money. Returning to where we hoped our shampoo would await us, we found that the saleswoman had disappeared. We waited until she came back. She wrapped our shampoo and we left. In all this my friend had stayed very calm and waited for things to take their turn.

Both types of enterprise, the friendly, private Green Market and the state-owned shops, coexisted in Yugoslavia. For my young informants, it demonstrated the differences between socialist state-owned and private enterprises. However, the Green Market was considered a relic of the past for the parents' generation while for their own parents, my friends' grandparents, the market meant an abundance of food.

Consequently, the parents would buy in the state-owned shops and the grandparents would do most of their shopping at the Green Market while my friends would frequent both places, but prefer shopping in Greece or Germany on their holidays. So in independent Macedonia, the 'Duty Free' shops²⁸ and their successors, the new private 'Western consumer' shops, became the site of shopping for many young people in Skopje, whereas their parents and grandparents mostly shunned these shops. Nevertheless, in independent Macedonia, the connotations of private and socialist enterprises are partially reversed and lead to a confusion of values. Today, when my informants think back to Yugoslavia, they see the socialist state as a caring one. The privatised world of Macedonia however, appears to them as cruel, a world where they must fend for themselves. In order to do this, they have to correspond to a picture that is outlined for them on television: firm, self-confident and smart. Many of my friends fear this picture yet still want to embrace it.

To understand this conflict of values in its historical dimension, I will illustrate them through two examples: one from socialist Yugoslavia one from independent Macedonia. It appears that the understanding and the value of 'private' and 'Western' are to a great extent identical when considering enterprise. However, looking at it from a historical perspective, private stands in contrast to 'socialist' in Yugoslavia, whereas in Macedonia

today, private stands for 'Western European.' The difference might not be readily apparent, but it lies in the historical perspective. Today my friends are missing the peaceful and promising times of Yugoslavia and, although they are not embracing some aspects of socialism, they do not feel deprived, but rather rebellious. In independent Macedonia however, they are trying to grasp the concepts that will allow them a Western lifestyle while attaining this seems more distant and cruel each day.

In 1990 a friend and I went to the post office to post a letter but decided to return home in the afternoon as the sun was mercilessly hot. We lay down for two hours resting in front of a fan before walking to the post office which closed at seven. We arrived at our destination around ten past six and found no one in the post office save a post office clerk, a most unwilling clerk at that. When we asked her to please accept the letter, we were told that the post office would close at seven. We told her that we knew this, but as it was not yet seven, we would appreciate having our letter sent. At that time my friend and I had a short discussion about democracy and the market-orientated society and we both came to the conclusion that it was the duty of the clerk to accept the letter. In our discussion we jumped from socialist social norms as described in the shampoo story to the example of the Green Market and experiences in Germany and Greece. We concluded that times were changing and foresaw the future of Yugoslavia

as a member of the EC soon. Because of this, we were to hold up the principle of such change. After a short argument with the clerk we left the post office triumphant.

Returning home we blurted out our upsets and eventual triumph to my friend's father.

We were shocked, however, by his disapproval of our little victory and, in fact, he told us that we should have gone to the post office in the afternoon. His response and his daughter's disapproval of it illustrates the generational conflict, that can be seen as typical of the change in values within a society. Those values however, in the times to come, would be shaken again and point beyond a generational conflict to a completely new set of social values.

When the foundations of Yugoslav society were torn down, Macedonia and its citizens found themselves in a new struggle for social values. In the same year my friends and I tried out our revolutionary expectations on a changing economy in a few more encounters. We argued at length in a newly opened private grocery store that we should be able to buy a single can of mushrooms and receive change without having to buy more cans. In the end, the saleswoman, who would have preferred us leaving without any mushrooms, was forced actually to go to a nearby bank to change our money. We achieved this only by asking for the manager! The manager came and actually agreed with us. Such confidence in a changing economy with new social values

was short-lived however and, by 1993, whatever changes had occurred had been reversed.

In another situation, my friends had queued for an hour to visit a crowded café. They had ordered drinks and were standing, squeezed against the wall, when their luck changed and a table became free right next to them. What a feeling to finally sit down! This joy, however, was short-lived as a waitress came by ten minutes later with her friends and told my friends that the table was reserved for her friends and they needed to move. My friends immediately got up as they knew many people in the café and did not want to cause any problems. Questioning them afterwards about that incident and others like it, I was told that was the way things were and there was nothing to be done.

If socialism rendered my friends powerless, yet political apathy came with the fall of Yugoslavia, then the question arises as to the difference between the two systems. In some ways, the feelings of powerlessness which my friends expressed were not really a change as, in 1990 and the years before, there had been the feeling that things would, out of necessity, change. In 1995 people found themselves back where they had been or, perhaps, even more deeply dependant on the goodwill of the few people running the country, people they would term the 'new' people or *bisnes djovek*, business men. The country was significantly smaller and, politically and socially, there was less space for

individual autonomy and fewer possibilities for personal development. In Macedonia the old times are now regarded with a certain kind of nostalgia. In many of my interviews I was told by very different people: "Things were not right then either but one nevertheless knew what to expect and how to cope with life."

By 1995 the feeling of powerlessness was more intense. Many of my mostly younger informants felt at that time that they had to leave Macedonia in order to survive and live a decent life, a life not necessarily better than what they had lost in Yugoslavia, but at least equivalent. When talking to the parents of those in their 20s, the image they create of their own youth is one of freshness, ambition and an orientation towards the future. There was no hint of powerlessness in these descriptions which were without bitterness and disappointment. However, there is a friction between this ideal picture of their past and their children's lives. The socialist program anticipated a specific type of young person: one interested in social issues, atheistic and willing to fight for the common cause of socialism. This image had very little relevance for young people in the 1980s who felt they had little influence on events happening around them. These feelings of powerlessness were not caused by the disintegration of Yugoslavia alone, but were probably exacerbated by it. By losing the framework of Yugoslavia, my friends lost their framework of orientation, ideals, social norms and even things to rebel against.

Young people today are dependant on their parents for much longer than their parents had been dependant on their families and they are not obliged to do many duties at home as the only expectation is excellence in their studies. Often my friends commented that they had never grown up and worried they would never be independent. In fact, they saw marriage as the only possible way to become more responsible.

These were carefree days for my friends who were first-year university students that summer in 1988; these feelings lasted until 1991, when war broke out and Macedonia declared its independence. During those years, my friends in Skopje had nothing to worry about, had no responsibilities or restrictions and they expected only pleasure from life. This life was, of course, very different from their parents' who had moved from small villages to Skopje, where there were great opportunities for ambitious young people in the 1960's and 1970's, building an ideal socialist society. When the economy slowed down and the parents failed to realise their own hopes and ambitions, they transferred their efforts to their children and tried to give them as carefree and as opportunity-filled a life as possible. Because of this, their children could centre their lives around their friends, material possessions and consumer goods. How one looked became very important and it became especially important to look 'Western.' Socialist ideology and partisan glory were confined to heroes of past childhood games. In this

perspective it is easy to state that the representation of my friends falls in the category of an adolescent development in which any young people move from a state of dependency on parents to individuation and independence from others (Noller and Callan 1991; Apter 1990; Coleman and Hendry 1990). However, I argue that in independent Macedonia this carefree life of the graduates changed and, even though certain values such as looking 'Western' and beautiful have been retained, their meanings were ultimately changed through feelings of pain, loss of control and the desperate need to alter the status quo.

Café Life, Beauty and Meaning

Whether it was a sense of hopelessness, a lack of responsibility or a lack of independence, things had changed by 1995. The *Stara Carsijia*, the old city plaza, where thousands of young people had celebrated life into the wee small hours, is now deserted. Is it fashion that has made other cafés the choice of the youth or is it because *Stara Carsijia* lies within the Albanian Quarter and is seen as not Macedonian? Social life in Skopje has definitely changed. Café life still dominates today but other places have become more prominent. Cafés in the new shopping malls, settlements and the Trgovski Centre, all cafés which are close to, or in, the Park are all in the north part of

the city. Only the alternative scene still frequents a few places at *Stara Carsjia*, but they are by no means crowded. Cafés are the places where one can be looked at, where you can see and be seen.

One evening in the café 'Van Gogh,' near the Park, a large crowd of mostly 'beautiful people' stood inside and outside the café, drinks in hand, trying unsuccessfully, due to the blaring music, to converse with the person squeezed tightly next to them. Outside the café, macho guys were driving up and down the street in their nice cars, accompanied by beautiful slim girls, talking out of the car windows to their friends. The police had already been and left, likely with a nice bribe, or perhaps they were just good friends of the owner of the café, a son of a 'big' man or *bisnes djovek* who had been given the café as a hobby. The police officers would have a couple of drinks, the music would have been turned down for ten minutes and, after they left, it was business as usual. While the government had tried to enforce a law that would close cafés after 11 p.m. in residential areas, this law was successful for only two weeks. After this time, some inhabitants had resorted to throwing water or tomatoes from their balconies onto the crowd below which only added to the atmosphere of hilarity.

We heard through an interesting information system that Susana and Vlatko were inside the café. With much discomfort, I squeezed my way through, trying to avoid

being burnt by cigarettes and feeling faint because of the close air. I was greeted by Susana with a smile and a nod, and a hello from Lorena, Vlatko's friend. I managed to order a coke and stood with them in the middle of the crowd. Conversation was impossible so I did what everybody else did, swayed a little to the blaring music, sipped my Coke and looked anxiously at Susana's brandy as it was unusual for her to drink and just a few days previously she had been drunk for the first time. I noticed Susana's face becoming tense and, following her eyes, I saw she was looking at Vlatko who, in turn, was looking in the direction of a group of girls, his eyes were gliding up and down the girls. They were typical of the girls in Van Gogh: tall, slim, tanned, long-haired owners of long, shapely legs tipped by high heels. These were the types of girls who could make normal women feel very short, ugly and fat. Susana is far from being ugly and fat and I did not follow this eye conversation any further as I had glimpsed some friends trying to squeeze out and I had a desperate urge to squeeze out with them. Maybe I could go with them to another café, as crowded as this one perhaps, but at least alternative in nature.

Susana had gone to the washroom and I waited until she returned so I could signal to her that I was leaving. When she returned her eyes were red, the make-up smeared and I knew trouble was ahead. I looked at Vlatko and saw that he saw nothing. Taking her by

the sleeve, we elbowed our way out. Outside she started to cry frantically, one moment saying how stupid she was because she knew she had nothing to worry about, that she looked good and, in fact, she was actually far too good for Vlatko and that he should be happy to have her and the next moment crying out loud at the thought of Vlatko's eyes going up and down those beautiful slim legs that did not belong to her. She started blaming herself for not having legs such as those Vlatko clearly admired, for lacking the self-control necessary to be slim, then she moved on to blaming Vlatko for looking, then said it is natural for men to like shapely legs. Susana then cried desperately saying she wanted legs like those at any cost.

I have described that evening at length, because that evening was like most evenings. Not only for Susana, but for many of her friends. Here I saw Hans Christian Andersen's mermaid cutting off her nice mermaid tail in order to walk on two feet for her prince. What had happened? It is the female body that has gained public importance in independent Macedonia, in the cafés, in the media, in most conversations I heard. This enchantment with the body stands in relationship to the changing world of my friends. The body became the site where the battles of loss of control, pain and the desperate need to change the status quo were fought.

It was the winter of 1993: Macedonia was going through its most difficult time.

Independence had been declared and Greece had begun to boycott Macedonia; on public television, Serbia had declared Macedonia was now South Serbia; elections were to be held and the Albanian population in Macedonia called for them to be boycotted. Serbia and Croatia had their own 'body politics' in which the female body became central to nationalistic discourses (see Zarkov 1997). Life in Macedonia was indeed unsettled.

The Body

It was on my return in the winter of 1993 that I was first introduced to a *trensje*, a 'shaker,' a person with a shaking machine - a new sort of private enterprise. The *trensje* I visited with a friend, had brought her 'shaking machine' all the way from Australia, where she and her husband had stayed for a while as her husband was a famous football star. She told me, however, that she was happy to be back in Skopje, because nothing was better than home. Now, with her experience abroad, she started a small business 'shaking' fat off people and assisting in the ongoing fight against cellulite. To my shame, I had not, until this time, ever heard of cellulite, but of course I was made to realise that my legs were in very bad shape. My friends had convinced me. In the flat adjacent to Vera's, which she had turned into a beauty parlour, Irina and I sat. We were

wrapped in blankets with electrical currents, conducted by wet towels, running through our bodies and we itched terribly. We talked with Vera throughout these sessions and she told us about her life in Australia, how hard they had worked and how little time they had had for themselves. Meanwhile we became slim and beautiful. We flipped through the western magazines Vera had lying in her parlour and imagined how it would feel to look like Linda Evangelista and what we could afford to buy. In 1993, prices were not all that different from 1988, shopping malls and beauty parlours excluded. Nevertheless, there was a difference and this difference lay in the extent to and the ways in which my friends sought to alter their bodies.

Foucault suggests that the body is directly involved in a political field in which power relations have an immediate hold upon the body. They invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs (Foucault 1995:25). I believe that my friends felt alienated after the break-up of Yugoslavia and that they acted out this alienation on their bodies. Similarly, Boddy describes Sudanese Bedouin women and their *zar* cult. In their *zar* ritual the women fall into a trance in which they often enact cultural strangers. It could be suggested that these women, through their bodily experience, gain a greater understanding of their own society and their position within it. In some ways, their ritual represents a comment on their society and gives

those women a distant look at their society, when everywhere else such distance is restricted. Following these examples, one could argue, in the broadest sense, the boundaries of Macedonian society have been altered and that the boundaries of the body reflect this alteration and that in Macedonia, as in the *zar* cult Boddy refers to, one can find a problem of embodiment. Susan Bordo describes something similar in her analysis of anorexia nervosa and bulimia in Western societies (1993). Bordo links these eating disorders to an idea of the physical body as alien, a *not-self*. In Augustine's formulation, the body is a cage that confines and limits and, as such, it is the locus of all that threatens our attempts to control (Bordo 1993:144). My friends in Skopje see their body as alien as Bordo or Boddy describe, so experiences of hunger from dieting or of pain from exercising, manifest themselves as sensations that derive from the outside, invading their bodies (see Bordo 1993:146). This is very similar to the way spirits in the *zar* cult are experienced. Hunger and pain are not experienced as forces that originate from within their bodies and, in order to master such 'alienation,' they have to learn to deny their bodies. They refuse to eat and are, therefore, creating their body-shapes, winning over nature and, at the end, hoping for the satisfaction of material transcendence.

In her work, Douglas (1966) demonstrates how the body is represented in a particular culture, looking at how the body is read as text. Mauss (1979) discusses body

techniques and Foucault (1995 [1975]) views the body as a passive object upon which external power is exercised. Though I am considering how my informants see and treat their bodies in a particular moment of time, I wish to stress that it is they themselves, not society, who are transferring messages that derive from their surrounding social world into their bodies. Women's bodies then, are not simply to be read as 'texts of cultures,' passively reflecting the values of their society. It is the young women themselves that draw upon these ideas, 'make them body,' because such action gives them the appropriate expression to a personal conflict (Benson 1997:143). What it is that drives young people in contemporary Macedonia to obey specific body images and leads them to a hard regime of body exercise and starvation remains a question.

Body Consumed

The consumption of images on television and in glossy magazines leads to an understanding of the body that supersedes appearance, but promises a whole new lifestyle. Appearance plays a particularly important role for Skopje's consumers. Appearance is the external inscription of identity and this inscription is radically different for my friends than it was for their grandparents, or even their parents. In the world of their grandparents appearance was quite standardised, dictated by locality,

folklore and economic circumstances. In the world of their parents, appearance became part of an ideology. An informant pointed out that in the 1950's and 1960's, far more women wore trousers than do today (1988). In Macedonia in 1994 several sectors of industry required, in response to public demand, their female employees to wear skirts. When asked to describe the fashion of today, informants identified the way that they and most of their educated urban friends dressed as 'smart.' When asked to describe the way their parents dressed, it was said that their dress was functional or practical, and their grandparents' dress was generally described as 'old-fashioned.' These differing descriptions reflect far more than simple changes in fashion or ideology. Dress and other bodily adornments, make-up included, have probably always served, to a certain extent, to individualise one's person, as well as to function as a social statement of inclusion or exclusion. Not long ago, every village and community in Macedonia had its own specific dress and within this system of dress, married women and men dressed differently from unmarried women and men. Today there is less organisation of dress and behaviour. This lack of organisation is characterised as 'Western' by my informants. In this situation my friends have to undergo a self-initiation in order to create themselves as citizens of new Macedonia, in order to transform their individual bodies into socially acceptable bodies. They do so by constructing their bodies in the image of the world

they find in American television and western European advertisements. The television is an instrument which helps them form their modern life and it is undeniable that the television they watch is itself produced to 'create' the body and its desires. 'Always' advertisements not only show my Macedonian friends which sanitary pad to use, but also present them with an ideal: a fresh, clean, lean body in total control of its bodily functions. It is a body worthy of a pair of expensive Levis jeans.

A friend of mine, after extensive dieting, took me shopping. She described it as shopping for her new-self, as now she could finally look like the singers of MTV if she chose to dress like them. Our first trip was to the Levis jeans store on the high street. It was not the buying of the jeans alone which created her new body, but the many turns in front of the public mirror outside the changing room and the repeated questions to her mother, the saleswoman and myself about how she looked. It was not important that we thought her gorgeous in any form nor that the saleswoman probably did not care, it was instead the self-assurance created by the public mirror that miraculously created a new self for her. She had proved her power over her body. Furthermore, she had started a continuing process of reflexivity. "The continual reflexive incorporation of knowledge provides precisely a basic impetus to the changes which sweep through personal, as well as global, contexts of action" (Giddens 1995: 29) and in accordance, my friend's

reflexive response to her own image started to change her perceptions of herself and the world around her. Furthermore, her changing perceptions called for differing social actions as well. The mirror had taken on a new importance in her life; it was this mirror image she could compare to the images on television. Her ritual should not be misunderstood as self-adoring. It was her control and her reflexivity that created her self in the midst of a plurality of choices, choices that ranged from a life that her grandmother had lived to the world of MTV. With control over her body she was able to start taking charge of her life. She had given herself the form she had sought by assigning herself a very specific lifestyle.

When asked to define this lifestyle it was said that the body would be shaped to withstand being 'disfigured.' The bodies of my friends' mothers and grandmothers were understood to be 'formed through life.' My friends felt that their grandmothers had aged too quickly because of the harshness of their village lives, and their mothers were, through neglect and carelessness, bloated from childbirth. They felt that their mothers and grandmothers had not behaved responsibly towards their own bodies. When faced with such accusations, the older women would laugh at the foolishness of their granddaughters, while the mothers' generation took pride in their daughters' bodies.

Their energy had been directed towards different goals, labour and childcare, and they

were happy for the young women to be given the chance of a period in their lives when they could care for themselves and their appearance.

None of the older women I talked to were opposed to young women marrying later in life as they now choose to do, nor to the frequent change of partners, although premarital sex was still completely unacceptable. In all this, the question remains as to why extreme weight loss was considered helpful in achieving selfhood. The mirror was put next to the images seen on television and in western magazines. The use of the word image is sometimes taken lightly and I do not wish to make a connection between 'images' in magazines and television and the obsession of the young people in Skopje with thinness. But cultural images themselves are deep and the way they become imbued and animated with such power is hardly mysterious (Bordo 1997:113). Images are not 'just pictures,' they have a great influence on the lives of my group of graduates. I argue that with the disintegration of Yugoslavia the susceptibility of my friends to such cultural imagery has changed and the perfected images in 'Western' television advertisement and supermodels have become a dominant reality for them, setting standards that are unrealistic in their demands.

Interestingly, none of the parents were much concerned about my friends' obsession with thinness; it was the grandmothers that were worried about the unhealthiness of their

granddaughters' lifestyles. I suspect that in some ways the parents themselves fall into the trap of wishing their daughters to be similar to the images they see about Western Europe. Bordo suggests that such a phenomenon is related to an increasingly image-dominated culture in which the presence of counter-cultural body ideals has become diluted (Bordo 1997:118). Most of my friends' grandparents do not watch television and live in the countryside and not in Skopje. The world of Skopje however, has become clearly dominated by a significant increase of 'Western European imagery' since the disintegration of Yugoslavia. This imagery is not seen as reality, not even as the reality of 'Western Europe,' my friends are too 'image-experienced' to believe this. Nevertheless these images create a specific desire and a fantasy of wanting to participate in the world those images portray.

I had several interviews and conversations with my friends about their excessive efforts to adhere to specific cultural images. These interviews took place from 1994 to 1996, when my friends had graduated and were working and earning their own money, a large portion of which was spent on enhancing their bodies or on presents for friends, for entertainment or for siblings who did not earn their own money yet. Only occasionally would they contribute a portion of their income to offset the family's household expenses such as petrol for the car, speciality food they enjoy, such as Cornflakes or

Muesli, or body care products for their own use. Their parents paid most of the living expenses, such as maintenance of the flat which is the responsibility of the owner, fees and food. This time, earning their own money, coincided with startlingly obvious changes in their bodies. They all had started a diet, bought clothes in the 'new' shops, and worked on shaping their bodies in one form or another. Names have been changed to protect their identity.

Interviewees:

Suse, 25, machine engineer, lives with her parents and sister, works at a radio station, started swimming and dieting eighteen months ago. She has lost approximately ten kilos. She loves dressing smartly and is admired by her male work colleagues for it. She has been involved in a serious romantic relationship for two years.

Eleonora, 25, lives with her brother at her aunt's home as her family lives in the eastern part of Macedonia. Eleonora's parents send money to the aunt for the upkeep of Eleonora and her brother. Eleonora has known her partner, Rade, for five years and they are planning to be married soon. She works in a small private computer company. She exercises regularly and, from time to time, she visits body sculpture studios; Rade pays for these visits. She also likes aerobics. She is very concerned about what she eats and

despises traditional Macedonian food. She has many arguments with her aunt, who cooks for her, about food. She does not want to tell me how much weight she has lost over the last year, but she has become very thin, even her fingers are very thin.

Maja, 24, just finished her last exam. Her father is looking for the right connection to secure his daughter a job in one of the ministries. She has no boyfriend, but fancies several men. She lives with her parents and her younger sister in the newly built apartment buildings of *Aerodrom*, a district in Skopje. She started dieting only a few months ago. She also went to a body shaping institute which was a graduation present from her aunt.

Irina, 26, works in one of the Macedonian ministries, and lives with her parents and her older brother in the centre of Skopje. Her older brother has recently married and his wife is now living with them. They are all getting along well. Irina has been dating her boyfriend for seven years. She jogs nearly every day. Over the last year she has lost about eight kilos.

Eli, 23, lives with her younger brother and her parents in the south of the city. She has been dieting for two years. She has studied economics and is now working at a private import-export company. She does not have a boyfriend. She goes to a body building studio at least twice a week, but tries to go every second day. She has also

started a strict diet program imported from America. She also follows the aerobic program on television if she finds the time. She did not tell me how much weight she had lost.

Blagica, 25, lives with her parents, her younger sister and her grandmother in a small house close to the centre of Skopje. She has been dieting since she left university two years ago. She works at the post office as a computer specialist and would love to go to Germany for a computer fair. She has no boyfriend, but started recently to date a colleague of hers. She does some body building and goes to the 'shaker' periodically.

Milka, 25, lives with her parents and older brother in the centre of Skopje. She loves exercising and tries to go every day. She has just found a new boyfriend. She works with the police. She is very slim, loves to go to aerobics and to the Olympic pool to swim. **Valentina**, 26, lives with her father and older sister in Skopje. She works as a technician in one of the ministries. She has no boyfriend and is very frustrated about her weight. She started doing aerobics only several weeks ago and has visited a body sculpting studio once.

Susana, 25, lives with her parents and older sister in the outskirts of Skopje. She works in a private computer company. She has been dating Vlatko for two years. She

started dieting two and a half years ago. She has lost about ten kilos. She regularly goes to body sculpturing, body building and to a 'shaker.' She runs and swims.

Elizabeta, 23, lives with her parents and younger brother. She is in her last year of computer engineering. She has lost 3 kilos over the last two months.

Aneta, 24, lives with her parents in the *Aerodrom* district. She finished her studies recently and works in a company owned by her uncle. She has been dieting and going to aerobics for a year now. She has a boyfriend she has known since highschool.

Sandra, 25, lives with her parents and two sisters in the centre of Skopje. She works as a computer specialist in one of the ministries. She has been involved with Filip for five years. She started to watch what she eats and to exercise two years ago. She goes to body sculpturing and body building.

Mirjana, 26, lives with her parent and younger sister. She plans to marry Mitko soon. She works as a mechanical engineer in one of the ministries. She goes to body building, sometimes to body sculpture studio and she swims. She has lost 11 kilos in eighteen months.

Despina, 23, lives with her mother and aunt while her father and older sister live in Belgrade. She has been with Stevo, 25, for four years now. They are planning to get married soon. Stevo got a job offer that would send him to Amsterdam for a year. She

started dieting a few months ago. She goes to a body sculpture studio and to a 'shaker' regularly, has started to do aerobics and runs after work. She works in an import-export company.

In discussion with my friends about their dieting and body shaping, they tried to explain some things to me:

Suse: "I have always been frustrated about my looks. I think I can change this now, because of Borsche (her boyfriend)."

For Suse hunger and sexuality have become confused. The message she is reading is that a woman's body should disguise the parts that make it distinctly female, its particular physiology. Slowly her experience of her body is changing. Through Borsche she learns that a slender body is desirable and that with her more androgynous form, she can enter a man's world, a world that demonstrates its strength through control. Such control is demonstrated by Suse and her friends through control of their bodies. The female body is seen by them as especially difficult to control. The experience of their body and their possibilities sheds new light on their social world. Being in control, being slender, secures them a place and recognition in a man's world.

Eleonora: "You see, people realise that I have lost weight. My boyfriend does not think I should lose weight as he thinks I am very skinny. It is only my legs that trouble

me. Right now I am trying to eat healthily and dieting for a while. I do not know how long I will be able to take that because it is hard sometimes; it really bothers me: I feel hungry sometimes and it is not a nice feeling. I think exercising is what I need most. But I need the dieting to lose a bit, there is fat which goes away. I know Rade likes girls with skinny legs. I have never liked my legs."

Eleonora talks about possibilities and strength and, like Suse, she feels that the world around her is changing and with this new life, she has to change too. More importantly, in this new world she suddenly has the means to change her body. She has a supportive boyfriend. She has the shops in which to find the clothes she sees in the glossy magazines. She earns some money and spends it on herself and her body-sculpturing. Classes on aerobic and body building are offered; these have only recently appeared in Skopje. She knows the images of the western world that tell her: 'if you become like us then you belong to us.' In a world that has redefined her country's physical boundaries and, in the process, greatly limited them, this last message is an important one. She looks at herself and finds her body somehow alien to her, she suddenly sees the limitations her body imposes on her. Her body becomes her enemy because it is different than the images in the glossy magazines. It is her body that confines her to a world where she does not want to belong.

Maja: "I am a person who likes eating. There are some people who do not care about food very much. That's why I try to arrange not to be hungry, but still if I would eat more it would turn into fat. I think right now I do this to prove something: that I actually can lose weight."

For Maja the answer to questions about her life lies with the issue of control. If she can control her body, she can control the world around her. For her, control is not just about power, but also about her ability to suppress her hunger and desire. A slender body, the achievement of her final goal, will be the triumph of will over the physical. Her body will be pure and ruled by her mind. She loves to see herself as a scientist and she would like to go to international conferences about computer engineering and hopes to be a rocket engineer. For Maja the rule of the mind includes the denial of her sexuality. Sexuality is too strongly linked with bodily processes for her to find it enjoyable.

Irina: "I see the fat. I see fat on my thighs. I measure myself and if there is one centimetre less of fat, I will be fine. Then I do more exercise and eat healthier food. Also now at least I eat: I eat fruits, I eat a banana, I am not starving."

Irina has a mother who loves her dearly but expects a lot from her in her studies as well as physical appearance. She makes a lot of choices for Irina. Irina's physical

transformation was greeted with respect. Irina started to feel more confident with her "new look." She started to buy expensive clothes that emphasised her shape. She felt she had subscribed to a completely new lifestyle, a lifestyle in which her mother had no part. She hoped to leave Macedonia for America or England where she felt she would find fulfilment. In contrast, she saw her mother as unable to change her own life.

Eli: "I try to avoid unnecessary calories. I think once you have achieved a healthy look, you can keep it. But you keep it by being more physically active, by exercising. You always have to be careful what you eat. Of course if you eat cakes every day you get fat again. You just have a piece of cake twice a week.. My mom says I am ruining my health, but I am eating salads and drink yoghurt and all these things. I do not have to stay hungry and I am exercising my body."

Eli's world very much revolves around avoiding the unnecessary, avoiding being careless. She has a sense that there is danger around her which she confronts by exercising control over herself. She feels if she maintains this control over herself there will be no part of her vulnerable to attack. Her body has become her sole world, all her thoughts circle around calories and how to reduce her intake. To know how far she can go gives her a feeling of satisfaction.

Eli and her friends differ from many anorexics in that they seek not to destroy their bodies and to become invisible, but to exercise control over their bodies. This is in contrast to what Orbach (1978) identifies as the central reason for women's ill-treatment of their bodies through their attitudes toward food; that is, women's lack of power and fear of violence and harassment. What I found with the people I interviewed is that many of them not only diet, but also exercise, run and go to aerobics and body sculpture or body building classes. They do not hate the female body, but instead try to control its image.

Blagica: "In the morning I eat a banana and an orange²⁹ and I am still hungry. But I think it is enough food for me; it is only that my stomach is used to getting more food maybe."

Blagica's self-denial is typical. However, her grandmother, Milka, disagrees vehemently with her ideas about dieting and often argues with Blagica and, indeed, tries to entice her to eat. For Milka starvation does not mean control, it means to be at the mercy of something else, the elements, nature or an occupying force. Blagica knows the feelings of powerlessness too. In order to apply for a visa to visit Germany, which was eventually denied, she had to wait in line to beg to be let in to visit and, not surprisingly, she felt degraded. Blagica insists that her body, the way she shapes it, proves that she is

different from her grandmother and the world her grandmother knows. Blagica has always insisted that she would not end up like her mother doing all the house work, being submissive to her husband and controlling of her children. By sculpting her body, Blagica voices her rebellion against the ultimate fate described by her mother and grandmother: passivity and acquiescence to the world around them. She has a force driving her, sometimes she can feel this force in the form of hunger, but, more importantly, this force is visible to her when she looks in the mirror.

Milka: "I exercise. I go to aerobics now, I swim. But what I wanted to do is to run a bit more, not just once a week, but I need company for that, so I will see how that works out. I can also exercise at home, but I become bored with that. I do not like it."

Like Eli, Milka is driven by her desire to strengthen her body, to not allow her body to be weak. She is less obsessed with leanness than with actually feeling good about herself. She loves shopping and to buy nice things for herself. However, she feels she needs to deserve these treats, this is why she exercises. She sets herself goals and when she reaches them, she rewards herself. These rewards are always in form of an enhancement of her effort, she would not buy chocolate for herself, but rather a pair of tight jeans that now fit. She is cheerful, refusing to take anything around her too seriously, especially politics and she is very popular among the young men of Skopje.

In their eyes she is the perfect woman: confident, amusing and someone who achieves her aims seemingly effortlessly, as I was told by some of my male informants in different conversations. She is the embodiment of the images on television promising worry-free freedom, Macedonian-style.

Valentina presents herself very differently from Eli:

"I want to go to Ohrid for a weekend maybe, but I would not like to go there for a holiday. In Ohrid everybody looks at you, I am tired of that. I just do not want to see anybody from Skopje. I do not want people to see me in my swimsuit. I would rather go to Cyprus where no one knows me."

For Valentina the body and freedom to travel are related, indeed she feels that the most popular conversation in Skopje, where one will spend the summer, is directly related to a specific body culture. She feels that 'the summer body culture' is more cruel than 'coffee house culture' that at least allows one to disguise one's body to a certain degree. On the beach the swimsuit reveals all, the body, exposed, open to the eyes and the judgement of all. She associates freedom directly with places outside of Macedonia, with being away from Macedonia where she would be free of the restraints and expectations she feels are imposed on her body. She felt she was, for the first time, a woman in her own right when in 1995 she left Macedonia and visited Amsterdam.

Susana: "I know he loves me, but I am scared that, maybe, he will see someone he likes more and decide he does not like me anymore. Sometimes my legs might make him unhappy, but I think if I lose weight I will be completely confident about myself. Then he has to be scared that I may see someone. I can imagine myself, when I come to this point, it is scary. Before I would forget about my problem with how I look, but then I see the girls with short skirts, which I really like, and it makes me upset. It is really making me upset. I want to be able to wear shorts and not always be conscious about how I look. And now my weight bothers me even more because I think maybe he sees these girls and likes them more than he does me."

Susana spends a lot of time worrying about her legs, neglecting her career, her family and friends. She is willing to sacrifice everything for a beautiful pair of legs and the recognition from men that this brings. So she diets, exercises and sculpts to achieve the final goal of shaping her body perfectly. In seeking love, she accepts that it is legitimate for her boyfriend to have a problem with her legs as she feels it is her fault that her legs are not thin enough, due solely to the fact that she has not shown sufficient self-restraint. Criticising herself, she often refers to herself as wanting too much.

Susana's mother emphasises this every day: "She wants too much. When will she learn she cannot have it all?" So Susana does what is expected of her and restrains herself.

Elizabeta: "It is difficult to find a boyfriend if you do not look a certain way. It is something you cannot change."

As with Susana, Elizabeta is very aware of the social implications of her own body. "How you look is what you are" is the common assumption in the café houses of Skopje. Elizabeta voices the desire to embody a specific image of a woman, a dominant image in her society and one in which women themselves have a central role in creating. A common saying in Skopje is that men only want to have sex, women only want money. Turning this around, women represent the sex object with its touch of western imagery, whereas men supply the financial means for such imagery. It is the imagery my friends see on television in Skopje, in American soaps and German advertising. There are no victims in this game, no losers and no winners.

Aneta: "'Beverly Hills' is a colourful series, I like watching it and the people look nice. It is relaxing, you do not have to think. I have always been obsessed with clothes and they have interesting ideas, very nice. Their tastes in clothes are fun. My mom does not like how they dress."

Many young women in Skopje love to watch Beverly Hills 90210. It is such a happy world, light and easy to digest. Women look beautiful and men are rich and drive fast cars. Nothing is serious, no serious work, no serious effort. The show does, however,

have a serious impact on the people in Skopje who watch it. It is no accident that the new shopping mall is called 'Beverly Hills.' The images presented by the actresses tell my friends how to hold their bodies, how to shape their bodies, how to behave and ultimately how to express themselves through their bodies. By shaping their bodies in a specific way my friends express what they cannot express in words - their reaction to the demands made on them and the feeling that their world is in turmoil.

Sandra: "I was talking yesterday with my colleague, Bojan, at work and he said: 'Come in a short skirt, so we can judge if you are fat or not.' He said this in a nice way. He says, 'Come on, I am your colleague. You do not have to be afraid, I just want to know how you look in a short skirt.' He is conservative. He thinks girls should wear short skirts. Right now I do not feel comfortable wearing a skirt. I would wear a long skirt, maybe."

Sandra feels that it is men who make the demands on women's bodies. Men like feminine women in short skirts. By tailoring her body to fit the image of the ideal woman, she is able to gain entrance to a man's world. She experiences the empowerment that comes with a sculptured body, a body image which represents the free, powerful and worthy world. A world not even the men around her can easily access.

Mirjana: "Mitko does not look perfect, but I am fine with the way he looks. My body does not bother him when he is with me, he says, but maybe when he sees someone else, it does. I can see him looking at other women. So he is helping me with my exercising. He says he does not want me to do it for him, or for me, but for us. In the beginning of our relationship I thought he was disgusted by my body. Right now we are fine; he likes everything else on me. I have never had anybody who cared so much for me."

Mitko and Mirjana's relationship mirrors a new set of values in Macedonia. The body is seen as demonstrating correct or incorrect attitudes. When I spoke with Mitko and Mirjana, it became clear that Mirjana's excessive exercising meant something different to each of them. Whereas for Mitko it is primarily about the containment of Mirjana's female qualities and weaknesses, for Mirjana the exercising is her form of escape from the kind of confinement her mother experiences. Her mother's body shape associates her with a domestic and reproductive destiny, a destiny Mirjana is not willing to share, at least not yet. She "wants to be out there and be seen."

Despina: "I am doing something I always wanted to do and did not previously have the will to do. If I achieve looking beautiful, I would be completely happy. If Stevo then decided to leave me, it would be too bad for him. I would be very confident about

myself. If you think rationally, you can do anything. Only I think about food all the time."

Despina and her friends have reacted against the world of their mothers, a world they resent and which for them fails to correspond to the world of 'young free intelligent European woman.'

In their specific, but also very similar, responses my friends show the importance of their female bodies in Macedonian society today. I suggest that the cultural discourse my friends are involved in is about what their desired body evokes. Their bodily appearances convey a specific meaning, a meaning that has been changed by the recent political occurrences. The control of weight and the choosing of a 'healthier' lifestyle have come to stand as the opposite of traditional, Macedonian values, values that have regained importance in independent Macedonia. In contrast to being beyond desire (Bordo 1997:127) and in contrast to Bordo's earlier assertion that slenderness derives from the wish to be less female (Bordo 1993:148), my young informants in Skopje seek to influence the images of being seen as Macedonian woman. They have very concrete desires, desires that to a great extent, point beyond the boundary of Macedonia. Their hunger, though they triumph over this need, symbolises a very strong desire. It is not coincidental that a rumour went round that the New Zealand Immigration Department

was only accepting intelligent, beautiful people, preferably engineers. Access was directly related to beauty. It was said that the agencies negotiating with the government of New Zealand were asking for 39 pictures of each applicant in order to process the application.

The young women I spoke with were not so much concerned about the sexual aspect of devouring as they did not feel they needed to control their desires, but they wished to control the world around them in a time when they felt they had lost control. In particular they had lost the control to rebel against the world of their parents. They could not go out and think of living an independent life in Slovenia or Serbia or perhaps even in England as successful engineers. They were not in touch, either with the material means of such independence or with the world they had before termed 'ours,' the world of young striving Europeans. Certainly many times this idea of 'Western' or 'other than Macedonian' showed itself as an illusion. The sister of an informant won an American Green Card through a lottery in Macedonia³⁰. She went to America, only to come back disappointed. She told people in Macedonia that Americans dress badly, work all the time, and never go out to café's and that's why she had to come back. Another person, who had gone to Toronto, reported back home that he just could not

believe how badly the Canadian people dressed, indeed how they dared to go out on the streets wearing what they did and that they did not know how to live life.

Reality is not always in accordance with the images people have created of it. But, in creating this idea of 'Western,' my friends create something very distinctly Macedonian, the Macedonian idea of what 'Westernness' contains. So Adrienne Rich considers body shaping an assimilation: "Change your name, your accent, your nose; straighten or dye your hair; stay in the closet; pretend the Pilgrims were your fathers; become baptised as a Christian; wear dangerously high heels, and starve yourself to look young, thin, and feminine; don't gesture with your hands..." (Rich 1986:142). Assimilation does not describe the world of my young starving friends. Images of Western Europe and North America are not used in order to assimilate to such pictures, 'thinness' and beauty have a very different meanings in Skopje than in North America. The image in Macedonia of American or European life is a creation of media and imagination, which is why many people are disappointed with what they see when they experience a country outside Macedonia. In Skopje beauty and thinness do not only refer to the external but also an inward reflection. Even though slenderness might come to stand for a successful assimilation of a 'Western' lifestyle, it is a lifestyle that is created not only to diminish the difference between Macedonia and the 'Western world,' but is also to create a

difference between my young informants and their parents. The difference is created by an outward assimilation to a world that is today entirely inaccessible³¹ to the parents' generation whereas some of my friends still feel that they may be able to will the realization of their dreams. Through their bodies, my friends try to establish an image of a seemingly 'free' woman, modelled after those they see on television, ready to claim their space in society, and very different from their mothers. In a time when Macedonia as a country is establishing its roots, they are adamantly opposed to falling into the roles they have seen their mothers occupy, roles defined by a peasant origin from the past according to my friends.

Essentially, the transformation of the body is an ongoing attempt to master their world. For some it becomes compulsive and extreme; how far it goes depends on the individual's personality. For them, their exercising, aerobics, running, clothes, make-up, shopping and body sculpture bring a sense of achievement which, in turn, engenders a sense of empowerment. The source of this empowerment lies in the management of their lives which they see as achievable through the transformation of their bodies. It is important to note that my friends are combining their dieting with aerobics, body sculpting or body building. These forms of transforming the body are linked through the extreme and excessive enactment of western culture's fantasies of the 'self-controlled

body.' Ultimately my informants redefine the relationship between what they believe to be truly them and a representation of themselves in their social world which is constructed through interactions with others and the wider cultural framework through their body acts (Benson 1997: 125). As well, my friends are concerned with the issue of health and healthy eating, an issue they feel is not addressed in their society. Through television, they come in contact with the 'modern' issue of healthy eating, health food, organic food and herbal remedies. By following this popular discourse, they redesign themselves by having the same concerns as their peers in Western Europe. Their image of the 'healthy self' is sustained, in part, through the creation of the image of their 'unhealthy' mothers.

Women Before and Under Socialism

Discussing the bodies of young women in present day Skopje, raises the question of how their mothers' and grandmothers' bodies were formed. To understand the difference between the younger women's generation and their mothers' generation, one can compare the duty free shop and its Christian Dior lipsticks with the drugstore and its homemade cucumber-camillo cream masks. Honey and beer are good for the hair as they make it strong and shiny. Lemon juice is good for thin hair. Vinegar makes the

hair soft. Cucumber or egg white makes your skin feel soft. One recognises the age of a person from the shade of lipstick or eye shadow they are wearing: "There is only one kind of lipstick, eye shadow or hair dye and everyone is using it" (Diana in 1992).

Perfume is made by the pharmacists and, as long it is perfume, it does not matter how it smells.

One day Eli and I went to buy Paloma Picasso perfume for Mothers' Day. For Eli's mother's birthday, we gave her a skincare program by Estee Lauder, products which we bought from the Duty Free Shop, a gift from daughter to mother, which ended up in the daughter's closet. The mother felt more comfortable following the old beauty recipes which were given to her by her mother and her grandmother before her, possibly on their wedding days. But several women her age did welcome today's changes in contrast with the life they had had. One middle-aged lady described how she saw her life in Yugoslavia: "Tito gave us freedom without beauty. There was only grey." Women of her age, the same informant conveyed, used 'natural' enhancers for their well-being. As the country sacrificed luxury for freedom, they sacrificed their comfort too. This sacrifice not only included make up, but also include simple sanitary products, such as sanitary pads or even toilet paper. "I will never forget where my family came from," another middle-aged lady told me. Their world was that of peasants: no electricity, no

running water, no beds and no education. That this world had been left behind in search of a better life and that this better life could not be found without sacrifice, was the commonly understood ideology.

Socialism had brought them so much; it had taken away the hardship of peasant life and foreign occupation. In any discussion, of politics or beautification, this was always mentioned.

"We learned to be happy with what we had and to be proud of what we had achieved. We liked to worry about small things, how to make a nice home or dress nicely. But we knew that in comparison to those of the whole country these were small concerns. My children today worry about small things too. They like to go on holiday, my girls like to look nice. I help them as much as I can. There are so many terrible things happening, what else can you do but make your children happy with small things."

For Zorica, she had control of her world in the past; there were people who were concerned with the building and formation of society. The world today she describes as being out of control and she cannot name the people who have control. When asked, she would say it is America and Germany who plotted, then caused the breakup of Yugoslavia and took control. In helping her children to obtain small gadgets from the world which controls them, she hopes to empower them. Looking back at her young adult life, Zorica liked to look nice, but she was told to use her energy in the pursuit of different goals. Today, for Zorica's children it has become important to embody the

image of control and her daughters have to control what they can: their bodies. Bynum (1987) argues that for medieval mystics the meaning of their actions must be understood in terms of the religious idioms of their time and that their self starvation represents not self-hatred as suggested by literature on anorexia (Orbach, Chernin, Wolf) but a celebration of the power of suffering flesh (Benson 1997: 138). In a very similar manner my friends indeed celebrate their power over their flesh as an action of control that is reflexive of the specific circumstance of independent Macedonia.

The grandmothers were far more critical of socialist Yugoslavia than their daughters, though it took time and trust before they would admit it. They felt that many things had been taken away from them and that socialism had been just another form of occupation. For them, beautification was a protest against the socialist ideology. Many times I was told that a woman was a woman and should look like one. Finally the time had come when women had some time for themselves, hardship had not cut deep lines into their faces, so in Yugoslavia their daughters at least should have time to make themselves feel special and feel what it means to be a woman. This was a strong theme throughout the interviews with the grandmothers' generation. They emphasised how hard it had been to feel special about oneself and that modern times had finally allowed this to happen. They hoped that their daughters and granddaughters enjoyed this special, mutually

inclusive gift God had given them: motherhood and femininity. Finally, a woman had time to take care of her body and was not sent to work in the fields while she was pregnant. It bothered these women greatly when they saw that their daughters were not taking advantage of these new opportunities and were pushing themselves too hard.

"Working, working, working, that's all they know. I did this all my life and so did my mother, why does God not give us a rest? Today things are supposed to be better. Babies are born healthy, but still women work and work, 'for what?' I ask myself, 'for what?' It is time men become men and women are allowed to be women."

The grandmothers feel their granddaughters have, in one sense, the right attitude in that they want their bodies to be healthy and beautiful. They feel that their granddaughters are acting out the luxury of enjoying one's body³², except they think most of the young women are thin and wish they would eat more. I was told that the desire to be slim amongst young women showed that they had never known hunger, otherwise they would appreciate food and a well-fed body. It was understood that the grandmothers' role was to feed the granddaughters enough food to enable them to gain an understanding of a healthy body.

Today some of my friends sell western cosmetic products to their colleagues. If they manage to sell a specific quota of products the cosmetic company awards them free gifts. What is important about these products is that they are manufactured and are

presented in, for example, little glass flacons with gold coloured lids. They cannot be compared with the corn flour masks their mothers mixed for themselves, creating beauty out of nothing. Indeed, this is the main stimulus for buying foreign beauty products. What my friends praise while their mothers look upon it suspiciously, is the sudden diversity of cosmetic products which can now be found in Macedonia itself rather than just being seen on television or in shops in the West³³. Comparing this diversity with what they had known in their adolescence and, indeed, what they continue to use today, the middle age women in my interviews stressed the feeling of uniformity with which they had grown up. The same hair colour as there was only one hair dye, a burgundy red, produced, the same make-up, the same clothes, even the same furniture at home. One woman pointed out that they had joked on the beaches of Croatia that they could recognise a Yugoslavian woman from a Polish woman, because Polish women had silver blond hair as opposed to burgundy red hair of the Yugoslavian women.

I went shopping with my friends and even until the late 1980's, the most advanced form of marketing used on packaging of chocolate or hair shampoo was the image of a lady with a hairstyle from the 1960s. Women on the covers of magazines wore mini-skirts, but the colours were so faded one would assume that these were actually relics of the early sixties. Today, the world offers different images. MTV or other shows where

advertising is shown are only watched by the younger generation. Vogue and Mademoiselle are laid out in the body sculpture studios where the average customer is in her twenties. These new images are quite different, different shades and different shapes compared to Yugoslavian advertising. They do not serve a utilitarian purpose, instead they are an expression of a lifestyle. This is where the world of my friends separates from the world of their mothers and grandmothers. The lifestyle demands you 'to be yourself,' be independent, be firm and strong-willed. It draws my friends away from the uniformity which they see as their mothers' burdens. For them the world of western glamour is a world of choice and, in contrast to their mothers, my friends feel a right to such choices. When I asked about the difference they saw between Yugoslavian/Macedonian and European products, I was told: "Everything is glossy and shiny, our things are all dull." In the way my friends formulated this difference, they also formulated a boundary. There was the world of their mothers which they had once thought they had escaped. It was a progression in the same way their mothers had escaped the hardship of their mothers. The shiny glossy western world was on their doorstep. With the political changes in Yugoslavia, they saw themselves thrown back into the uniformity of their mothers' lives. Many mothers also understood the political

happenings the same way. In this way, images gained a far greater importance in my friend's personal life.

Imaginative interpretations and images excite and inspire cultural discourse, but they are not limited to mirroring reality (Bordo 1997:185). The mothers of my friends had a different way of coping with uniformity. They sewed and made clothes. Aided by their mothers, they made clothes for their grandchildren from Burda, a German sewing magazine pattern sheets. However, some women I talked to considered corn-masks and pharmacist-mixed perfume, mini-skirts from Burda patterns and burgundy red hair, as their specific way of dealing with the sometimes humiliating effect of this uniformity. They felt this uniformity had denied them their femininity. I was told: "The only thing then I wanted was to smell good and to feel clean. It was so hard to get even sanitary pads." Today, one can get sanitary pads but for five times the price. Nevertheless, they were the first items my friends bought from the new Duty Free Shops. They are an item mentioned to me by all three generations as explanation of how women are valued in society. The grandmothers told me about the disgrace they felt when they were young and were using straw or grass bundles wrapped in cloth. I was told of the change in women's rights under socialism. For example, although women could do the same work as man, the system failed to supply a sufficient number of sanitary towels which limited

women's ability to do so. Even today tampons are locked up under glass in the stores and sold in packs of 10 at an exorbitant price. When my friends can rarely find any cheap sanitary pads in the market, but only the very expensive western kind in the Duty Free glamour stores where the sanitary pads lie out in the window next to Marlboro cigarettes, Chanel perfume, Ariel washing powder and Siemens microwaves, this situation is shown in all its absurdity. Here it can be interpreted that it is the social body that constrains the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society (Douglas 1970: 93).

The sculpted body presents itself as clean and effortless. Side effects are that immense effort is required to create a body which fits the image of Vogue magazines and because of the starvation dieting, some of my friends suffered months of permanent bleeding. In Yugoslavia when my young friends entered university, the number of female engineering students was still about 50% of all engineering students. Today the number of women at the faculty has dramatically dropped. However, the so-called egalitarian system that socialist Yugoslavia created also created the double burden of my friends' mothers. Only their visibility, not the attitude towards women had changed.

Women were used as an icon in Yugoslavia as they are today in Macedonia. Living expenses were so high in Yugoslavia that both partners in a family had to work, but only the women did the housework. However, today with socialism withering, women try to hold onto their legal rights, and to a certain extent they have been successful. The demands placed on women are now more subtle as I have tried to show in this chapter. Women's rights are not sacrificed for the benefit of some nationalist scheme. Women are not portrayed as the childbearers of the nation, they are not held responsible for keeping the nation 'clean,' by keeping outsiders out. Women in Macedonia are still in charge of their reproductive rights. Nevertheless, their bodies are used by social discourse. One could easily conclude that the bodies of my friends demonstrate both for themselves and for the surrounding society that they are in control, that they are on equal footing with the powerful world around them, Western Europe and North America.

In *Gender Trouble* Butler reads the body as a text. I, however, would like to understand the bodies of my informants, not as text but, as a concrete and limiting location and as actual social practice. To think that my friends starve themselves for two reasons: agency and resistance, ignores that those terms are concretely embedded in the social world of Skopje, Macedonia, today. So it cannot be concluded that my informants starve themselves because of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, or that we can read the

disintegration of Yugoslavia on their bodies, but that they use cultural images of 'slenderness,' images that are as Western as they are Macedonian, to be more like their perceptions of other young people in Western Europe and, with this, discern a difference between themselves and their parents. By being slender they do not hope to be guided into Western Europe nor do they entertain the illusion that they could transform Macedonia into Western Europe. They merely want to control their bodies to make a difference: a difference between themselves and their parents. It is because of the disintegration of Yugoslavia that they see this difference diminishing before their eyes because they do not have the same venue open to escape the world of their parents as they had in Yugoslavia.

CHAPTER 4

SHOPPING FOR THE 'NEW' PERSON

The world of the villages of Macedonia, that is, the world of today's grandparents, is a long way from the world of my young friends. Change and transformation are the way of life in Skopje, while the world of the village is the world of memory. The question arises as: What is the medium through which such change is experienced by my informants? The arrival of the body sculpture studios and the images promoted and sold through these studios, through other media including television and magazines, brought something new to Skopje: the world of consumerism. Within this world my friends experience new perceptions and interactions. The whole process of transformation in Macedonia is, for the younger generation, largely defined by the introduction of consumer culture. This consumer culture influences their relationship to their bodies as much as it influences their relationship to objects. There is a new emphasis on display and the external. To a great extent their understanding of themselves is enacted through their relationship to Western objects. It is a silent relationship, in that it is a relationship that is defined as 'normal,' as normal as it is in any other Western country. Rausing

notes for Estonia: "The dissolution of the Soviet Union means that the national discourse of future goals has shifted from a Utopian state, to a Western-identified 'normality.' The confines of being defined as Western within the Soviet context, however, means that the changes in material culture are greeted with less of the surprise, enthusiasm, or confusion, than might be expected: the 'normal' or optimal reaction to the new things is a silent appropriation, redefining the objects as already taken for granted" (Rausing 1998: 190). My friends, in identifying Western goods as normal and not exotic, appropriate those objects in the same manner as the Estonians appropriate Western goods, as something that has 'naturally' belonged to them. However, this natural relationship for them derives, not from a historical connection with Western Europe as for example Slovenia or Croatia could claim, but through claims derived from their Yugoslav past, as a 'Western' socialist country. In some ways this causes a perplexing contrast of thought in which Macedonia cannot be readily compared to other post-socialist countries, certainly not in the eyes of the people I came to know. For my friends, Yugoslavia would have lead 'naturally' into the integration of Macedonia into the Western world. With the disintegration of Yugoslavia this 'right' is seen as being questioned by the European community, which today demands visas for Macedonian citizens even though they once granted them free access. Access to 'western' goods and

their appropriation as 'normal' then gains a high political importance. It is not the access to 'Western' consumer goods, but the recontextualisation of these objects³⁴, which allows my young friends to develop a very specific meaning, one that has evolved from their particular memories and aspirations. Just as a person's movement around the city determines that person's place in society³⁵, a person is also determined by the consumer objects s/he purchases and uses.

What value do these objects have for my friends? Simmel insists that value is never an inherent property of objects, but is instead a judgement about objects by subjects, and that these objects are valuable because they resist our desire to possess them (Simmel 1978: 67-73). As such I would like to follow Appadurai's suggestion that looking at consumption should focus not only on the aspect of sending social messages but also on receiving them and that demand thus conceals two different relationships between consumption and production. Demand is determined by social and economic forces just as it is manipulating, within limits, these social and economic forces (Appadurai: 1986:31). As my friends are receiving the social messages of the new consumer goods imported to Macedonia, the demand for these objects creates a new aspect of their identities for them, that has social and economic implications.

Consumer objects bring with them images, stories and ways of living from 'outside.'

Sometimes these images become more real than 'real life' in Macedonia; these images are creating a reality. Often my friends referred to the world outside Macedonia as what 'should be' and the world in Macedonia as a circus mirror that obscures. These consumer objects and their associated images, become directly linked to people's lives. The criteria of what matters have become extremely volatile and as a result people are left with an uncomfortable ambivalence in directing their own actions. Humphrey (1995), in discussing the consumer culture in Moscow, has pointed out the uncertainties that may arise which make it virtually impossible for her informants to know what one should or should not care about. In the same manner, Rausing's Estonians struggle to construct themselves as 'naturally' Western in order to guard themselves from the ambivalence between their Soviet identity and their wish to be recognised as 'Western.'

In Skopje, people's relationship to their surroundings and to the people around them changes slowly as the direction they take is towards the images of Western television. Friction arises if these images do not coincide with life as it is experienced in the 'real' world. The lives of my friend's parents do not correspond to these images which causes friction, between the real and an imagined world, which, in turn, causes turbulence in Macedonian society and the fluctuation, which results in transformation.

However, to say that a society is undergoing a transformation, only hints at the enormity of the changes this process brings to the individual lives of the people in that society. The transformation will alter personal relationships with one's family, employer and even with strangers. It is a transformation which occurs through the openings of independence of Macedonia, Macedonia's break from socialist Yugoslavia and the embracing of what people understand as new, modern and Western. It is the visibility, the images on television and their enactment in the world of Skopje through the purchase of consumer goods, and the emphasis on a body culture which causes the changes. The rearrangement of such visibility, consequently causes a heightened sense of how appearance and self must be created and cultivated. To create a 'self,' my friends are forced to create social relationships which conform to their ideals and dreams. It is in the realm of the family that the first conflict arises.

Many of my friends found that their family expected them to fulfil roles which they felt to be incompatible with their 'new' self. However, at the same time it is the family which, more than ever, gives them support and a sense of security. Many of my friends have found it far more difficult to find a job than their parents ever did. Those who find jobs do so through *vrski*, family connections. It could be said that Macedonia's economy in Yugoslavia as today, was largely based on this concept of *vrski*. In times when

certain goods were not available one had to rely solely on *vrski*. In an economical sense, *vrski* could be described as barter and bribe. In times when the economy of Yugoslavia was stagnating, especially in the 1980's, people needed to rely on family members abroad and in the countryside to supply the world of urban Skopje with both foreign and agricultural goods. Today this system persists, but I argue that the meaning of the goods has changed.

There are goods that can be received through kinship from the countryside, there are household goods that are received through kinship and friendship with people in Germany, Italy or France and there are goods that can be purchased through monetary means. I suggest that the last category creates something beyond *vrski*, it creates an independent 'Western' ideal that stands in direct opposition to *vrski*. This 'Western' world is a world of achievement. However, it is a world that is very difficult to imitate given the economic and political situation of Macedonia in which my young friends must depend more than ever on the family and *vrski*. An additional difficulty for my friends is the impossibility of finding independent housing. It is not possible to get mortgages from banks as they do not offer any of the usual services such as loans or even bank accounts. Bank accounts were closed in 1991, all savings were frozen, and only exist as numbers on pieces of paper. Most people store their money, bundles of

Deutsch Marks, in their homes, hidden in an obscure cupboard. When the German bank changed its banknotes and I brought the new money back to Skopje, the mother of a friend fell crying on a chair, shattered, because she believed that all the money she had saved, every Dinar of which she had changed into Marks, was now worthless. It took some time to reassure her that her money was not lost again. In this situation, the modern way of delaying marriage until one is financially secure, is obsolete and meaningless. The desire for independence and individual preferences cannot be considered. It is very difficult for young Macedonians, despite the intensity of their desire, to emulate the lifestyles they see in American television programs which show young people leaving their parents to start an independent life. Only if their parents are wealthy, have some family property, or belong to the new elite of *bisnes joveks*, business men, is it possible for a son or daughter to move out. If they are most fortunate, they may move to one of the nice apartments in the newly built houses that are appearing everywhere on the Skopje skyline.

It has become necessary to stay at home, submit to your role as a son or daughter and hope that you will find yourself a wife or husband who has their own flat. If not, as a woman you might find yourself moving straight into your husband's parents' house as their daughter-in-law. All of my friends found this situation in direct opposition to the

image they aspired to: the image they saw as modern and West European³⁶. Many times I was asked about my personal situation and when I described my independence from my parents, I was told that I could not possibly understand the situation they were in as my parents were not constantly telling me what to do and what not to do. This situation, close family links and obedience to one's parents, is common in many societies, but my friends rejected this way of living. They had thought that this way of life, which they associated with their grandparents, was passé, at least in the urban environment of Skopje unless you were Albanian³⁷. My friends believed that this way of life was not meant for them and their desire to recreate themselves as modern citizens of an independent Macedonia, created pressure at home which they sought to escape and possibly negotiate through their love of foreign consumer goods.

There is a distinction between 'liking nice things' and the meaning that is applied to those 'things.' To like and want to have a jumper is one thing; to want it so much that you are prepared to spend a month's salary on it, is another. Not all my friends spent money in this way all the time, but they certainly all felt it was more than acceptable behaviour. When I asked about specific purchases, I would often be told that, unlike their situation in Macedonia, it would be easy for me to buy the item in Germany. The explanation given for this inequity would be that there is greater freedom in Germany; it

would not be said that Germany is simply a far richer country. Their idea of 'freedom' was contrasted to the lack of freedom they experienced at home where they were not able to do what they wanted to do³⁸. What they wanted to do was be like 'everybody else,' that is, like people their own age in England, Germany or America. I was told many times by numerous people: 'All I want is a decent life.' They feel their difference from the young people they see on Western European television. On television young people of their age live by themselves or with friends, manage their own household, have jobs they chose and applied for, have hobbies and a 'lifestyle'. They have their own money with which they can buy whatever they want. They travel and know many interesting people and places. My friends, however, are constantly scared to lose what they have: peace, money through the devaluation of currency, ideals and dreams. Buying expensive consumer goods today gives them a feeling of security about tomorrow. After all, by tomorrow those goods might be out of reach forever. So their shopping gains a certain sense of urgency. This not only affects my young friends, but also their parents. Like their children, their parents want to see their children have 'a decent life.' Their parents see this as being achieved through consumption. The parents themselves, however, rarely buy consumer goods for their children, nor are they necessarily willing or able to deplete household resources in order to buy anything that

is beyond necessity. They would for example buy a winter coat for their daughter, but would not be willing to buy a 'Western' designer coat. The daughter however might add her salary to the money her parents put aside to buy the coat she wants.

The images from Western Europe and North America which my friends see on television support them in their quest to control their lives: they want to *become* those images in order to escape to a different world. This world should not be understood as simply an illusion as it indeed exists. It creates a particular reality, a reality that presents my friends with a mixture of old Yugoslavian values with a new meaning inspired through Western consumer goods and images from which my friends create their personhood.

In the years following the fracturing of Yugoslavia, the appearance and practices of people in the street and, accordingly, the appearance and practices of my friends have changed, while social categories have not. This situation was described by a friend as:

"...it is hard to express these thoughts, it seems things changed, but words have not. I do not know what is right or what seems wrong. My parents know things, I know them too, but they do not fit with what is today, but then there is nothing else either, it is not like we have different ideas on things. My words do not express what I think anymore."

In this time of uncertainty, where words are not adequate to convey thoughts, objects and their consumption provide the sought-after guidance. In this world, it is not

ideology or ideas, but material objects which represent my friend's dreams and fears. It is the valued perfume, sweater or brassiere with an English, French or American label which provides guidance in the search for defining oneself beyond the limited definition of the daughter, beyond the identification bestowed from your village³⁹, beyond being an engineer and beyond being Macedonian. Consequently, cargo cults, seen as social movements that intensely centre their symbolism on European goods which are difficult or impossible to attain under current social and economic circumstances⁴⁰, come to mind. The cargo cults function in a symbolic replication of European consumption thereby promising the arrival of 'Europeaness.' The goods that symbolise this 'Europeaness' can be seen as symbols of specific aspects of European life, that is prosperity, power and 'happiness.' As a social practise, consumption is more extensive than what is described in the cargo cults in the South Pacific. The idea of 'cargo cult' is an image in itself and lends itself to us to describe different aspects of global exchange (see Lindstrom 1993). Consumption in Skopje creates consumption objects that are not defined through their utility within this global exchange but through the role they play in the symbolic system of identity formation.

Consideration of the issue of food, its consumption and the ambivalence of the younger generation's social practices provides insights. This generation is altering the

social order within the city. On a visit to Berevo where I stayed with grandmother Baba Mare, I began to understand the meaning of the food which I was repeatedly offered on my visits to Macedonian homes. At breakfast, when I ate a combination of eggs, eggplants, garlic, peppers and tomatoes, Baba Mare pinched my cheeks and said, not so much to me but to the other members of the family, 'She is Macedonian. She eats peppers and tomatoes with us, she is one of us.'

'One of us' was a much used and highly significant expression for Macedonians in relation to 'outsiders.' One of the first questions asked of the person introducing me was always, 'Is she one of us?' to which my host replied, 'No, she is not one of us.' On my first visits to people's homes I would, with formality, be offered *slatko*, a sweet, usually young figs, apricots, strawberries or other fruit which had been cooked many times in sugar. Only morsels of *slatko* were eaten at any one time and were followed by a big gulp of water, as *slatko* is extremely sweet. Offering *slatko* is a traditional Macedonian custom⁴¹ and a sign of great hospitality. It is also a source of immense pride for every *domacinka*, female head of the household, who prepares her own *slatko*. Nevertheless, I was told that offering *slatko* is a Turkish custom and as a Turkish custom, the source of many 'Macedonian' customs, it is a constant reminder of 500 years of 'Ottoman oppression'⁴². As such, these old traditions have two meanings: they define 'who you

are,' but they also identify past oppression. It is felt by my young friends, who are still very proud of their mothers' *slatko*, that an independent Macedonia needs different traditions, so now it is often the case that a formal visitor receives sweets bought in the Duty Free Shop.

When I began to eat regularly in a household, and thus, to regularly eat the staple dish of peppers and tomatoes, I became more like a 'real' Macedonian. The classic pepper and tomato dish is *aivar*, which is made at harvest time, and is seen as making a true Macedonian. *Aivar* has come to represent the extended family to the people of urban Skopje who gather once a year to eat it. In jokes referring to the possibility of a Serbian invasion, people loved the idea of every single Macedonian standing up for their country and, due to a lack of any weapons, throwing tomatoes at the Serbian army. Tomatoes and peppers are the staple ingredients in Macedonia today and are, in fact, the country's lifeline. Besides watermelons, grapes, poppies, tobacco and some fruit, agricultural production in Macedonia is based on peppers and tomatoes. The dismantling of Yugoslavia left Macedonia with a very one-sided economy, a situation that, if it is to be changed, will require revolutionary measures.

Rakia, or schnapps, is another strongly codified medium of Macedonian social exchange, the consumption of which turns out to be a statement about gender. Just as

the *domacinka* is proud of her home-made *slatko* and the whole family takes pride in its *aivar*, the *domacin*, male host takes pride in his home-made *rakia*, made from grapes, plums or potatoes. *Rakia*, 'cleanser of the soul,' is a very strong alcohol and seen as a man's drink - it is never offered to visiting women while wine can be consumed by both sexes, the sweeter ones suitable for women. Today however, the idea of sweetness is associated with excess, indulgence and ottoman rule: very sweet treats such as Turkish delight or *slatko* are associated with the Turkish rule. Instead it is fashionable for the young women today to use 'sweetener' in coffee⁴³. Beer is rarely drunk by women. These gender divides are more rigid in the countryside, where it sometimes is deemed unacceptable for a woman to drink any alcohol except wine. The traditional food and drink create and recreate traditional social relationships in a way that is largely implicit for the participants. The introduction of imported consumer goods, because they arrive unencumbered by tradition, therefore represent a contrast to the social relationships produced by the consumption of traditional food.

Social norms for the consumption of food, are consciously altered by my friends in Skopje who seek a 'more European style of living.' Even though they understand tomatoes and peppers, *slatko*, *rakia* and coffee as being important, my friends insist on the past tense when referring to them and consider these traditional foods and drinks

representative of their childhood, their parents' and their grandparents' generations and Yugoslavia. When Gell notes: "What distinguishes consumption from exchange is not that consumption has a physiological dimension that exchange lacks, but that consumption involves the incorporation of the consumed item into the personal and social identity of the consumer" (Gell 1986: 112), he stresses the same intense relationship between items consumed and the social identity of the consumer that I wish to stress for my informants. *Slatko*, *rakia* and other traditional foods and drinks are still consumed in Macedonia, but 'Western' consumer goods, food, material objects and images transcend the merely utilitarian aspect of consumption goods, so that they become something more like works of art, charged with personal expression (Gell 1986: 114).

In 1988 I spent many long evenings with a group of female friends in Skopje's cafés, drinking *jupi* or *cokta* instead of sprite or coca cola which, imported from Greece, was only available in a few places. We drank Turkish coffee or Nescafé. Today we order cappuccino, espresso and banana milkshakes. In 1988 we spent many hours at each others homes, eating *kashakaval*, a hard cheese and chickpeas, and had the coffee grains in our cups 'read' by male friends who would look deeply into our eyes when they told us our future. Or we would simply indulge in straightforward *muhabeti*, the Turkish

word for socialising and talking sociably⁴⁴. In 1996 we would stand outside Van Gogh listening to loud music, drinking cocktails and 'meeting' people.

In Macedonia, food, what type you eat, how and when, defines your gender, the level of formality in your relationship, youth and old age: it communicates one's origin and identity. In this context, the change of diet undertaken by many of my friends becomes highly significant as my friends consciously attempt to change their image of themselves through changes in their eating habits. Macedonia has established an interesting compromise, in terms of its identity, between its past as a part of Yugoslavia and its present as an independent country. In the midst of the massive political upheavals my friends are trying to make sense of the constantly changing and conflicting images of what has been, what should come and what is coming.

Gender

In the new political order, social relations have become an area of critical importance although political theoreticians in Macedonia do not recognise this. Politics is represented as gender neutral. There are more urgent issues than women's rights, a government official stressed in one of my interviews. Consequently, political discourse centres around privatisation and inter-ethnic conflict and does not address issues such as

changing values in society. Despite, or perhaps because of it, certain socialist achievements around gender equality remain legally untouched; this is in stark contrast to other post-socialist countries, which chose to overthrow their socialist inheritance. Abortion is still legal and there are no calls for it to be restricted or prohibited. The proposed changes to working hours which accompanied the onslaught of privatisation that was meant to 'Europeanise' Macedonia, have been successfully resisted, and continue to allow men and women to finish work at three or four o'clock and spend time with their families⁴⁵. Macedonia's socialist past is not resented, indeed it is sometimes glorified, and is very much present. However, another world has been introduced, a world which is supposed to pave the way to a different Macedonia: a Macedonia with a distinct identity that is a blend of the old and the new.

Europe and America as Ideals

Western television and its associated images have become dominant in Macedonia since the fall of Yugoslavia and are now central to family life. The increase in openness which has occurred in Macedonia since the fall of communism, has lead to a huge increase in the availability of pornography which, in turn, has clearly lead to changes in people's perception of themselves⁴⁶. Pornography is easily accessible to anyone

including children who can watch pornographic films at three o'clock in the afternoon. Even though pornography is seen as Western: images of naked women were already found on crossword magazines in Yugoslavia despite party ideology. Today, however, as pornographic films pirated from American satellite programs, can be seen at local cinemas and on television, I suggest that the meaning of those images is deeper than the one immediately assumed. Catherine Portuges refers to pornography in Hungary: "In these and other works in which youthful bodies are exhibitionistically fetishised, the ardently sought free-market economy is both symptom and cause" (Portuges 1992:287). I, however, believe that for many of my male and female informants, those images of naked bodies present not so much women as objects, a point that is not easily understood either by male or female informants, but represent a meaning that stands in connection with the act of obtaining those films: pirating.

The act of pirating films from a satellite dish, is gaining access to an objectified area of the world that is 'out there' and unreachable other than through 'pirating:' the 'havenots' stealing from the 'haves.' The women in the films are stereotypical American women by Macedonian standards; these women represent America. To connect to this world is to consume their images in a manner assumed to be 'Western:' detached consumption that objectifies everything, only taking. Watching pornography is more

than a symptom and cause of a market economy, more than entertainment; watching pornographic movies is an act of gaining access not to the object of the film itself but to *the act* of watching it. While I lived in Skopje, male friends came to visit me, not for a coffee and chat as I thought, but in order to tune in to the different pornographic movies that were playing. My loud protestations were heeded but not understood. They did not understand why I was upset as their understanding was that I was from Germany and porn was a normal thing for me to watch. Secondly, I was their friend and was not ready to share the freedom of living on my own and my television, when they surely could not watch such films with their parents and little sister at home. I had two things they saw as 'Western:' choice and freedom.

By recreating themselves as modern consumers, my friends are attempting to eradicate the differences between themselves and the West, differences which have become increasingly skewed. Having been raised to be proud of their Yugoslavian identity, the non-aligned nation, Macedonians, citizens of a country which is no longer a 'model', the Switzerland of Eastern Europe, find themselves disenfranchised.

Reaction to Macedonian Independence and the Fall of Yugoslavia

In the four years between 1992 and 1996, consumption became the key feature of the 'new society' of Macedonia. This culture of consumption is centred on the capital city of Skopje and developed at a time when many people in Macedonia had to struggle to survive. Through the process of privatisation many people had lost their jobs as companies closed down; they had lost the small amount of foreign currency because of the closure of bank accounts and many people were barely surviving. Most people simply could not afford to buy foreign consumer products.

The development of a consumer culture results from a particular set of historical circumstances. How is this transformation seen from within? Consider the effects of this transformation in an excerpt from my notebook in July 1996:

"The last old shopping centre is empty. A new mall, 'Beverly Hills,' has been built. In the old bookstore they opened a Doc Martens store. Things change - even if only slightly. Many foreigners are here and Stefan, an engineer friend, was in Ohrid to install equipment for an action movie by Steven Spielberg Productions starring Nicole Kidman and George Clooney [I think?].

They took down the old bridge over the Vardar and found that the base can be dated back to Roman times, 300 BC. This means that the Bridge is not a Turkish construction, a very convenient situation⁴⁷.

Sitting here and writing this down on a sunny afternoon at café 'Ciao' it is absolutely obvious that Skopje today is a young peoples' city. The only people you see in the streets are between 25 and 30. These are the people without their own families, maybe without jobs. One hardly sees any older

people. If one would look for them you would find them at the Green Market⁴⁸ or in the Park going for a stroll or playing Backgammon.

Yesterday we all went to café 'Van Gogh,' which is now closing at 12p.m. Everyone was there. Suse still has five exams to go; Elena, who works for a Swiss company, is very well paid but has to work from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. She is designing software programs for the post office and banks. Zoran came too; he looked so happy. He is getting married on the 12th October. His girlfriend is from Veles. I was talking to Igor, he still has to finish one exam. He is working as a programmer too. He was telling me that everybody wants to leave Macedonia, that nobody wants to stay here. He was saying that his mother really surprised him when she told him to leave. He said she told him that he could certainly get a job abroad, he has three computers standing around, he must be good - not that his mother has any idea about computers. Zoran still cannot find work. I asked him if there was any business going on, but he said that the times are bad for businesses, it is not the right time.

In the morning we went to have me registered at the police station. Afterwards we went to Eva's place; she works for a private import/export company. She was complaining that there was a lot of work to do. I talked to her colleague Daniela. She told me what a beautiful country Germany is and we ended up talking about the different perceptions of work in the East and West and she told me that Macedonians are not used to work. She said everybody wants to go back to the days when one finished school, and automatically got a job which earned you enough money to live an okay life and to travel. She said that everybody misses Yugoslavia, that it was a good life."

If my friends are working; they are employed in a private company and their work is always related to, or directed towards, Western Europe, the UN or an American aid organisation. If they work for the state, they complain about not having enough work, not having enough pay and about widespread inefficiency. All of them, however,

embrace the 'New Macedonia' and its revised interpretations of past times and capitalism.

The lives of my friends in 1996 are bound up with the discussion of the 'new people,' those who are envied because they can afford the consumer culture but are judged as stealing from the people. None of my informants would count themselves in this category although they certainly aspired to the same consumption patterns. The idea that earning money is a form of theft is, as Liseta pointed out, an old concept from communist times, when making money for oneself by securing a deal for one's company was seen as 'stealing from the people.' Today, she commented, it is called good business. In fact, the old ideas live alongside the new. The result of these conflicting ideologies, the Yugoslavian ideology versus capitalism which is the true essence of independent Macedonia, is evident in the constant talk of corruption. To steal is 'to be corrupt,' but in today's Macedonia, stealing could just mean good business. Rausing reports a similar concept in Estonia, where, despite the governments commitment to the free market, the people who have been successful in it are often seen as less 'Estonian' in people's imagination; very smart and with dangerous connections. She says: "They seem already to belong to another imaginary entity that is only partially contained by the entity of Estonia." (Rausing 1998:195). Similarly, the original Estonia symbolises for

Rausing's Estonians what Western Europe signifies for Macedonians: a specific type of person, who has success through achievement and not through intelligent manipulation.

The latter is seen as an original Balkan trait. The *nouveau riche* represent the typical Balkan personality and, in addition, they do not conform with the existing socialist ideology in which this class is seen as stealing from the common people. These two aspects come together and create unfavourable conditions for the *nouveau riche*, thus explaining, the lack of a drastic emergence of the *nouveau rich* as a class in itself as Humphrey (1995) reports for Moscow.

These conflicting ideas about success and business, have produced an understanding of a means to success. Whilst previously people pooled their cleverness, nowadays the kind of understanding required to run a business is shared by only a few. For many of my friends, their parents and relatives, the knowledge and experience they have acquired has become meaningless. In this world, a polarisation takes place that stands against socialist and 'European' valued ideology, as both are seen as valuing equality in some way. The middle class as 'Western' ideal has disappeared in Skopje before it had been formed. Possibilities and the standard of living rises for a few people while for most people, it declines. For my friends, it is in this world that the struggle of who they want to be and who they *can* be, takes place. Shopping is the locus in which this particular

struggle becomes visible. Western television conveys an image of the world where supermarkets predominate, where one just goes and get the things one needs in five minutes.

Life in Skopje looks very different however, my friends disregard this disjunction and interact with the outside world *as if* it were actually available to them. It follows that economic activity has intrinsic political and ideological value. If my friends browse through shops in which they will never be able to afford to buy something, they are, nevertheless, making a political statement. This intrinsic political statement is determined by history, in this case the history of socialist Yugoslavia, as well as by Western television and global consumerism. In socialist Yugoslavia it was production that was glorified, whereas on Western television, glamour is produced by speculative gains. Each value condemns the other, but promises the same thing. In Skopje, the world of consumerism arrived because of risky speculation and the contact this produced with the outside world embodies a particular political/moral attitude. Shopping in Skopje illustrates this well.

Shopping in Skopje

In the socialist Republic of Macedonia basic goods were found in state-owned shops or in semi-legal markets. The markets supplied the population with farm products from outside of Skopje as well as with goods illegally smuggled from Turkey, Greece and Germany. Goods that were difficult to obtain were obtained through friends or connections at the workplace. Supply was never assured and items could disappear from the shops overnight. Then, the network of friends would provide advice as to which shop might have toothpaste, sanitary pads, toiletpaper, noodles, mushrooms or other goods in stock. In 1992, small private market shops began slowly to appear, where many people sought to make their fortune. Many of them failed in the attempt, but some people managed to build empires such as 'Orka Sport' with the help of 'old' illegal money.

If you already had contacts with Turkish, German or Greek companies despite the Greek embargo, as was the case with Orka Sport, it was possible to obtain Western goods to attract customers. Duty Free Shops were established and could be found anywhere in the city as well as on the borders with Serbia, Albania and Bulgaria, although these shops have since been outlawed. In these shops you could find traditional duty-free goods such as Marlboro cigarettes, Metaxa and Braun watches. As

time went on, however, one could find refrigerators, microwaves, Gillette shavers and blades, vacuum cleaners, batteries, Ariel washing powder, as well as Chanel perfume and other luxury items. These Duty Free Shops turned into ordinary consumer shops. New shopping malls were built and there were many tiny shops of around five square metres that sold lingerie, sweaters, skirts, watches and many other goods that could readily be identified as 'Western.' Some of the shops expanded and became Levi's stores, Stefanel stores or, in one case, the Yukan department store, in which the customer was offered cake and coffee with Toys 'R' Us toys and Stefanel and Hugo Boss dresses and suits for him and her.

Shops that I would call small department stores are often bulging with Western goods and employ a staff that is well-dressed and well-mannered. These shops are run by the typical *nouveau riche*, socialist managers who bought up their companies through the illegal devaluation of those companies, or people who made a fortune through illegal import and export operations with Serbia which was under an embargo from the European community. Many of my friends automatically cross to the other side of the street when they pass such shops, feeling it inappropriate to walk next to the 'new' shops, as if the shops suggest a world to which they do not belong. As such, shopping is still a long way from being a leisure activity in Skopje with its burning pavement and dust

hanging over the city; this world is almost surreal when seen through its haze. The shopping depicted on television is still a long way from the reality of Skopje. Miller (1997:39) describes shopping as a social occasion to look at other shoppers. In Skopje the shopping malls seem relatively deserted while the Green Markets are buzzing with life. Shopping in Skopje is not a social occasion, but a direct encounter between the objects to be bought and the shopper who would like to identify herself with these objects, not so much to present herself to others, but to stress a specific aspect of herself.

Shopping in Skopje is not so much a personal desire, but a political enactment of choice. If the shopper can access this specific choice to buy 'Western' consumer goods such as Ray Ban Sunglasses, she is partaking in a life like that of her fellow shoppers in Germany or England. The fact that her choice does not fit into the economic environment of Macedonia makes her choice a political act. In Skopje friends rarely shop together, only the 'expertise' of the 'Western' and shopping-committed anthropologist is sought, otherwise shopping for 'Western' consumer goods is a solitary enterprise. This is a contrast with shopping for food and necessities that is often done with one parent or siblings. Friends only accompany the shopper if a present has to be selected for another friend, which is most commonly given as a present from several people. Spending money then cannot be seen as demonstration of financial means,

sociability or sensual satisfaction as Miller suggests for Trinidad (1997), but has to be understood as a real and desired barrier between the shopper and 'normal' life. Miller's comments (1997:45) coincide with mine for Macedonia when he writes: " It is through consumption that political values may be formulated in such a manner that populations are at least able to appropriate the images of the possible worlds they seek to create. Through this objectification they come to consider who they might be in relation to the gamut of political identities." The reasons why Western consumer goods are imported and exported are secondary to the primary issue of the specific symbolic value of Western objects in Skopje. This value is not created either by the 'European' media or by the Macedonian government fulfilling their political agenda, but the shopper in Skopje that actively chooses the symbolic value of the objects. This act of shopping is a solitary one, but the value ascribed to the objects that are shopped for by all my friends in today's Skopje lies in the idea of living a 'normal,' and therefore European, life.

In socialist Yugoslavia goods were not bought in an exercise of free will, but were allocated by the state or the companies. Thus, though people bought things, they felt that they were receiving something from the state. Shops were not called Orka Sport or Yukan, but by the more general nomenclature of meat, shoes, bread and books. Shops did not always have window displays, and even if goods were displayed, they were not

necessarily for sale. Even today, many of the small shops do little to present goods in an attractive manner, unless they wish to make them more expensive. The window displays are a mix of many products ranging from Italian noodles and German blackbread to shaving cream and diapers and an expensive suit. Today many shops carry only the one item they display. Others stock just a few of each line, so it is important to buy an item when you see it. The only exceptions to this practice are the internationally owned stores such as Benetton, Benetton for Children and Stefanel which stock any quantity of the same product. Many goods are priced in German Marks and bought using German currency even though the dinar has been stable for a number of years.

The Green Market still flourishes, because it is the only place where fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, fish and cheap Turkish household goods, can be obtained. Imitation Levi's jeans can still be found there, but now the UN peace-keeping troops are the only regular customers.

The state store offers one plate on ten, otherwise empty, shelves while the shop assistants sit in groups smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee, taking no interest in customers, just as they did in the old days. Bored and uninterested as the shop assistants are, one of my friends admitted that she feels more comfortable in the state shops than she does in the new shops where the assistants try and persuade you to buy. To say to

the shop assistant that she only wanted to browse, feels like an admission of inferiority.

My friends said that they feel they were not actually meant to buy these items that are for non-existent glamour girls.

Not all of my friends were attracted to such shops; some dreamt a different dream of actually going to Germany or London to buy their favourite items. A friend of mine managed to travel to London and insisted that she would not senselessly spend her money while she was there. Nonetheless, on her return she was proud of all the nice things she had found in London and judging from what she bought, goods were much cheaper than in Skopje.

What is important to understand is that shopping in Skopje, even in 1996, had nothing in common with the experience of 'going shopping' in London, Munich or Paris as they saw on television. There was no relaxed strolling through shops, it was a hunt for something special, something Western that was quite inexpensive without being shoddy. There was a constant fear that products would disappear without warning from the shops. When I described to a colleague in London, the half-empty, half-finished shopping malls that rise high above the sky-line of Skopje and the shopping habits of my friends, he commented that these shopping malls make him think of cargo cults in the South Pacific. The malls indeed looked like they were planted there by some giant:

bare concrete, stairways that are too long and broad winding their way upwards toward nothing and broken glass windows and hallways that are too long for the tiny shops they access.

If there was a desire to imitate Western consumerism, the old ideals prevailed over it. The way my friends 'go shopping' appears to be a microcosm of political life in Skopje, in the same way that the bodies of my friends are one expression of the country's search for a new way to mark themselves as Western. The process of buying cheese exemplifies this: a friend of mine caused a minor riot in one of the new grocery stores by refusing to take the portion of cheese because it had been cut too big and was therefore too expensive. A few years ago she said she would have accepted whatever the saleswoman had given her, she would even have brought her own paper with which to wrap the cheese. However, she said, "I do not see anybody in Germany or America doing this. Here in Macedonia, we only learn to accept, never to question, never to insist on something for us, for ourselves. I did not want to pay more for the cheese. I knew how much cheese I wanted and how much I wanted to pay." When she refused to accept the cheese, another customer in the shop supported her, insisting that it was my friend's right to choose what she wanted and that the other women in the shop should follow the example of this 'new' woman. Here the concept of 'newness' becomes

political: newness means the right to demand what you want. The political discourse of the 'new' in 'new' Macedonia refers to a right not yet articulated, in mind or speech, when Macedonia was still a part of Yugoslavia according to my informants: the right to choose. The concept of choice, of choosing, even demanding, what rightfully belongs to any human being, is at the very heart of the image of Macedonia that Macedonians wish to convey to the rest of Europe. This 'right to choose' is what Western television promotes all the time: consumer goods offer choice and choice is a right that has to be granted in any modern state. "No choice, no freedom, you have Eastern Europe all over again," a friend said, trying to help me understand the Macedonian craving for German and Italian advertising programs on satellite television.

Many of my friends do not see themselves as having the right to demand or choose and are actually taken aback by this attitude. Such an attitude sets you apart from your fellow humans. Even if they would like to participate in the 'new' Macedonia, they grew up in Yugoslavia and are nostalgic for those times with a "better and peaceful life of, when people cared for each other." In this sense, there are conflicting notions my friends follow in their task to negotiate themselves as citizens of independent 'new' Macedonia. They feel attached to their inheritance from Yugoslavia, but they also want

to be part of Western Europe. In the midst of this conflict, my friends try to make sense out of their lives.

Be it shopping, or the type of body a woman is supposed to have, what is going on in Macedonia today is a fierce fight between that from the Yugoslavian era which is still cherished and what people believe is necessary to differentiate themselves from the Balkans and Eastern Europe. It is a conflict my friends have to put to rest for themselves. It forces them to think about who they are and who they want to be and, in the process, this clarifies the social position of others and also societal norms. Each of my friends engages in a project of their own, be it dieting, bodybuilding or the purchase of expensive clothes, appliances or furniture. Each project helps them to redefine themselves. Nevertheless, in the current situation, my friends are trapped, some of them tragically, in a world of illusions.

Politics and Consumerism

Despite the seeming contradiction, many people had greater access to foreign consumer goods when Macedonia formed a part of communist Yugoslavia than they do today. People had relatives or friends in Germany or Italy, people travelled to Turkey, Italy, Germany, Spain or England and obtained consumer goods through these routes.

From 1991 to 1995, access to Greece was denied because of a Greek embargo and, since the fall of Yugoslavia, hardly anybody, except those with good connections abroad or with embassy personnel, is able to travel to Western countries because obtaining a visa is so difficult.

What drives the desire to be a new person, to be a new country? Certainly there is the missionary zeal of the Western industries that have started to invest in Macedonia, in order to bring a post-communist country towards a free-market-economy. Today you find Western ice-cream everywhere. The old Italian style ice-cream shops have lost many customers, even though one scoop of their ice-cream costs about three pence and a Magnum ice-cream one pound. Worlds drift apart here. Their parents struggle to make ends meet, some going for months without pay, to workplaces that are basically shut down⁴⁹. Many of my young friends spend the money they earn on consumption goods instead of contributing to their parent's household⁵⁰, which is how the world should be according to both parents and children. "The world closes down on the children, but what is offered now, as long as the West is still noticing Macedonia, the children should enjoy. Who knows what will happen tomorrow?" a mother told me while discussing her children and their desire for expensive perfumes, clothes and cars.

Essentially still a socialist country, Macedonia embraces the concept of a 'new' Macedonia, but does not copy Western capitalism as a political system, thereby Macedonia essentially creating a new model for its people. A judge explained to me:

"Macedonia wants to be European, it wants to be a modern democracy, but we do not want to turn our back on our past as part of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia has given us more than an identity, as Greece always likes to point out. It has given us something to believe in and we do still believe in it. Macedonia has historically always been stepped on, only within Yugoslavia were we given respect as people. We believe that everybody should have equal rights and we do not like the American idea of 'the best only should win.' We, as a whole people, want to win in this enterprise we call the Republic of Macedonia."

The young people in Skopje reject the timeless, unchanging aspect that goods possessed in socialist Yugoslavia. They long to be young, ambitious Europeans. The limitations of choice are felt more strongly today than before, because this limitation goes hand-in-hand with restrictions in movement. In the past I did not hear complaints that one flat looked much the same as another since similar furniture was supplied by the Yugoslav state to everyone. Now when my friends think of establishing a home with their husbands, they dream of new Western furniture. However, it is impossible to obtain such furniture in Macedonia and, even if it were available, it would not be

affordable. Today, many of my friends are happy if they can afford new furniture at all, even Yugoslavian-style.

While Macedonia was part of Yugoslavia, my informants considered access to the necessary private 'consumer' goods a right, whereas today consumer goods have become a component of one's personality. They define whether one belongs to the 'hard working, but going nowhere' or the 'fashionable, should be part of Europe' people. In newly independent Macedonia, it is consumption patterns that determine whether one is defined as 'new' and it is the 'new' which, in the country's political-social discourse, is embraced. Macedonia itself, its neighbours and Western aid agencies expect that Macedonia will reject its socialist past and choose instead to be a capitalist democracy. To be recognised by the European Community as an independent country and not as simply one of the leftovers of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Macedonia has to convince the EC that its goal is only democracy.

My friends were devastated when they were denied access to Europe after they had applied for visiting visas or acceptance to conferences; they had felt that their desire was so strong that it must be fulfilled. This denial of access led my friends to obtain this access through other means: the consumption of Western goods. "If I cannot go to Italy, I will at least buy a Benetton sweater here," a friend said, explaining that she wants

to be worth that much. However, this is not understood as a rejection of socialism (Verdery (1992:25-6) is cited by Humphrey (1995:56)), but rather that Western consumer goods have become a way of constituting one's self and rejecting the barriers that have been built between Macedonia and Western Europe. If consumerism in Macedonia is understood in this way, then the situation is markedly different from that described by Verdery and Humphrey (1995). Verdery (1995:7) states that in Romania: "the present confrontation between capitalist and non-capitalist systems is being played out as a cosmic struggle between Good and Evil." In Macedonia, Western consumer goods are not valued because they are seen as 'Good,' while the times they were unavailable was a time of 'Evil'(meaning socialist times), but in socialist Yugoslavia, even though there might have been a shortage in goods, and specifically 'Western' consumer goods were not available in Yugoslavia, Macedonians have been tourists abroad and many young people have worked outside of Yugoslavia for extended periods of time, consequently Western consumer goods have always been available. I argue however, that in Macedonia the meaning of these consumer goods has changed. The meaning is not determined by an assigning of 'good' and 'evil,' or by the meanings of the socialist past and post-socialist present. In the mix of old and new, consumer goods are used by my friends to help them create and define themselves as European. Through the

acquisition of Western consumer goods my friends construct a sense of being 'deserving' of a 'Western life-style.' They do not try to divest themselves of their Yugoslavian past, as this is seen as their legitimisation of being a part of Western Europe since Yugoslavia gave them the geographical and even political⁵¹ proximity to Western Europe. However, their ambivalence between their Yugoslavian past and their present position⁵² creates a desire to incorporate Western consumer goods, images and ideas into their Yugoslavian identity. In their consumption, my friends struggle to retain a sense of themselves as modern urbanites, a sense that was created in socialist Macedonia, while incorporating something of the freedom and access that is seen as 'European.' Thus my friends' consumption is a key element in creating their idea of an independent Macedonia, a place of urbanisation and modernity (Miller 1987), combined with freedom and access. My friends consumption, though not an affirmation of socialism, does not oppose the old political system either. What my friends wish is to be 'Europeans' without stripping socialist Macedonia of its meaning. It is this image unanticipated by my friends' parents, the politicians and the aid organisations that steers Macedonia on a strict course towards Western capitalist democracy.

The Old and the New Values

The concept of 'price' within Macedonia is notable. During the socialist period the cost of most necessities, like bread, were subsidised while other prices, such as the price of flats, were fixed by the government because in some sense housing or appliances or furniture were owned by the government and thus the people.

With independence came privatisation and flats were transferred from the government to private owners which allowed many people to profit greatly by moving to the countryside or in with relatives and renting their flats to UN personnel and the peacekeeping forces. Due to this, the cost of renting a flat has risen sharply: one can spend up to £500 a month. Only foreigners can really afford to pay such rents. Nevertheless, since the 1990s, the construction industry has been booming in Skopje and high-priced consumer goods are found in several 'modern' and 'new' shops.

It appears that the price of consumer goods is not perceived as related to the cost of production. My friends and their families are uncertain as to the value of consumer goods; they do not know an appropriate price and they cannot compare specific items to similar things in the West, except by decoding Western advertising programs. However, value derived from Western advertisements carries its own ideology and my friends understand value as a price tag on 'identity.' Within this logic, a 'new identity'

necessarily implies that objects bought to acquire it were not cheap, but rather had a 'Western price,' the price of Western-ness. Many people in Macedonia asked me what I had bought each day, as they assumed that everything, including the 'new' luxury items, in Macedonia must have seemed cheap to me. When I told them that I had not bought anything they were puzzled, wrongly assuming that my lack of purchases was because I was not interested in anything in Macedonia, rather than the real reason: I simply could not afford to buy goods in Macedonia. This explains why my friend was amazed upon returning from London amazed where she realized that many things were cheaper there than in Skopje. Another myth⁵³, that in Turkey consumer goods are incredibly cheap, creates its own truth. People travelling to Turkey will often pay whatever is asked because they do not know what a fair price is, and are sure that it must be a bargain because they are in Turkey.

The concept that price should be related to purpose and the benefit brought by the product, is understood in relation to products that have been available in socialist Macedonia, but is not understood in relation to goods that today carry a specific value. How is this value created? The value of 'Western' goods is determined by demand (consumption) and desire. As Appadurai discusses (1986:29), demand emerges as a function of a variety of social practices and classifications, rather than as a mysterious

emanation of human needs, a mechanical response to social manipulation, or the narrowing of a universal and voracious desire for objects to what objects are available. Demand and, therefore, consumption, are aspects of the overall political economy of societies. Hence, consumption is eminently social, relational and active. A new value, for example, was created by assigning value to living expenses, whereas previously, living expenses had had no monetary value in Yugoslavian times and were instead seen as a right to which everyone was entitled. When it costs £400 per month to rent a flat, a price which few in Macedonia are able to afford, the high cost of living creates an idea of the 'new' life-style of independent Macedonia. Some Macedonians live in these expensive flats and these people are defined as 'new' and the only ones capable of living this new life and, consequently, most people in Skopje are strangers to this lifestyle.

If we consider consumption and the value of goods and services in Skopje, we have to focus not only on consumption as sending social messages, but as receiving them as well. Demand then, as Appadurai details (1986: 31), is determined by social and economic forces, but can also, manipulate to a certain extent those very social and economic forces. I suggest that Western consumer goods in Macedonia are regarded not as luxury goods that simply fulfil a desire, but as an index of social value that is ultimately political. As such, the value of 'Western' goods in Macedonia is not

determined by the value that is seen as 'Western' nor is the value determined through the demand for those objects: many 'Western' goods are in very low demand in Macedonia and often only one item of its kind can be found in Skopje at a time. As well, shopping for those items is a solitary enterprise and does not adhere to principles of competition. But the value of goods was determined by the political positioning of Macedonia as a 'lower kind' of Europe. The prevalent thinking was that goods must be cheap for me in Macedonia because I am truly 'European' and my choice not to buy anything in Macedonia is because I assign the right political value to Macedonia. My lack of consumption was interpreted by my friends as my seeing Macedonia as 'a lower level than Europe.' It is inconceivable that 'Western' goods in Macedonia are actually more expensive than in most European countries where an economical demand is, for the most part⁵⁴, determining the value of goods. The value that is given to those 'Western' goods is the value that is seen as necessary to lift Macedonia to 'Western' standards. This assignation of value is not done by imitating 'Western' prices, but by designing the value of those goods to the scale of 'uplifting.' The value of those goods is determined by the believed difference of value between Macedonia and Western Europe.

The Nouveau Riche

What is meant by the term 'the new people?' There is a negative connotation that originates in socialist ideology which suggests that the new people are stealing from the country since they make profit without investing their own labour in the process. They are like traders, condemned by socialism, who buy and sell goods without adding any value through their own labour but still gain profit from their transaction. It is characteristic, that in 1992, especially with the embargoes on Serbia by the EC and UN and the Greek-imposed embargo on trade with Macedonia, illegal trading activity was booming. Macedonians sold petrol to Albanians in Kosovo and Serbia; Macedonian and Greek authorities smuggled whole trains filled with petrol to Serbia; Greeks smuggled their goods to Macedonia; Serbians sold their goods to Macedonia while Macedonians sold their products on Serbian markets. Instead of fewer goods arriving in Macedonia, the market carried a plentiful supply of new goods, a strong contrast with socialist times. For my friends this situation meant, in particular, a connection to Europe through the trading of goods and also by the goods themselves. My female friends, by actually transforming their bodies into a representation of Western consumer culture, engaged in an intense discourse with the society surrounding them, particularly in the way this society connects to the outside world.

Consumption and Television

Much of my life in Skopje was spent watching American television programs including Beverly Hills 90210⁵⁵ and MTV-Music Television but German and Italian advertisements were our first choices. We also watched the Italian version of Beverly Hills 90210. If only as a leisure activity after work or before going out to the cafés, as a soporific or merely background when visiting friends or relatives, the television was always on. I had a few people say that there was something strange about the place where I lived and it always took a few minutes for them to work out what it was: the television was turned off. When television was discussed, it was always mentioned how nicely the people dressed and how beautiful they looked, a factor much more important than the actual storyline, hence Beverly Hills 90210 in Italian. For a story my friends go to the cinema or they rent a movie, most of which are pirated. Television however, is watched as an important resource, as a way of 'knowing the world outside,' as an informant put it. What is understood as 'inside' is revised in terms of this knowledge of the outside world. This process can be termed 'consumerism,' a continual increase in the consumption of goods. The verb 'to consume,' to eat or drink or to destroy, to use up is *troshi* which means to crumble, to spend, to waste; for consumer goods, one uses the

phrase: '*stoka za shipoka potroshuvaik*,' which means 'goods for broad consuming' or 'goods for dropping money on.' However, as Gell rightly argues, "consumption as a general phenomenon really has nothing to do with the destruction of goods and wealth, but with their reincorporation into the social system that produced them in some other guise." (Gell 1986:112)

Consumerism in Macedonian has, in fact, much more in common with Pacific cargo cults, than consumerism in the West. In this time of uncertainty and powerlessness, the message is received through satellite television that there are powerful outsiders who have promised cargo goods. This cargo consists of Western consumer goods and images that are seen as metonymic of a whole system of power, prosperity and status (Appadurai 1986:52). My friends have internalised the idea that if Macedonia manages to establish itself as a modern European country, they will then 'gain access to this cargo' which they feel will re-establish their dignity and the social changes their country has gone through would then make sense to them. By making themselves worthy of Western European consumer goods, my friends seek eventually to be worthy of recognition by Europe as Europeans and to live in a part of Europe. However, even though the imagery of 'cargo cult' lends itself nicely to the process in which a new aspect of one's identity is created through the buying of 'Western' consumer goods, in contrast

to theories about cargo cults as noted by Appadurai (1986:54), my friends are aware of the economical forces behind the circulation of goods. Therefore, it is not a Macedonian 'cargo cult' but consumerism that identifies the desire to be something other than 'former-Yugoslavian.' This cannot be understood as copying another form of commodity exchange since through their consumption, my friends are miraculously transferred to that land over the rainbow where the rich and beautiful live, that land free of economic misery. There is another world outside of Macedonia where one can become the person one wishes to be: beautiful, independent, popular and respected. It is in the moment of consumption, in the moment of buying and admiring specific consumer goods that my young friends fleetingly inhabit this different world. As with the Muria described by Gell (1986:136) material elements are selected and integrated into an immaterial cultural matrix, a collective style that becomes tightly integrated with the process of identity formation.

Consumerism in Macedonia is not to be equated with the 'Americanisation' of Western Europe but arises, instead, from the very specific circumstances of an ever-changing Macedonia. Consumerism, the embracing of Western goods and ideas, existed before independence. However, today foreign goods and ideas have a specific meaning for a country which has declared independence under the distrustful gaze of Europe and

in spite of the opposition of its closest neighbours. In Macedonia, to consume is not to express a longing for goods, access to which has formerly been denied; it is not an attempt to redress the balance between 'twin' countries as it is for East Germany.

Consumption in Macedonia relates to the creation of a new understanding of what being Macedonian means. Macedonia does not want to be seen as a peasant society, as some of its neighbours portray it, and the attempt by some Macedonians to 'return to our roots' is rejected by most of my informants. My friends want to see Skopje as a cosmopolitan society where objects of enchantment and desire are to be found in any Orka, Yukan or Benetton store. Sorabji (1989:45, 47) notes for the population of Sarajevo in the 1980s that especially amongst young, second generation migrants there is a feeling of superiority in comparison to those from rural areas. In addition, "The rules of Sarajevo are deemed by Sarajevans (whether native or migrant) to be different from, and better than, those of the country." Tone Bringa reports that in her study of Bosnian Muslim villagers, the city was seen as distinguished from the country side through the absence of faith or religion (1995:60). She relates this idea to the concept of culturedness, of not being a *seljak*, from the countryside, that is pervasive throughout Bosnian identity, which describes the differences between the village and the city, as well as the differences between the villagers themselves⁵⁶. Nevertheless, the idea of the essential

cosmopolitan identity that is sought was inherent in the Yugoslav system and is maturing today in a strengthened concept of consumerism. When the cosmopolitan world, seen as a right for the urbanised population, grew closer to the rural population of their own country and further away from the cosmopolitan world of Western Europe after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, then the urban population of Skopje increased its consumerism of Western goods in order to regain the idea of a cosmopolitan Skopje.

Nevertheless, Macedonia is not a carbon copy of Germany or the USA in terms of consumerism and my friends feel very strongly that their lives are a continuation of certain Yugoslavian ideas and values despite the influence of imagery transmitted through Western television series and advertisements. Considering self-construction, these images certainly influence the process of self-formation

"...but as this process is located in the realm of images, reflective acts vis-à-vis goods are in a continuous relationship with other types of reflecting, especially other people and, of course, the whole realm of mass media representations, from television news and soap operas to movies, music videos and advertising. These experiential goods, whether distributed free or sold, may very well be consumed as 'mere experiences' but they also act as mirrors for the aforementioned self-reflexive contemplation."(Miller 1997:4)

Images and experiences drawn from Western television in Macedonia do not create or represent identity but are in themselves consumer items with a specific value attached to them, a value that can be very specific to Macedonia. An advertisement for Nivea hair-

shampoo might create a beautiful world of a happy family living in single family home and owning two cars and a dog, but this image is read by my_Macedonian friends, as any other Western consumer good, in a specifically Macedonian context. To buy Nivea shampoo is not to recreate the 'Western World' but to buy a shampoo that is believed to be more gentle with one's hair than the Macedonian brand, which is sold cheaply on the Green Market. The idea of having well-cared for hair, is what is promised in this advertisement but in Skopje this is understood in a Macedonian context. Consequently, Macedonia is creating a very particular image of itself in which the old is not cast out, but given new meaning by objects which are more than mere luxury items and which, in fact, have come to represent the 'Western' face of Macedonia.

In 1988, many of my friends, contrary to prevailing attitudes of youth in Skopje, were sceptical of the idea that the youth of the country were dedicated communists, hard working, enthusiastic and socially involved. This political apathy was due to the feeling of not being able to influence social and political events. Positions of social, political or economic importance were taken by the 'partisan generation' and then nepotism ensured the transfer of power to their friends and family. My friends feel the same sense of disempowerment today, only the source of that disempowerment is different. They dissemble these feelings, however, through the purchase of Western luxuries, objects

which seem to embody a feeling of power. In reaching towards these items they reach towards the power that created them.

The Characteristics of Consumerism in Skopje Today

Indifference distinguishes my friends from their own parents at the same stage of life. This is partially caused by their dependence on the parents through the changed economical situation of Macedonia today. At home, young people have minimal responsibility while parents try to give them a security they themselves did not experience. Parental expectations are simply to be successful in school. The education system does not promote a sense of responsibility and many young people in their mid-twenties see their main goal in life as partying. They expect pleasure from life without restrictions or responsibility. These attitudes, which seem to be the direct opposite of those promoted by communist ideology, have endured and, although the attitudes certainly change with age and starting a family, the social and economical isolation of independent Macedonia and the sense of fear and insecurity this brings, encourages young people to live life for the moment. Today, because of this feeling of disempowerment, private aspirations, one's circle of friends, material possessions and fashion, are the foci of interest. This time however, it is not the state that is the source of

feelings of disempowerment, but the fact that the state itself is disempowered.

Macedonia exists because of the mercy and not the respect of Western Europe and the United Nations since there is a fear that if Macedonia ceases to exist, the region will be destabilised. Macedonians envision several scenarios that would destabilise the region:

- 1) Serbia swallowing up Macedonia thereby causing another civil war;
- 2) Macedonia becoming a part of Bulgaria thereby creating a dangerous instability between Bulgaria, Serbia and Albania;
- 3) Macedonia becoming a part of Albania and civil war erupting;
- 4) Macedonia in a state of civil war, the ethnic Albanian versus the ethnic Slav inhabitants;
- 5) Macedonia under Turkish influence which would cause major problems with Greece.

As can be seen, Macedonia currently has a very sensitive position in the region, but this certainly does not mean that it is master of its own destiny. Today's situation is markedly different from that of the time when Yugoslavia, under Tito, split from the Soviet Union and founded the Non-Alignment Movement. At this time, Macedonia

within Yugoslavia, was at its height in determining its destiny and the destiny of the region.

To sum up, the history outlined above shows why consumerism in independent Macedonia is created out of both a desire to embrace the West and yet to retain socialist benefits, such as social welfare, child care, regular, relatively short working hours, maternity leave and abortion rights. Obviously, not everybody can afford Western consumer goods, but all endorse, whatever their means, these symbols of life elsewhere. There is another motivation, however, fuelling my friends' consumerism and that is the sentiment that some part of their life has been stolen. With a part of their lives taken from them, consumerism offers an opportunity to get back something of what they have lost which ought to be theirs. It is politics that forms consumption in Macedonia, though obviously consumption, as it is carried out by individuals, is a very private affair. What happened in Macedonia prior to the arrival of the pretty people, *the nouveau riche*, and the emergence of the world of consumption? The answer is twofold.

Firstly, the Yugoslav state fell apart and, what was once understood by my informants to be a unit, disintegrated into 'so called' ethnic enclaves⁵⁷. If they could go back in time and alter history they would prevent the break up of Yugoslavia, however, as a friend put it, the time for dreams is over.

Secondly, Macedonia aligned itself with the material and ideological culture of the West, a process which began in the mid-1980's when Macedonia was part of Yugoslavia. 'The West' was understood by everyone as West Germany and America followed by the more intellectual choice of England and France which were only important to people who had travelled there. Because of migrant work in Germany by at least one family member in most families and the legal or illegal supply of German goods, Germany was the main supplier of Western consumerism, both ideologically and practically. Ideologically, Germany was closely followed by American television. Interestingly, the Green Markets were the centre of German consumer goods distribution and have given way to high fashion shops like Orka Sport, Yukan, Stefanel and Benetton, a situation resulting from an ethnic shift as well. The green market used to be run by ethnic Albanian Macedonians who had been guest workers in Germany. They brought German consumer goods back to Macedonia and sold them, for the most part, legally on the Green Markets. Today, the new shops are run by the new Macedonian business elite that travels to Germany, acquires similar goods, usually legally, and sells them at three times the price the Albanians charged. Many import-export agencies which play on the idea that the goods offered would be as desirable to German

customers as they are to Macedonians have sprung up around Skopje. In contrast, the green markets are thought to offer goods which are considered cheap in Germany.

Consumption and Desire

Consumption has become a strategy, employed by most, if not all, young people I know in Skopje to establish themselves as 'Western European Macedonians'⁵⁸ and to preserve individuality. For the older generations, consumer goods are a luxury in a time of deprivation. These luxuries, however, have become necessary to provide hope for their children. For instance, a friend of mine 'needed' to obtain an expensive perfume. She knew about the imitations offered cheaply on the green market but still she bought the perfume in a duty free shop in Skopje. She bought it at the duty free shop in order to affirm and confirm who she is each time someone sees that perfume bottle on her shelf; she did not buy it to deny the fact that this perfume was beyond her means or to pretend she was a person she was not. This perfume bottle closes the gap between her and the West.

Consumerism in Skopje is not merely an imitation of something else, a copy of another political system. Much more than that, material goods and images of these goods have become new symbols. This symbolism is strongly based on the negation of

a peasant past, a rural life-style and any similarity with the Albanian-Macedonian population of today⁵⁹.

The identity of the youth in Skopje today is beyond nationality and culture, bound as they are to maps, ideology or language. Instead, who they would like to be is rooted in dress, gesture, body language and the purchase and ownership of luxury goods. A friend wittily pointed out to me over a coke at the new croissant shop on the Boulevard Marshall Tito that, after independence, people did not sit down and start asking themselves 'Who are we now?' "We just live on and take what we can. Nobody can dictate your thoughts and feelings, no one can dictate what you would like to have rather than independence. Things are not that orderly here, you have to go to Croatia for that." Socialist ideology has lost its importance since the fall of Yugoslavia and, consequently, Macedonia has also lost the fixation of programmed thought and social activity which it once had. In its place, a diffuse and diverse consumerism provides a political perspective.

This consumerism gives the young people of Skopje an idea of what they would like to see the future of Macedonia become. How the desire for this sort of identification is formed and what it implies demands consideration. What many of my friends choose from their understanding of modern consumption⁶⁰ is not a copy of a lifestyle they see

on television or in Germany, but something far less coherent: a desire for freedom and proximity to a world that for many seems blocked off. Consumerism is their way of gaining, to some extent, control over political events. By bringing the West close to them through material possessions, they feel they are exerting a measure of control over their lives and are less separate from their Western European counterparts. Their patterns of consumption serve as a form of self-identification and should not be understood as choosing or copying a foreign lifestyle as my friends channel their consumption towards a specific goal: the proximity to the European Community. They consume very specific products, images or ideas and construct their lives around them. In the context of performances in Bicol, Philippines, Cannell (1995:254) points out that the apparent mimicry of Americanness is based on a different meaning of imitation in the Philippines and in the West: "To take part in such a performance is both to move towards the pleasures of empowerment which come with 'knowing the words' of a text and making it one's own, and also to move towards a transformation in which what is distant, powerful, and oppressive is brought closer and made more equal. In transforming yourself, in the process of becoming 'beautiful', one also transforms the other." Even though my friends seem to imitate 'the West' through their consumption, their consumption creates something very specific and personal for them.

I am reminded of the earlier discussion of peppers and tomatoes and the idea that you are what you eat. This dictum is true in Macedonia as well and their consistent diet speaks about identity. For instance, abstinence is a statement as is the eating of specific foods. Eating imported yoghurt, cereal or Mars&Co. ice-cream is a statement about *who* and *where* you want to be. In these discussions about what should be bought and what was bought, a social act is performed that alters the relationship between people since food items are noted and remarked upon when purchased. Coca-Cola provides a good example.

Not many years ago, we sat in cafés and drank Cokta, the Yugoslavian version of Coca-Cola which was regarded as having a much better taste. Today, very few people drink Cokta even though it is three times cheaper than Coca Cola. Many cafés do not even stock Cokta anymore. These foreign consumer goods can be understood as the objects of an economic and cultural system which resembles again a similarity to Pacific cargo cults. Indeed, the shopping malls themselves could be monuments built in the spirit of a cargo cult. Like the wooden planes in the South Pacific, the shopping malls and the goods offered in their echoing halls introduce images and ideas as the means by which a life force is imported from the outside since the prevailing sentiment is that

Macedonia lacks such a force. It includes, to a certain extent, a millennium vision that everything would be all right if only Macedonia could be part of the European Union.

Consumption becomes the outlet for the idea that Macedonia lacks its own life force as consumption not only represents the desire to be European, it constitutes its own very real social imagery in a way that does not always match reality. From this point, one can understand that self-definition in Skopje⁶¹ is contingent on consuming and consumption behaviour: the idea that one's actual place in a global world is based on consumption. It is secondary that the consumed good, idea or image is transmitted by national television, pirated from North American and German or Italian television. Mass media still offers the way into places that are today physically out of reach. Gell's belief "that there is a valid distinction between dull, unimaginative consumerism, which only reiterates the class habitus, and adventurous consumerism like this, which struggles against the limits of the unknown world" (1986:115) describes Macedonian consumption as well: it is not the battleground of class distinction, and not even of straightforward ethnic distinction, even though an ethnic distinction is inherent in the concept of 'European' and the 'Other,' but consumption serves as a struggle against limits set by social, economical and political circumstances within the newly independent Republic of Macedonia.

The degree in which the notion of the 'West' has become an instrument of creating 'belonging' is remarkable. It is the world of 'objects' and consumer goods, that offer insight in this struggle to belong. It is the process of objectification that creates a process of incorporation and rejection that defines 'belonging.' What this 'belonging' entails can only be fully understood if we look at the world of the grandparents of my friends; it is a world that represents a counter-reference point for the world of the graduates.

CHAPTER 5

THE ESSENCE OF BEING:

Procreation And Sexuality: Beliefs And Practices Of The 1940-50, Recollected

In this chapter I discuss the ideas expressed to me by a group of elderly women, in response to my questions about matters of sexuality, conception, childbirth, and gender relations. My interest in the lives of my friends grandmothers was necessary to understand the nature of change in socialist and post-socialist Macedonia and the sense of belonging the engineering graduates experienced. The interviews took place in the region of Skopska Crna Gora in 1995 and the women were born between 1910 and 1925. Because the women I interviewed lived through such immense changes it is not always possible to know what exactly they thought 50 years ago, but I have attempted to disentangle 'new' ideas from those they grew up with.

Skopska Crna Gora is a mountainous area close to Skopje and the Serbian border. Recently their proximity to the Serbian border has become a political issue among the population of Skopska Crna Gora who like to identify themselves as Serbian, even though they are Macedonian by nationality. Further this area has a reputation for black

magic (see Rheubottom 1993)⁶². However, despite the perceived differences, Skopska Crna Gora is the closest rural area to the city of Skopje, which can be reached by bus in less than an hour. The bus runs three to five times a day, and school children and their parents commute daily to Skopje and back. Those who can afford it prefer to live in Skopje. Education is highly valued by these peasants and it is not seen as positive for the young people to stay behind in the village and continue a peasant's life.

Kinship, Affinity and Marital Residence

A family's surname usually suggested descent from a common ancestor in the male line. A patrilineal, exogamous family would also commonly trace its origin to a particular house or household with a specific 'house name' of its patron saint. During weddings in particular, frequent reference was made to the kinship groups to which people belong. Weddings in Macedonia involved the two families inviting guests, and it was only at a wedding that the bride and groom might meet all their kin and affines. These kin furnished a network of relationships on which the married couple hoped to draw for support. Otherwise there was little explicit emphasis on affinal relationships. Marriage was usually virilocal, so it was the groom's family which welcomes 'their bride' whereas the bride's family watched 'their daughter' leave. The new daughter-in-

law was only slowly integrated into her new household, the group being sensitive to the protection of its boundaries from malign outsiders. Only after about one year was she slowly allowed to leave the transitional role of a 'new daughter' and take up her role as wife (See Rheubottom, 1980: 244-5). Only when she had become a mother and proved her procreative capabilities to her husband's family did she become fully integrated into the family as she has now secured the continuation of the family and closed the previously open boundaries behind her. Women never completely belonged to a family into which they had married: their solidarity could be questioned, their transitionality seen as a threat. Only with this in mind can much of the material to be presented be understood.

Courtship and Marriage Arrangement

As households were very inwardly focused and functioning, there were not many opportunities for the young people to meet. According to Rheubottom in his discussion on the slava, feast for a patron saint, which highlights openness, peace and community (Rheubottom, 1976: 25), it is only when household boundaries are lifted that 'strangers'⁶³ can meet. However, boundaries were still vulnerable and a violation of such boundaries would have had serious consequences. An old woman from Berevo was

recalling the time she met her husband for the first time. She was dancing during one of the slavas when a young man from a distant village started dancing next to her. She pleaded with him to stop, and when he insisted, her brothers came, beat him up and then beat her and, a few days later, they had to marry and she had to leave with her new husband to go to his home. From the time he danced beside her until her wedding, she did not enter her own home nor did she contact her family for many years.

Normally however bride and groom were from the same or a neighbouring village, but from a different lineage. Often marriages would be arranged by the families through a matchmaker and bride and groom would first meet in church. Nevertheless, many of the women knew their husbands at least by sight as they were often neighbours. When they went to fetch water they risked a glance or two about them, and perhaps caught the eyes of a local boy. The age for marriage varied from seventeen to twenty-five. This, I believe, was due to relatively lenient regulation of marriage by state and church.

Todorova (1993: 31) writes:

'In contrast, the relative subordinate role of the Orthodox church vis à vis the state from its very beginning, and, later on, its status as an inferior religion in the Muslim Ottoman Empire, deprived it of the exclusive privileges and influence over the social life of the people enjoyed by the Catholic Church. This, alongside ensuing ideological differences, in turn explains the greater adaptability of the Orthodox church to secular tradition.'

My informants had little to say about the legal aspect of marriage, and little more about the creation and significance of affines. They were more talkative about the consummation of the marriage as this guaranteed the continuation of the family, unless blocked by infertility.

Engagement, Marriage and Sexuality

It was the engagement ceremony which gave a legal character to the relations between a young man and a young woman, and it took usually took place only a few days before the wedding itself. The engagement emphasised the social and economic relationship between affines, including negotiations over bridewealth and dowry. At engagement, bride and groom came into the second of the three transitional stages of human life: birth, marriage and death. Marriage was the moment in life that made men and women into fully social persons as they guaranteed descent group continuity. At the engagement ceremony the bride would receive gifts such as jewellery and gold coins as her personal property. The dowry consisted of clothing, household goods and money, communal property of the family she married into, and simultaneously, personal property of the bride, later inherited by her children.

The day of the wedding, usually a Sunday, would then be set,. It started with the bride's hair being ceremoniously combed and the groom shaved. The groom's agnates would set out for the bridal home to fetch the bride. At the bride's natal home the wedding guests would be welcomed and invited for a meal. The groom's agnates would offer presents to the bride's female relatives. When trying to enter the bride's home a fight was enacted, but after being presented with her wedding shoes, the bride would come out and go with her new family to the house where the marriage was to be consummated.

The relationship of a new bride to her husband was difficult at the outset as she was in a very vulnerable position in her new household. The vulnerability was caused by the bride's ambiguous position as affine to the groom's agnates. Affinity blurred the boundaries of the family and left the family exposed. The woman new to the group had to gain a position first as wife and then as mother. Rheubottom points out that:

'...the bride is immediately incorporated into the work parties of the unmarried women and treated as part of her mother-in-law's conjugal family. [...] If the bride is treated as 'daughter', little is made of her new status as wife. As I have noted, the bond between husband and wife is treated as if it did not exist. Indeed, her husband plays only a small part in the entire wedding celebration' (Rheubottom, 1980: 245).

Only after the woman has given birth to her first child do she and her husband become a single unit.

For most women the relationship with their husbands was accompanied by beatings: '...my husband would come back from work - [and wanting to sleep with her] no matter where, just when he felt like it. Lots of people were living in the house, but he did not care, and when he felt like it, the woman had to do it. Three sisters were living in the house with us, as well as the grandmother, and the children, and if I did not want to, he beat me up, always beating me, for everything...'. 'If the husband wanted his wife, he would beat her with his stick and I knew I had to go there, so if he was out with the sheep I had to bring him food there and there he would do it, do his job.' All of the women emphasised that the most important thing for a woman was a husband who would not beat her. This is what counted, otherwise any marriage would be fine, because there were children: 'My husband was my neighbour. First I did not like him, but when I got engaged I got used to him and I thought I would love him forever. That's what I tell these young girls, they always talk about love.' And: 'It is hard for the woman. When you know him it is fine, but in our time it was important that he had a house, that he had a goat, and not whether he was a good man and would treat you nicely.'

Another woman told me: 'It is important that he did not beat you. He will like you, he will want you.' The women felt that men cared mostly about sex and they felt when

they could satisfy a man in this respect, and work hard and raise their children properly, they could have a happy relationship with their husbands. 'That (sex) is what is important for a man. For the woman the children are the most important.' Motherhood strengthened their positions as wives. Nevertheless, a woman's stronger position as wife paralleled the weakening of the position of her mother-in-law and would lead eventually to her family splitting away from the household. Her sexuality was both a future blessing but also a present threat to her new family and should be contained. Her sexuality implied the future splitting of the household and a diversion of interest of her husband and his parents, to his own wife and children. Comments on the shame of a woman's pregnancy and sexuality have to be understood in this light. Signs of sexual maturity in a girl reminded her natal family of her temporary membership in the family. One woman was so embarrassed when she grew breasts that she hid away from her father; and later when she got her period, she was told by her mother to hide from her father again as he would not welcome this news.

The roughness of the husband towards his wife in the first years of marriage can be understood in the same way. His solidarity with his family meant he was supposed to show no noticeable interest in his own wife nor in her sexuality. If the incoming bride drew attention to her sexuality, this was seen as a threat to the unity of her husband's

family. Women tried to hide their pregnancies from their in-laws for as long as they could, because pregnancy was the ultimate sign of a sexuality that eventually would split her husband's household and would position her at the centre of a new household, that of her husband and their children.

The young groom was expected to show little visible interest in his bride. If he spoke to her at all in public, he had to be gruff and commanding; and he was to show no noticeable enthusiasm for the marriage bed. This was the public stance, but all my women informants made it clear that their husbands were, in private, strongly interested in sexual relations, and that it was this which legitimated them as wives.

The bride's virginity was important at the consummation of the marriage. If it was discovered that a woman was not a virgin, she was sent back to her own home. When I asked one woman if she was scared to get married I was told that of course she was, as she did not know if she was a virgin. When I inquired why she did not know this, she told me that the groom might sometimes sneak in to the bride's room, before the wedding, and then later on the wedding night he might 'discover' that she was not a virgin. The virginity and the procreative capacity of the woman did not belong to her, but to her husband and agnates. As one woman put it: 'Why would a woman no longer be a virgin? Only because of a man, but it is she who gets the blame.' Another woman

told me about the advice her aunt gave her, that she should take care that her husband did not put his semen into her, but that first she should live her own life for a year - ' I had no idea what she was talking about, but I told my husband to wait and he respected that. Men know these things, I did not know anything.' This woman was nineteen at the time of her marriage. Only later did women learn to use their procreative capacities for their own ends. For children were seen as a mother's children and constituted her strength.

It became apparent that the women I interviewed saw their own sexuality, not only their procreative capacity, as slowly becoming a source of power over their husbands, whom they portrayed as absolutely addicted to their wives. This emphasis went so far that many of the women stressed that men loved to have sexual intercourse with menstruating women: ' We once went to a mill, my husband and I, and he wanted to be with me. I could not say no because he was beating me, but men did not understand anything. When he wanted it, you were supposed to give it to him and he was not interested in anything else. Now I hear that women do not sleep with their husbands before they have finished menstruating. But whatever, children are always possible⁶⁴, before, after or during menstruation.' Some of the women explained their husbands' interest in sex with his menstruating wife, by his ignorance. One of the women told me:

'We were bleeding and we could not hide it. Men were not scared of it; some even liked a woman especially when she was bleeding.' Five women told me, in one way or another, that their husbands liked to sleep with them especially during menstruation. One of the women told me: 'Some men are even so crazy that they take you while you are bleeding, some men like you especially then, though other men do not like it, and think it will pollute them.' Another woman told me: 'For the first three months of my marriage I didn't get pregnant, and a cousin started asking why I wasn't pregnant yet. I didn't tell my husband that I was menstruating when he wanted me, but he liked it very much then, and he was wondering why and the next day we went to the field and he wanted it again and again, he liked it very much and then our son was conceived.' She found it very embarrassing to mention how keen her husband was on sex with her.

Most women told me that they did not learn about sexual matters until they became married women. 'Women talked to each other about these things. We never went to the doctor. We only talked about these things and then we simply did them. God gives what he gives, that's all we knew. Dogs were taken more care of than we were.' Some of the women I talked to had been 'initiated' by some older woman, aunt or neighbour, never by their mother⁶⁵, in what to do after marriage, 'how to lie down and how to do things.' The women told me about their fears, being scared about giving birth, about

lying next to their husbands. Some of them told me humorously that later they were running after their husbands. What they regretted was that their mothers never talked with them about 'being a woman.' They preferred the way their own daughters or daughters-in-law were bringing up their children. They agreed that in 'their time' it was 'a shame' for women to talk about 'things like that,' but that men talked about them more easily. They told me that men were taught everything they had to know before they got married by some older men and that women knew nothing.

God and the Religious Element

Initially all the woman insisted that they were ignorant that they knew nothing and that they were still primitive [ne kulturini]. I have met this reaction a few times with older women in Macedonia. Socialism in Macedonia, it was explained to me, meant breaking with old ways and turning one's back on what had been. Thus, the older generation became the un-educated, un-civilised generation, something these old women have heard many times and had internalised. One 50 year-old woman explained that this was because: 'we went to school and broke with the old ways. We were the new generation, the hope of the country. Everything that we left behind was backward and primitive. We were the future, but we also left our parents behind, our mothers who

toiled to get us an education. We were the ones then who got educated- we had risen from being cattle.' And one woman in the village told me: 'we had nothing...but still our children were healthy, no matter that they are saying nowadays that we knew nothing and that we did everything wrong.' Another woman commented: 'My children are all very well educated, but I am living in the old way, and I cannot change now. For them, everything is 'known.' They know everything.' As one woman told me: 'In our time we were too busy. We did not 'think' - we worked in the fields and were content merely if our husbands did not beat us.' Another woman said: 'Now a child of five knows how a baby is made. We were ignorant then, and now things are better. So many children died, in those days.'

None of the women had attended school for more than four years and many felt they were ignorant. Comments such as the following were typical: 'I don't know anything, nothing, what should I tell you, I just know nothing.' One woman commented that: 'if I would have been able to go to school for longer, maybe then I would know something. As it is all I can do is pray.' Later she told me: 'God? People talk about God (laughs) - he has nothing to do with it, it is nature. Nature alone determines everything. My children have had an education.' By saying that her children had an education she implies that they had been supporting the socialist system, and as such she as the mother

'progressed' with them by denying God⁶⁶ Another woman said: 'We were stupid in those days, just like sheep.' Thus, 'nature' or 'science' had been introduced to my informants as a alternative concept to God. They said: '...God decides this, and it is nature.' When I asked the women what the moment of birth meant to them one woman told me: 'We did not ask ourselves where life came from as now the 'new' people do. In those days we thought that God is giving life, and God takes away life. Nobody said that a man or a woman could make life.' Procreation for these older women then was seen as historically differentiated. Statements about 'in our time' and 'today' are differentiated by life given by God and life given by society. The idea behind this is that socialism introduced agency into the life of individuals. The consummation of marriage for these women was a relationship not between men and women, not between families, but a relationship between them and something higher that defied definition.

They all emphasised that today things are different, but that in the past God gave things and took them away. One woman told me that: 'When you give birth you will know all these things. Nowadays there are two Gods. In the hospital they can give injections, but the babies are still the same.' Thus, the power of medicine and science, that has played a predominant role in socialist society, is referred to as 'another' or 'second' god, a notion repeated in several interviews. One woman summarised neatly

the underlying idea which, I believe, all the woman I talked to had, that: 'We should keep our eyes open. We are here. God is up above. If you have children and grandchildren we'll seem simple to you, but in those days we didn't think about such things, because we had to work in the fields.' They believed themselves to be very much at the mercy of God, evil spells, evil spirits and nature. All of them were proud of how they had managed to bring up their children. One woman really wanted to ask God why he made decisions the way he did, but then sighed and said that she was too stupid to even try to understand God.

All the women mentioned God as being responsible for the 'give and take' of human reproduction. However, they argued with him only in the sense that he was responsible for the uncertainties. They could seek his help, but he alone would decide to help or not to help. Village women everywhere in Macedonia peeled saints' eyes off church walls, and boiled the peeling in water, as the resulting fluid had healing effects. In the same way women would boil a cross in water or would ask the priest to give them some baptismal-font water to mix with their baby's bath water to protect it from illness and black magic. Evil spirits and the church were battling in opposition, and the women tried to influence one or the other as best they could.

They agreed that it was not good if women could not have children, 'But you cannot do anything about it. Nobody is to blame - it is simply God's will.' They felt they had no influence over this matter. Infertility was not caused by evil spirits, but was the will of God and God could not be influenced. The midwife's task lay more in helping the women to protect themselves from spells than to assist medically: 'The midwife told me to tell nobody when I was giving birth so that nothing bad could happen to me...but if I sensed that someone knew I would have had to go over the person three times, so I would have no trouble.' The idiom of 'going over a person three times' the woman told me meant literally stepping over a person three times. The best time to do this would have been when that person was asleep. She added that this was difficult to do and one could still resort to other means. The underlying idea was to distract a potentially jealous person. Three is an auspicious number in Macedonia. For example, to greet a person one should give three kisses on the cheek. These three kisses are for God, his Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Religious symbolism played an important role in giving birth. One of the women told me that the midwife had given her a towel. Her birth was very painful and it went on for days, during which time she 'made wooden things break⁶⁷' but when she thought of the towel and that she would take it to church: 'the baby came out just like this, as if

someone pulled it away from me.' The towel became the connection between her newborn baby and the church. The child was pulled out of her as if it were holding onto the towel. From all the accounts it appears that the church played a major role for these older women in functions of giving birth and managing death, both spiritually and practically. Today they are faced with the world inhabited by their children and grandchildren in which those tasks are taken over by medicine and science. They are told by their children that they had been living in ignorance and that today society has taken control of such fundamental issues as birth and death. However, my informants seemed unconvinced. Their telling me that they are ignorant and do not know anything is more mimicking the official party line. Often, as I mentioned earlier, they told me that despite all the odds they had been able to raise healthy children. And some saw that society today has as much control over life and death as they had - only with different kinds of 'ritual' and in different guises.

Insemination and the Creation of the Child

Procreation or better, 'making children', had specific aspects for the women I interviewed. Women would describe how they slept with their husbands, what would determine if it would be a boy/child [the two words are the same in Macedonian] or a

girl; what determines the baby's appearance; and in what way the children were formed into people. All emphasised that children, boys and girls, are most important for a woman as they will be the ones who take care of her in her old age. They were not all clear about what exactly happened biologically but had similar ideas. The most striking feature was that all of them agreed that men desired menstruating women and that either girl-babies were made while the woman was menstruating or especially strong boy babies. One woman told me that in the uterus the semen of man and woman fight and the one that is stronger determines if it will be a boy or a girl: 'If the woman were to have no semen then there is no child, she cannot give birth. The woman bleeds inside to feed the child. If she bleeds outside she has no child.' Women are seen as nurturing the baby, giving the baby their life force in the form of blood, krv. They told me this in terms of: 'if the woman is strong, the baby is strong, so it does have to do with her.' One of the women told me that she found it strange that weak women would always have the strongest children, whereas the strong women have weak and sickly children. I believe this to be related to the idea that a strong woman would use up all the nurturing blood herself and have nothing for her baby left, whereas the weak woman would give all her strength to her child. Krv, blood was important in other respects too: If the child looks similar to its family this is a result of the blood. Some women repeated what the priest

had told them, that at marriage the two bloods were 'joined.' When I asked the women what semen was or where it came from they told me that the semen came from God, and menstrual blood and semen both go into the child. 'Man and women cannot be without each other'.

Blood and semen are similar substances which most of all indicate strength. They are not substances that 'create' a child, as only God creates, but they give strength. When these are joined successfully a child will be born. One woman explained that semen is similar to the blood of menstruating women. Blood and semen also come to stand for sexual desire. Sexual desire is a form of strength. Women's strength was not supposed to be channelled in sexual desire but into their love for their children and family. A woman who demonstrated her sexual desire was often seen 'as a man.'

All the women had similar answers to the question of what determines if a baby is a boy or a girl. If the woman were strong, and more powerful than her husband (at the moment of intercourse - something which made a few of the women giggle) then the woman would give birth to a girl. They told me that if the child looked like the mother, the mother had been stronger (in a physical sense) as well, and added that in this case people would laugh at the father. One woman suggested that if the couple had only boys, that showed that the husband was stronger than his wife. One woman told me

that before and after menstruation the woman would conceive a boy and a girl while menstruating. Such 'explanations' varied from woman to woman. The most common explanation the women gave was similar to: 'you sleep with your husband and he puts his semen into you and if you do this while you are bleeding you will have a daughter, otherwise it will be a child (boy). It is God's will if a child results.' I was also told that, if one wanted a boy, the woman should sleep with her husband one week before her menstruation and then the boy would be especially strong. I can only assume that they thought that if the blood accumulated in such way that it would make the child a boy, and the boy strong. Here again the concept of strength is predominant. Male and female substances do not create the child or its sex, but it is the relative proportionate strength of male and female substances that determine the child physically and morally, and later further shape it. Blood is the strength of the mother, semen the strength of the father. Only one woman told me that conception cannot occur while the woman is menstruating. Neither male semen alone, nor menstrual blood alone create the child or determine its sex. Many of the women told me that it required several acts of intercourse to make a child.

Infertility, Women's Strategies and the Evil Eye

To remain unmarried, or to be married but barren was terrible, the women agreed. 'If you have not given birth you are not a woman' was the sentiment. This was the reason a woman got married. Some women told me that being able to give birth was related to 'having the will.' After giving birth they would 'wash their babies with ashes' so they would not fall victim to the evil eye, meaning their babies would become undesirable to others, because to have children meant to have people envy them. Children were the greatest treasure a family could have.

All the women thought that one could not really do anything when someone was infertile, (even though some of the women told me that it depended only on one's will). As I have already noted, the general condition of barrenness was seen as the will of God. 'When God wants to give a child he will give you one, it is not up to you. Now young people think they can do everything, that it is they who 'decide' how many children they have. They replace God, but I do not understand with what.' Most of them agreed, not only that infertility could be also the husband's fault, but more that it was most commonly his fault: 'If nothing comes it is not the woman's fault. If God wants it, whenever you have sex with a man you can have children. If you do not want a child you should stay away from each other.'

Barrenness was not recognised as a mere female problem by all women interviewed, though the question stays open if my informants projected 'new' scientific knowledge back into their early lives. There were a few accounts however, which would support the idea that it was known that men could be the cause of infertility as well. All of the women interviewed mentioned that it could very well be the husband's problem. 'Ah, the husband would marry somebody else and then this woman wouldn't have children either - is that not proof enough!' Asked if men would remarry such divorced women, they agreed that they would: 'it was difficult to obtain a woman and it cost a lot of money. Men had to pay for us - it was difficult for them. First they bought a house, then a woman. Before marriage a woman was not valued at all, not kept well until she is married. Then she was treasured, but then, too, he might beat her. Before [the marriage] he would send people, money, bags...Yes, parents would sell a daughter and they would not ask her who she wanted.'

Personally I found most intriguing what the women told me about a specific female conspiracy, in one case of infertility: One woman told me this 'When I was young you could not go to the doctor to see who was not able to make a child. The old women then, when they saw that there was a hopeless case, would come together and take the woman to another man so she would get pregnant. Nobody was supposed to know this,

not the husband, not anybody, so the husband would think it was his child. Even if the people then were illiterate and simple they knew how to keep secrets, so the lie would not fall apart. When the child would not look like his mother or father then the old women would say: 'oh, he looks like his uncle nine generations [belts] ago,' yes, then the old women would say: ' oh, the baby looks just like his uncle.' In those days men trusted the old women, and that's how they could arrange such things.' Such accounts throw new light on the alleged powerlessness of women. One has to take into account that when the women remember that they were beaten and completely at the will of their husbands, they often recall their first years of marriage. While I was sitting with them and chatting, it was the husband who brought us tea and who was tenderly shushed. Certainly, in the later years their positions had improved in the household and as wife and mother they had far more control over their lives than at the beginning of their marriages.

Birth Spacing and Male-Female Relations

Without children a woman had no power at all. Too many children however, meant poverty. There was not always enough land to feed extra hungry mouths. Regulating fertility thus became important. Generally there were only two methods mentioned in

the interviews of doing this. One was abstinence, which the women claimed was difficult for the men to observe or, coitus interruptus. Regulating fertility was described as a man's responsibility.

Abortion was legal in socialist Yugoslavia, and continues to be so in today's Macedonian Republic. In other interviews, younger women told me quite frankly that they had had very many (up to nine) abortions in their lives. One woman, when asked why she had had so many abortions, told me that she did not know anything else to do and that her doctor promoted abortions, 'as it was cleaning me inside.' Something similar was said about actual child birth: 'Having children makes you cleaner - it fulfils you.' But the old women I interviewed in Skopska Crna Gora never mentioned abortion as a practise they employed in their youth. One woman in the village told me: 'We did not take such care, we just took what we got and did not think of what we could have (done?) as my daughters now.' It seems that infant mortality was so high that abortions were not needed. What was seen as important was the spacing of pregnancies.

Foetal Development and Complications

If the women agreed that the birth of a boy or a girl depended on the relative strengths of father and mother, they also claimed that if the baby's face was similar to

that of the mother, she was seen as stronger than her husband. However, paralleling this, some of the women emphasised that the baby had only one blood, that of its parents, as husband and wife were one blood and their blood mixed: 'That's the reason the priest chants at the wedding, husband and wife are one blood now and that's why sometimes the daughter looks like the father, it is the blood. The mother has been stronger, but they are of the same blood. This is why the girl looks like the father or the baby looks like the mother.' Or, I was told, that usually people would say that the son looks like his father and the daughter looks like her mother and sometimes they would look like some other relative, but God would decide this; it is nature. Sometimes I was told the mother would be troubled because the child did not look like either its father or mother and then people thought the woman must have been with another man. One woman told me: 'Today people know about hormones that decide if you have a daughter or a son, but then we did not know, and we thought it was the men who were to blame if they sometimes father only boys or only girls.' If a child resembled its mother, she had either looked, while sleeping with her husband, in the direction of her natal home or, I was told, that if a woman turned at her wedding towards her natal home her children would have her family features.

I was also told that if the father were a thief, the son would be a thief, as this was determined by blood as well. All women agreed though, that the blood was a joint matter and that a child would always have something from the father as well as from the mother. In addition I was told that when the father drank a lot, he had no strength and could not do anything; his semen would be weak. Cold and warmth also influenced the quality of the semen. Hot weather was supposed to be better for semen, as I was told by one woman: 'it is because it is the time when the fields grow. God wants it like this.'

Women stressed how many children died in the past. None of the women I interviewed had more than three living children⁶⁸. They told me that: 'today things are different, today you have injections against death.' One woman mentioned that many children died from measles and that they could not do anything about it because the doctor was far away. If they wanted to bring their child to the doctor they had to tie it on their back in a cradle and walk for hours as there was no other means of transportation. Thus, it seems, that survival of mother and child were directly related to the mother's health. The 40 days of the Leunka (see below) were, I believe, seen as a time to preserve the woman's health and take special care for the child. Thus, I believe, the 40 days were related less to concepts of pollution than to the protection of the mother.

Birth and Midwives

I started my interviews by asking women about when they gave birth. They felt at ease with this question and told me eagerly and proudly about it. 'Now you give birth in bed, then we had only hay like the cows. Yes, that's how Mary gave birth, that's how we knew how to give birth.' It was not at all easy for them, but it was for all of them an extraordinary task they managed by themselves. 'The moment of giving birth I remember as if it were now. It was very difficult. We were four people at home and we had eight workers and I had to make food for them. We had no beds, we were sleeping on the floor. But birth then was such happiness and joy. It is what the woman can give to the family, but you could not afford to feel anything special or important, we were so many at home and everybody had to work.' Some were all alone, some had a midwife with them who would help and advise them. Nearly all the women mentioned the secrecy surrounding birth so as not to attract evil spirits and also because of the shame of possibly being seen naked. They were burdened by such secrecy, as they themselves did not really know what was happening. Generally they described giving birth as the moment when they started to have pain. 'Then when I gave birth we opened up all the doors from the house, from the cupboards, from everywhere, the closets and

everywhere, so the uterus would open - it would open easier then⁶⁹. I was kneeling down, like a chicken, that's how we used to do it, like a chicken laying eggs.

After birth the baby was swaddled completely for 40 days. Its arms and legs would be bound so they would become straight and they would keep their children like this for a whole year. The women mentioned how beautiful the children were then, and that 'now men and women are like dwarfs, then people were big and nice, because they were swaddled.' They also thought that today there are more people with defects because they were not bound. There was another way of forming the child; I was told that soon after the birth the midwife [Babica] would massage the baby's face, and particularly the nose to give them a good shape.

After giving birth, the woman cut the umbilical cord herself, and the midwife came and announced the birth. All of the woman agreed that the greatest danger for a woman giving birth were bad spells that might have been put on her. Past evil deeds could also have caused problems, and they agreed that this was not so nowadays. Spells, they claimed, were not dangerous for the women today. One woman told me she was keeping some of the lactovit, milk substitute, her granddaughter was fed with as a memento: 'We had nothing like this, in our time we did not observe any real rules, but we did what we could.' If the baby was not well, the women took it first to the Baba and

then to the priest or to the doctor, depending on whether they could afford a doctor. The Babica would call the spirits and cure the child. 'There were many women doing such things those days, they would dance around the fire and spit water on you. They were probably praying to God and we thought they knew so much. They were doing strange things, moving glasses and they put shells in the water. Now we know that you can get these shells everywhere from the sea-side but then we did not know. It was such a common thing and we paid out money for such things.'

Some women were thought of as looking at the child with envy. A woman would say how beautiful the baby was and how healthy, but with the envy from her eyes she would put a spell on it. When such a person left, the child had to be wiggled on a chair to shake off the spell. Women would offer a lock of their own hair on a first visit to a new born child, just in the case they were unconsciously envious, so that they could not hurt the baby. The mother would take the hair of the visiting and potentially envious woman, and put it on the fire while holding the child over it in order to remove any spell.

Generally the women agreed that the greatest danger for women came from spells, but that this was not the case today.

The Post-Partum Condition: Leunkata

All the women were aware of a special status for the 40 days after birth when the new mother was called leunka, or leunkata or rodelkata. 'The first 40 days the families would take more care of their leunkata, so they gave her more food. She had lost blood so she had to regain her strength, but after 40 days nobody paid her special attention anymore.' All my informants had observed some of the leunka regulations, mostly the avoidance of church ground. The women mentioned pollution only in respect of this avoidance: 'For 40 days the leunka could not go into a church. She had to become clean first.' One woman told me that the leunka was supposed to hide and relatives were not allowed to see the mother because it was shameful.

Once having given birth, but depending on the season, women would have to return to work in the fields. However, while during the 40 days of the leunka condition they were not supposed to be out after sunset, because it was believed that the maternal milk would dry up. A few women mentioned that the leunkata should not drink any water because her stomach would blow up, but she should drink wine because that was good for the milk. The woman had also to wear a red thread around her right hand. She was not supposed to meet any other leunka who had given birth in the same week, lest one of their children die. However, when one could absolutely not avoid meeting such a

woman, the women had to exchange rings. During these 40 days none of the women were allowed to enter church nor were they allowed to sleep with their husbands, for the sake of their own health, some women thought. However, I was told that the husbands did not really care about this. After the 40th day they would go with their child to church and pray. Other people would go with them to ask the priest for baptismal water. The Leunka would send him a bottle of water, the priest would pray over the water and chant, then he would return the water. The Leunka would put a little bit of the water into the baby's bath-water, which would ensure they would have enough milk.

Before the sixth week was over, the family and the prospective Godfather would take the boy into the church. The Godfather gave the child a name - the mother in her leunka status still not being present in church. Then children ran to her and told her the name of the child (and they would then get some money for telling this news to the mother). When I asked why the mother was not allowed to go I was told: 'she was still a leunka; maybe she was more vulnerable and her milk could be cursed.' I believe from these and similar comments that the women refused to see themselves as polluting, but were certainly in a condition of vulnerability, as were their children.

Women as Mothers

I mentioned above that the responsibility for forming the child's personality and giving it an education lay in women's hands. In most of my interviews I could sense this special relationship between mothers and children or grandmothers and grandchildren, while men did not seem to be included in this emotional bonding, but operated more in the 'political' sector of kinship.⁷⁰ I am not suggesting that fathers did not love their children, however, emotionally there appeared to be greater bonding between mothers and children. This placed a lot of responsibility on women.

A few of my informants would agree with what one of the older ladies said: 'It is too bad that you have to sleep with a man to have children. Children are a woman's riches, the only thing that gets her recognition.' Children were seen as 'mother's children.' The father participated only with a small moment of personal joy, but as all the women stated, it is the mother who nurtures her child, first in the nine months she carries it, with her pain and after birth for the rest of her life. Some women pointed out that it was they who organised their children to go to school and university; with their hard labour they made it possible for their children to live a different life than they had done. This reinforces all the other information I collected over the years: mothers have a fundamental role in bringing up their children.⁷¹

Conclusion

In the preceding pages I have attempted to find the essence of procreative being, or more, the understanding of it amongst a small group of Crna Skopska Gora women. What I found is mirrored by an ambivalence Juliet du Boulay pointed out in her 1986 discussion on: 'Women- Images of their Nature and Destiny in Rural Greece.' Du Boulay sees this ambivalence arising through the opposing imagery of the two female prototypes: Eve who, through sin, has caused mankind to fall, and Mary the Mother of God. One is seen as inferior and impure, the latter seen as the upholder of religion and tradition, the ultimate mother. In Christian religion such ambivalence is resolved by assigning the image of Eve and the image of Mary to different phases in the development of womanhood. Eve is the seductive, unmarried, unproductive woman, whereas Mary becomes the image of the all-holy mother, a symbolic understanding widespread in Eastern European societies and in the Mediterranean. Thus, reproduction becomes the ultimate goal of every woman and is seen as her power base.

In contrast to Delaney's assertion however, children are not 'given as a present' by men to woman in Skopska Crna Gora, but are given by God. However, God is not the ultimate male in the sense that Mary is the ultimate mother and woman. In contrast to

God, Mary has human origin and Jesus is pictured as her child and thus, mankind is distinct from God and men are not equal to God. Women and men in Skopska Crna Gora are fulfilling the plan of God; God for them is the essence of being. In this world it is the task of men and women equally to contribute to the passing of essence of being onto future generations. The essence itself, the life force, lies in the blood of women and men. When the priest joins the bloods of wife and husband he gives his blessing to the passing on of joined life force. What men and women are giving to life is their strength; only united do they have the strength to pass on life. Such gendered strengths are complementary. However, as du Boulay pointed out for Greece (1986: 147): 'marriage used to be virilocal- it being, until very recent times, the custom for any sons to bring their wives into the parental household, to live as a joint family until such time as it was thought that the inheritance should be divided and the various families go to live separately. When this happened, it fell to the lot of one son, usually the youngest, to stay in the familial house with the now ageing parents, to look after them, and, after their death, to inherit the house and a significant part of the land and appurtenances of the farm.' As this holds true for Macedonia too, it can be concluded:

'This situation thus created an obvious fault line between the mother-in-law and the bride (or brides) who came into her house; for while she was happy for her son to marry and to give her grandchildren, and happy also to

have a younger woman in her house to work under her direction, she was also aware that the incoming woman would be a threat, both through her ability to take over the affection of her son and in the fact that by her very youth and strength she was in an ultimately victorious position, waiting only for the older woman to die before she would in turn become the mistress of the house.'

(Du Boulay, 1986: 147)

So it was in this vulnerable position towards her mother-in-law, whose solidarity the young woman could not count on, that the young woman felt insecure. She was beaten by her husband, feared him and felt worthless. This however gradually changed over the years, mostly by her ability to bear children. Being a mother slowly transformed the young bride into the centre of the house; in old age with grandchildren, her influence extended and was recognised by her husband. Beating his wife showed that the husband kept his solidarity with his parents and it proved his strength to his wife, a strength she did not necessarily dislike as it showed the strength of his blood, a strength the woman needed to have a healthy child. It is up to a woman's strength, up to her 'will', to nurture and raise her children and to pass on the essence of life. Nevertheless, for this to be possible, it is irrevocably linked to her husband's strength; and only together can they pass on life. As such the question is not 'who creates life', the semen of men or the

woman's contribution to the child through some other substance. It is not a matter of substance, but only a matter of relative strength.

CHAPTER 6

GETTING MARRIED

Prologue

By 1995 some of my friends had boyfriends whom they had been dating for some time. Today, many of them are married and a few have already had babies. I have considered the insecurity they feel, their seeming lack of control over their environment and their dissatisfaction with the work they do and with their life at home with their parents. Do they still feel out of control? And who do they feel they have become?

In 1988 they had dreams about how their lives would unfold and they watched as the fall of Yugoslavia shattered many of these dreams. All of my friends had, however, dreamt of loving and being loved and, for some, those dreams have been fulfilled. In considering how my friends re-negotiated their *selves*, after their identity as modern, ambitious Yugoslavian and European citizens was taken from them, I have observed their lives. Some of these people were heading toward something very new for them, not an exploration of their identity as Macedonians or as Europeans, or even as one of

the 'new people', but as an exploration of their identity as wives or husbands, as mothers or fathers and, consequently, there was a completely new experience of the world awaiting them.

In the following chapters I attempt to understand what this new experience, marriage, has meant for my friends, particularly within the context of Macedonian identity. There are a number of factors to consider. Firstly, what is the effect marriage has on the way my informants construct and define themselves as people? In answering this question, an understanding of what marriage means in Macedonian society, its origins and possible future is necessary. It is also important to explore what marriage means today specifically how social change has influenced and altered the concept of marriage. The purpose of marriage for my informants goes beyond economic considerations: marriage for them is about love, an ideal of love; and, it is about parenthood. However, in order to understand marriage, one has to look for other reasons as to why people decide to get married. If today the ideal is marriage for love, is this ideal in opposition to other conceptions of marriage? This question will lead to a short discussion of the process of exchange in marriage, including dowries and kinship affiliations. In order to examine these issues I will compare marriage in modern day Skopje with marriage in modern day Galichnik. Galichnik, a small village with one inhabitant in the remote mountains, has

experienced a revival of traditional marriage processions. Further, I will explore what marriage means and how it is celebrated in the wedding ritual for several of my informants in accounts drawn from three generations.

There are several factors considered in the decisions made by my informants at this particular time in their lives. Attention to the way in which these decisions are made will show that the problems faced by my informants relate directly to the transformation of their country. Examination will explain the impact on young couples of the change from neolocality to patrilocalty; it will show the effect of the housing crisis and it will consider the way in which marriage can provide security in these changing times. And it will also show whether my informants will seek another route to fulfilment in life: do they consider leaving the country rather than staying, marrying and having children? Finally, I will look at the way in which patterns of inheritance have changed. All of this will explain what marriage means to today's Macedonians living in a time of social change. Marriage is one way, perhaps the most important, in which my young informants create a new identity for themselves.

Wedding and Identity

The Macedonian idea and ideal of 'the west' requires some examination. Though it might be expected that weddings, closely associated as they are with kinship and the family, would be a traditional proceeding in urban Macedonia, I have found that this is not always the case: there have been interesting shifts away from the traditional. After the fall of Yugoslavia, wedding ceremonies once again started taking place in church. With this change came the reintroduction of the white dress and the orthodox liturgy, followed by a cocktail party. Today many discussions between couples centre around wedding arrangements and, in particular, how traditional each family wants the wedding to be. Although the church ceremony is seen as both traditional and an act of defiance against socialist ideology, illustrating the couple's modernity, it is the party afterwards that determines how traditional the family is. If all the kin are invited, this often means a party with 400 people, and if, in addition, there are gift presentations and an orchestra playing 'folk music' which includes modern folk music and Serbian songs which is not significantly different from Yugoslavian times, then this is a traditional wedding. However, the gathering of kin in an urban environment does not descend from old Macedonian customs, but rather has an aspect of the wedding ceremony developed during Yugoslavian times. Whereas it was custom to celebrate a wedding with the

paternal kin, today both sides of the family take part. While traditionally the paternal kin welcomed the bride into their midst, in socialist Macedonia the kin held a farewell for the couple, from childhood into adulthood and independence, stressing the couple's responsibilities as members of a socialist society. Today the married couple goes to the church service before going to the law courts and then celebrates with kin and friends. This order of events considered traditional yet modern, is thought by Macedonians to emulate weddings in Hollywood movies.

The most traditional, the most Macedonian, aspect of a wedding was the engagement ceremony and today, many people are again interested in these old customs. Young people had to be taught these customs by aunts or grandparents who had not forgotten the old ways. It was in this context that the wedding in Galichnik was revived as the model of a real Macedonian wedding and has helped create an identity for the people of Macedonia through its enactment.

Macedonians today are faced with three models of weddings to choose from: 1) the pre-socialist wedding; 2) the socialist wedding; and, 3) the combination wedding.

The pre-socialist wedding is similar to those practised by the grandparents' generation which involved emphasis on the engagement ceremony and presentations and particularly popular with young people of Skopje because they see this marriage as not

based on romantic love. However, since they say in Skopje *'there cannot be two religions under one blanket,'* young people certainly believe some social considerations should apply. Although they are not religious, most of the young Slavic Macedonians I know would not choose to marry a Macedonian of Muslim heritage, the Albanians or Slavic Macedonians whose ancestors converted to the Islamic faith and thus 'betrayed' the Macedonian people. I would suggest that this discrimination is not so much based on religious belief, rather it is founded on a discourse on identity: "Who are we? We are not Muslims."⁷² A Macedonian wedding originates from Christian belief and the reference to Christianity is important to distinguish the more *exclusive* identity of 'Macedonian' from the general run of 'Macedonian citizens.'

The second model of marriage is that practised during socialism. This marriage involves specific, easily identifiable elements: a ceremony at the law courts followed by a family gathering and a gift presentation to the couple and, finally, neolocality and independence for the couple.

The third type of marriage is practised in Skopje today, and combines various elements of the other two weddings as well as some unique components. It is this, the marriage in Skopje which provides perhaps the clearest picture of how Macedonians see themselves: full citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, reaching adulthood through

marriage and its connected responsibilities. However, through necessity in independent Macedonia, many couples cannot be independent, but will move in with the groom's family.

Marriage and Identity

Marriage in Macedonia, as in most countries, is closely linked to the way people interact with each other as a group. Kinship literally relates people to each other and the family forms the smallest unit of a nation. In theory, marriage is the basis of kinship and kinship testifies about origin, structure and exchange from which a blurry picture of personhood appears. Bourdieu in *Outline of a Theory and Practice* sees kinship as an open-ended set of practices employed by individuals seeking to satisfy their material and symbolic interest. Further, marriage is also about a solidarity that is affirmed through matrimonial exchanges both between and within families. The most important aspect of marriage and its greatest impact on one's personhood is that, out of a union between two people, indeed between two families, children are raised and a sexual division of labour is negotiated.

Through marriage, the identity of my informants is altered in a very important way. They commit themselves to the establishment of new relationships between their spouse

and themselves, between themselves and their spouse's family, between their spouse's family and their own and between themselves and their offspring and to the acceptance of new obligations. Marriage is a rite of passage, transforming people from adolescence to social adulthood. Knowing how my young informants in present day Skopje understand the wedding ceremony is thus very relevant and even though the wedding ceremony is no longer as highly ritualised as it was in the past, it remains the most ritualistic aspect of life in today's Macedonia. I would suggest that the values embodied by marriage are reflected in the way my informants and their families create themselves as individuals and as members of society. This is particularly the case in present day Macedonia, where ceremonies such as baptisms and weddings are performed publicly, contrary to Yugoslavian times when such ceremonies were private. Also, today real weddings are celebrated in Galichnik, whereas in socialist times the weddings were performed by actors in memory of Macedonia's past. There is another aspect to the weddings of today - most of them incorporate, first, the church service, then the law courts and finally a party to which friends and chosen family members are invited. These three stages link together different aspects of Macedonian identity: that is the rural past, the socialist republic within Yugoslavia and the idiom of 'the west' that has gained great importance since the fall of Yugoslavia.

My younger informants have certain things in common. They live in Skopje, they graduated from either the faculties of engineering or economics at the University of Skopje, their parents are, for the most part, firm believers in socialism. Representing the socially and politically most dominant strata of socialist and independent Macedonia, the large majority are of Slavic origin, confirming that Macedonia is divided more by ethnicity than by class, especially in Skopje. None of the parents of this group are native to Skopje, but relocated there after the earthquake⁷³, a situation which gave them a special position in Macedonian society. Many of them were quite young when they came to Skopje, the majority were born between 1935 and 1940, and they moved to the city in order to complete their higher education or to take up relatively responsible positions within the socialist structure. They came from all regions of Macedonia, except the towns of Ohrid and Bitola, the second and third largest towns after Skopje. My friends would appear to have very similar backgrounds: through their parents they have strong connections to their parent's birthplaces, through the retention of family land and relatives still living in the villages. My young informants are native to Skopje⁷⁴, yet their roots are not there: when asked where they are from, they give the name of the village or town where their parents were born and brought up. Despite the seeming homogeneity of urban Skopjanici, there is an awkward dilemma when it comes to

creating a set of social rules for wedding ceremonies, even though the couple seems to come from a relatively homogeneous group. The urban Skopjanici, and it is not at all unusual to find that the bride and groom-elect have significantly different wedding traditions, have wedding traditions which, in fact, originate from different places in Macedonia.

In the past, Macedonia had very distinct regions, each with their own language and customs. Typically, it is the family of the husband which determines the traditional way in which the union of their son should be celebrated. However, in today's Macedonia my informants insist on their desire to create a new life. Their wish for a new life creates a variety of traditions and wedding celebrations, paying homage to traditions and customs, but in the process of reinventing them creates a new meaning. It is the couple who decides to either follow the traditions of the groom or to mix customs of both families and their regions, or to invent new customs such as the throwing of rice as seen in Hollywood films. They want to be full and active participants in the new enterprise of Macedonia.

Stripped of their identity as Yugoslavians, people create their own Macedonia, not in a political but a social sense. They create a Macedonian identity and it is the wedding, the ceremony initiating a marriage, that is the centre piece of this creation. First of all,

marriage for many of my informants is a means of introducing stability into the havoc which has been their lives of recent years. They assume responsibilities when they agree to get married. Never doubting that they would, under normal circumstances, get married and have children eventually, discussion on this after 1992 centred on whether they wanted to bring children into the existing situation. This for most of them was not a question of having or not having children, but instead a question of whether they would stay in Macedonia, thus giving in and facing its reality, and at the same time accepting its comfort, or move to another country. A decision to marry, though often accelerated by pregnancy, was a decision to be Macedonian. Beyond being an individual and private decision, marriage is a very important social decision which, in this light, shows the importance of the wedding as a locus of Macedonian identity.

Conclusion

Within the Macedonian context and within the formation of Macedonian identity my informants make a distinction between marriage and wedding. Many of my informants think of the wedding itself as something they are doing for the families, but think of the marriage as being about themselves. This in turn emphasises the strong social meaning of weddings, even though today in Skopje weddings do not have the same ritual weight

as they had in the villages in the past⁷⁵ There is a tension between what the couple chooses to give their parents through the wedding ceremony and what the same wedding ceremony emphasises for themselves and their future marriage.

CHAPTER 7

GALICHNIK WEDDING

Every region in Macedonia has its particular customs and clothing for wedding ceremonies and, consequently, weddings as a tradition have created regional distinctions within Macedonia. The wedding celebration in Galichnik, which today is celebrated as a national event and serves as a counter-reference to the weddings of the Skopjanici, can demonstrate how the revival and reconstruction of this wedding celebration is the showcase for the changes within their country.

Galichnik is a remote village in Mavrovo National Park, near the Albanian border divided by the Jance River that flows into the river Radika in the Bistra mountain range. The 800 families deserted the village in the 1950's when Tito ordered all the goats and sheep, the livelihood of the people in Galichnik, to be killed according to his plan to nationalise all bourgeois property. In Galichnik men raised sheep and goats, the women did housework and worked on embroidery and carpets, a folkart for which the village is still famous. But because the land in the mountains was harsh and could not be cultivated successfully, the young men went abroad to seek work, *pechalba*. After the

goats and sheep were killed under Tito's orders, the people of Galichnik had to move to the cities, in most cases, Skopje. The last wedding to take place before the village was completely abandoned took place in 1961. It was not until the late 1960's and early 1970's that a group formed to memorialise Galichnik and since that time, weddings have been re-enacted on St. Peter's Day in Galichnik, and most of the former Galichnik inhabitants have returned to their deserted village for the ceremonies. Traditionally St. Peter's day was marked by the return of the young men, on *pechalba* in Greece, Germany, Australia, Canada and the USA, who married the young women at home⁷⁶. In the past, the Galichnik wedding celebrated the homecoming of the grooms, while in socialist Macedonia, the wedding in Galichnik celebrated the hope of its former citizens to return to the village. The people of Galichnik remembered proudly that sometimes more than 40 weddings took place on the three days around St. Peter's day. Each wedding had its own musicians and dance groups. It is said that the mountains shone with reflections from the gold and silver of the young women's dresses. In re-enacting the traditional and distinctive wedding, the former Galichnik inhabitants came to resist nationalisation as advanced by the socialist regime which sought to create unity.

Galichnik has become a tourist site even though no one, save crazy Gatzka, lives in Galichnik year-round. In the winter, one cannot get to Galichnik and in May the road is

still snow-covered, yet over the last 10 years, more and more families have gone back and restored their houses for use as summer residences.

Today, the distinct Galichnik wedding ritual has not lost its popularity but has gained new meaning. Through the revival of a 'real'⁷⁷ Galichnik wedding celebrating their distinctiveness in independent Macedonia, the former inhabitants of Galichnik and their descendants fete the ultimate Macedonian wedding and unification of Macedonia in their own way.

The Galichnik wedding was, and still is, transmitted across the country and by Australian and National television and is viewed by many, including the urban population of Skopje. Performed by actors in socialist Macedonia, the re-enactment became a celebration for the entire country. In 1992 a real wedding was celebrated in Galichnik for the first time in many years as the groom's ancestors originated in Galichnik. At the church, the priest married the couple, and said: 'This wedding in Galichnik may show the world that we, as a people exist; Macedonia does exist.'

In 1992, when the weddings ceased to be mere dramatisation, actors still performed as close kin and those of Galichnik, who still owned traditional costumes, participated. The houses and sites are the same every year and are not specific to the particular families involved. The sites are chosen for their condition and location in the village

and have been the same since the wedding was re-enacted for the first time.

The Galichnik cultural council decides the structure of the weddings carried out today. The celebration on the Saturday is a more exclusive affair, reserved for those who own homes in Galichnik and their invited friends although some people stay in the only hotel in the village. On the Sunday, tourists and families from Skopje arrive. The buses arrive from Skopje with thousands of spectators, commercial advertisements from the sponsors are set up and the archetypal Macedonian wedding begins.

The Modern Galichnik Wedding

In 1996 two engineers from Skopje, friends of mine, were married at this event in Galichnik. The wedding had great meaning for the groom who had roots in Galichnik, however, the bride felt somewhat uncomfortable with the event. She commented:

"After all, this is celebrating a past I don't know but Stojan wants to revive his village, start out just as his grandfather did with five sheep, multiply those five sheep to 10,000 sheep and open a cheese shop, restore the house and live in Galichnik again and help it back to its former beauty."

Certainly Stojan differs from many of his colleagues in that he tries to find a future for himself within, rather than outside, Macedonia. Having his wedding in Galichnik on

St. Peter's day is a statement about who he is, where he comes from and his desire to find a future for himself in Macedonia.

The modern wedding celebration starts on the evening of the Saturday before St. Peter's day with the musician's welcome. They perform in front of the hotel and then walk slowly to the groom's house. The groom and his friends welcome the musicians at the bridge over the river Jance. Many people gather in the main square to see the groom's mother dance, shortly before sunset. After her dance, there is the *Teskoto* dance, a dance that symbolises the heaviness of the oppression experienced under the Ottomans. The dance is a symbol of national pride and as such illustrates the Macedonian desire for freedom⁷⁸. After the dances, the flag is decorated. There were once specific flags for each family but today it is the national flag that is decorated with flowers. The groom hangs the decorated flag on the right side of his house and then guns are fired. The next stage, almost exclusively for the young people is very picturesque: the bride is taken by the matchmakers, who, today, are actors, to each of the three fountains in Galichnik. They are followed by everyone involved and all in attendance light torches to chase away the evil.

On Sunday morning at 7:30a.m., the groom's family, the musicians, the television crew and an anthropologist are the only ones allowed to attend the procession to the

graveyards to visit the graves of the ancestors to invite them to the wedding. The beginning to the day is announced with folk music pouring through loudspeakers. Then the godfather, *kum*, has to be officially invited. In front of the fountain, next to the church, the groom's friends shave him. While this ritual is performed, the groom's closest relatives are to be grieving as the shaving symbolises the separation of the groom from his father and mother. Then the matchmakers, friends and kin of the groom ride and walk to pick up the bride from her natal home.

This procession, to the bride's home, is lead by the standard carrier on a horse. The young man carries the decorated flag which is the national flag in both socialist and independent Macedonia. He is accompanied by representatives of the families in Galichnik who are also on horseback. The groom, also mounted, and his family slowly proceed towards the bride's home. Upon reaching the bride's home, one of the groom's party will enter the bride's house to ask permission to take her to the groom's house. The flag is hung from the bride's house at this time. The groom is lead by the representatives of the bride's family towards the bride's house and the bride watches him through a wedding ring. The groom shows his respect for the bride's parents by kissing their hands and they, in turn, put a towel over his shoulder. The groom's party is then welcomed to a table laid out with food outside the house. The groom's mother presents gifts such as

clothes and shoes to the bride who kisses her future mother-in-law's hand in respect.

Following this act, the bride withdraws to get dressed for the wedding ceremony. Once dressed she is presented to the groom's party. The bride, with her trousseau, is then placed on a horse and lead to the groom's house where she is welcomed by the groom's mother who has a sieve, a cake and a goblet of wine. The groom's mother circles the bride three times and touches her head with the cake. They tie a bridle on the bride and put the groom's hat on her head and she is taken into the house.

Everyone is now prepared for the wedding ceremony. The groom's mother and father, who carries the flag, and all the relatives walk to the church. The groom's mother carries a kettle and a basil bouquet. A carpet is laid down in front of the church and the flag is raised on the right hand corner of the church. After the wedding ceremony there is a wedding banquet in front of the groom's house. The *kum*, the groom's godfather, sits at the head of the table and makes a toast. Afterwards the bride is taken to the fountains to get water for her new family. The bride will then lead the bride's dance and the celebration ends with the farewell to the musicians.

This outline of the official proceedings of the ceremony is not identical for every wedding as sometimes rituals are simply forgotten, not practical, or actors, bride and groom alike decide to alter the proceedings. Some of the older people complain that the

traditions are being lost but most people see in this celebration, not a chart of rules which determine tradition, but the importance in the event itself and not its proceedings. This distinction is important in trying to understand how Macedonians today understand themselves. An informant comments: "It does not matter if the world thinks we do not exist or should not exist, we do, just by living." The wedding in Galichnik celebrates a distinct local tradition, only somewhat similar to other places in Macedonia. In fact, wedding celebrations and their attire marked most clearly the distinctiveness of Macedonian regions. Nevertheless the Galichnik wedding has become universally Macedonian, because it celebrates a distinction in relation to the outside not from within. It cannot represent inner distinctiveness as wedding rituals developed during socialist Macedonia have become similar to weddings celebrated in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Russia, or Albania. But to the outside world, especially Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Europe, the wedding in Galichnik today announces that Macedonia exists as a whole, that it is distinct and that it is celebrated by its own people.

The Galichnik Wedding in the Past

Swetle's Story

Swetle's story illustrates clearly that the Galichnik wedding announces that

Macedonia exists. Swetle was married in 1923 in Galichnik. Interviews

My trousseau was packed in big boxes and pillows on the horses, around 10 or 15 pillows with golden embroidery. I was engaged for a whole year. We had the weddings on Petrov day [St. Peter's day]. My husband came and they questioned him in front of the icons: *'Do you love her? Will you take care of her if she becomes ill?'* This happened one or two weeks before they took me for the wedding.. The priest came to these interviews, where we were both questioned, to listen to the answers.

Seclusion and Girlfriends

After the Easter holidays, one month before the wedding, the brides went down to the meadow to see each other as girls for the last time because afterwards we would spend one month in seclusion. I had to sit in the room in the basement where it was cold, so that my face would become white but we were not alone. Girlfriends came and we had parties, it was fun. Also, in the evening we could go out a little bit, because there was no sun.

Youth and Lost Arts

There were 46 weddings the day I was married: it was so beautiful. The drums were so loud. For every wedding there was different music. While the drum is played, the mother-in-law performs the dance with the sieve. I got married when I was 16 years old.

When I was 17, I had my first child. Yes, we were young. Today, girls finish university but we finished only primary school and then prepared ourselves for marriage: we learned to cook and sew. Now you can buy everything. There is no need for such things as sewing or weaving.

Weddings in Galichnik

The first day involves going for the water; the second day the bride sleeps with her friends at the groom's place; the third day is the wedding; the fourth day is *Poklonari*, the day on which respect is paid and presents are given. Sometimes this can last for 2 days if all the relatives bring their presents. They brought wine and lambs as presents, there were so many sheep in Galichnik. The air was so nice. The bride made dough and the others sang songs. The fifth day was *Prviche*, the day to present your best self to the guests. The parents of the bride then go to her new home for the first time.

The Night Before

The wedding ceremony began with the drums going to the groom's house. His mother went out with the sieve on her head and danced *oro*, a Macedonian round dance which is very popular, particular with young people. Bread and wine were put in the sieve so that the bride would not be hungry. The groom's mother goes around 3 times, then she hides and lets the young people dance. At midnight they put a wedding flag on

the front doorway and we danced all night. We decorated the flag with flowers and put a cross on it.

Afterwards we went to the well with the torch. Drums were playing and people were singing songs for me. I had to fetch water from the three wells. I had to wash my hair with this water, so that I was ready for the next morning when I had to put on my bridal dress. It was the last time I fetched water for my family. The night before the wedding they took me to my husband's home and I stayed there overnight, but I was not sleeping with my husband, I was there with my friends. I was disappointed though, because for the whole year while we were engaged, we were together all the time. That night when I was supposed to sleep with my friends at his place, he came into the room and wanted to stay there. My friend threw him out. And then next morning we prepared for the wedding.

The Day of the Wedding

Before they take the bride, they have to go to the cemetery to invite the dead. Then they shave the groom and sing to him. I remember one song that tells the story of how the groom does not want to get shaved until he gets the blessing from his mother and father. The drums went to my husband's house. He did not need to wash himself with the water from the well and would have been shaved by his friends then. After he is

shaved, the groom dresses and mounts his horse. Other people ride horses too and the man that is carrying the flag rides around the house.

When the riders got to my house, my bride-groom put the flag on the door of my family's house. They gave me presents and money. I did not take the money myself, my family received it. When they gave me the money, I was still wearing my girl's clothes. Afterwards, I put on bride's clothes. When the groom came on his horse, he kissed my relatives' hands. He also had a bottle of wine and poured wine in their glasses. First, he gave wine to his relatives and then to mine. I had to look through the wedding ring, but I was still inside the house. I sang *'through the ring I'm watching you so that you go inside my heart.'*

In the church, married woman should not meet the bride-elect. The wives leave the church by the upper road and the bride-elect approaches along the lower road. There were so many weddings on Petrov day. At that time, the men were returning from their work in other countries. Weddings lasted for a whole week unless you were from a very poor family whose celebrations began just 5 days before Petrov day.

Customs

One of the benefits with these customs is that people looked forward to the wedding and prepared for it. It was a big event. When I was 18 years old and started going to

these weddings as a guest, then I understood why all these things were done. I liked it best when the bride was taken to the fountains at night. There were up to two hundred young men and women. There was no electricity at that time, only torches and it was so touching with that light. To feel all that you have and live it. You cannot feel it through television. When the groom went to the graveyard to ask forgiveness from the dead, I do not believe there is a custom like this anywhere else in the world. I love the church too.

Virginity, Chastity

On the wedding day they take the bride to the groom's place. After they are married they sleep together. In the morning when she wakes up, she goes and fetches water. The mother-in-law puts walnuts in a clay bottle and when the bride and groom go into the bedroom together, she breaks the bottle on the door. Small children pick up the walnuts and eat them. When they are in the room, the groom's mother goes to the door and listens until they start talking. This is done so that when they have a child, it will not be deaf and dumb. The next morning they open the door and if the bride is decent [a virgin] they are happy and they start dancing *oro*. Once there was a case when the bride was not decent; they were our neighbours. The husband was crying and saying: "Give me a gypsy woman, I don't want her."

In the past, they sent the unchaste bride back to her family on a donkey, with the tail in her hands. Afterwards, her family would give lots of money to marry her to somebody. It is a bit hypocritical though, because if she had had relations before, it was probably with her husband. There were some women that were not virgins, but they covered it up and just did not tell anybody.

Poklonari, Paying Respects

After our wedding night, I had to go to the well to fetch water. My mother-in-law and I had to take presents with us to give to the relatives. People in the village put ferns at my feet and I filled the pot with water and gave water to everyone to wash themselves and provided a towel so they could dry themselves afterwards. I gave them the presents and they gave me money. Afterwards, they brought me to my new home and everybody drank sweet boiled *rakija*.

Living Together

Brothers usually lived together in one house. For example, in our house all three brothers lived together, but they went to work in Greece where they kept sheep; they were wealthy. My father was a breeder. He took the sheep to the mountains every year to pasture. He and my uncle had a store in Solun, Thessaloniki. With the money from the store we built the house in Skopje from stone. You can see the doorframe is a whole

stone. It has been 30 years that we have lived in Skopje now. At first we rented a flat.

Afterwards, my son finished university, got a job and bought a new flat.

Plaits

When I first came to Skopje from Galichnik I still had plaits in my hair. Our landlord said that he didn't want to rent a flat to a girl with plaits, so I went to a hairdresser and had my hair cut. My mother who lived nearby saw me and said that I had made myself ugly. Also, my daughters had plaits. I grew mine again and still have them. My sons used to tell me to hide my plaits. They were ashamed of me.

Death of my Husband

My husband died in Galichnik from appendicitis. Because my husband worked, I could have taken his pension. But I decided to work. I worked in the factory where we made carpets. I worked for 30 years and now I have my own pension. When my husband died, the children were small and it was difficult to get my husband's pension. I moved to Skopje afterwards with my sons. I have 5 daughters and 2 sons. I brought up seven children by myself and educated them as well. All of my daughters have 2 children. One of my sons has 1 daughter and the other has 2 sons. It is right. I did everything by myself. My daughters married well. Once, a foreigner came to Galichnik and said: "I saw people dressed in village clothes, but they were city people."

There are vivid descriptions of the symbolism involved in these weddings but the way in which the tradition is frozen in time is far more perplexing. It seems as if socialism in Macedonia was merely a brief interruption in the history of these wedding ceremonies. Even the extent of this disruption can be questioned. After all, the weddings were celebrated during the socialist years, if only as dramatisations. It might be suggested that real weddings in Galichnik take place because of the re-emergence of church authority. However, religion in Macedonia today, is more about nationhood and asserting distinction from the Albanian population, than the revival of something forbidden. In the Galichnik wedding, the focus of celebration is not the church service, in fact, the service is de-emphasised. Instead, the priest provides the general format for the event and asks the world to take notice of Macedonia and recognise it for what it is: an independent country with distinct and long-held traditions.

In comparison to the enacted wedding, Swetle's story tells us that the event is about emotions. Not only is the wedding celebrating love in a very elaborate way, it also creates a structure which engenders other emotions. It is formed to locate individuals within their family, their village and their country. Swetle tells of belonging and the pride she felt and how this had been taken away from her, so much so that she cut her plaits off. The wedding itself was an event for the young people and celebrated their

change from adolescence to adulthood. In fact the celebration did not so much celebrate the acquisition of a wife for the agnatic kin, as it celebrated something far more fundamental: life, procreation and food for everyone in the community.

The symbolic meanings of the rituals in Swetle's recollections do not suggest patriarchy as strongly as it is officially laid out for the celebration presented today. It was difficult to find people to elaborate on the bridle and similar symbols and, in the weddings I observed, this ritual was left out. I suggest that such customs are linked with ideas of the past perceived as represented today by the Albanian population and, therefore, unfavourable. Swetle interchanges the formal 'bride' and 'I' and also uses 'we,' all of which de-emphasise agnatic kin, but suggests she sees her village as community. In her account, much of the symbolism had practical meaning, for example bread for food, or washing herself at the well so she is clean for her bridal costume. Her account does not emphasise a particular idea of kinship like today's ceremonies seen as depicting Macedonia's roots, but rather her community. What is presented as 'Macedonia's roots' comes from socialist rhetoric of progress, a progress away from patriarchy. Considered in this manner, the wedding celebration today is far more a communication with the socialist past than with ancestral Macedonia.

Secondly, the enactment of the wedding in socialist Yugoslavia was a form of protest,

a protest that is without relevance today. Thus, the wedding does not represent a return to roots or a revival of traditions, because the traditions have been kept alive even though their meanings have changed. The events after 1991 served to create a Macedonian identity that was promoted to the outside world, and having been perceived as peasants without culture by the outside world, the weddings in Galichnik prove the world wrong. Swelte's last words were those spoken by a foreigner who has visited Galichnik and sees not peasants but 'cultured' city people.

The Galichnik wedding is a political statement, one consciously chosen by Stojan. The Galichnik wedding is not only an old tradition with rich symbolism and picturesque images, rather a real event, taking place in real time and it does as much refer to the past as to the future. People are not just villagers, but are rich in culture and tradition: they are civilised. It is always emphasised, speaking to people in Skopje, how many poets, artists, writers and musicians Galichnik has produced, despite the fact that many of these creative people were born in Skopje. Galichnik is about the idea of being civilised like other European countries. A Macedonian talking to a Slovenian tourist at the wedding says: "We too have culture, Slovenia is not the only place with spirit." By decorating the Macedonian flag and using it as a wedding flag, by having the whole country take part in the event watching it on television, it stops being a local event, though it might

still be this, in part at least, for Stojan, and becomes a national event.

Be it wedding ceremonies in Galichnik or less elaborate ceremonies in Skopje, the social discourse taking place in Macedonia today, unites them. Besides the individual purpose of a marriage, that is taking on another identity and perhaps experiencing some kind of redemption, the actual wedding celebration is a social discourse on what it means to be Macedonian today. The Galichnik wedding as a separate event celebrates the continuation of the past and does, as a national event, demonstrate to the Macedonians themselves that they do exist and have existed as a separate culture. It is the Galichnik wedding that presents the political and social values that are inherent in any social structure, especially in the formation of kinship, as kinship is a dialogue with the past. The actual wedding ceremony of my informants can, however, be understood more as a dialogue with the future.

CHAPTER 8

MARRIAGE AS EXCHANGE

Before considering personal descriptions of marriage and comparing the different generation's understanding of marriage, it is useful to examine the concept of the historical wedding. There is a rich literature, in Serbian and in Macedonia, supplemented by travellers' and anthropologists' accounts about wedding traditions in Macedonia. Indeed, weddings are seen as the most traditional Macedonian custom as well as being the one most elaborated on by many folklorists I spoke with in Skopje. Weddings, historically, are the custom that is most evocative of the community as they are the event that engages two families in one ceremony. As well, in the past through matchmaking, weddings were the work of many parties and it was through the matchmaking that the whole community was involved. With both families, the matchmaker would negotiate the dowry and the wedding and, as a marriage was of great economic importance to the entire family, these negotiations usually centred on the economic gain for each family. The dowry itself consisted of three essential elements: the trousseau of linen and clothing, furniture and money. The question arising from this

situation is whether the dowry at marriage is a part of the inheritance and if so, has the system of inheritance changed over time so that today another understanding has developed?

Inheritance

Rheubottom writes in *Dowry and Wedding Celebrations in Yugoslav Macedonia*:

"The bride's family does not endow the groom or his household: they endow the bride. But they do not endow her in order to balance the amount her brothers will receive as their inheritance. This is patently demonstrated in those cases where a man dies leaving several unmarried children. If his estate is distributed before all his offspring are married, then it is divided into as many shares as there are sons, plus an additional share which will be used to support any unmarried sibling, male or female. Thus, if a man has four children, two married sons and an unmarried son and daughter, then his estate would be divided into five parts: three from the inheritance of the sons (the two married ones and the bachelor), while the other are intended for the weddings and upkeep of the two unwed siblings. Such shares cannot be considered as the equivalent of an inheritance, however. Their purpose is to provide for the unmarried siblings but only until they marry. It should also cover the appropriate wedding expenses. But the share itself is given to the married son who looks after his younger siblings and makes the wedding arrangements. After these expenses have been met, the remainder is kept by the former."

(Rheubottom 1980: 231)

This process has changed from Rheubottom's account of Skopska Crna Gora, just outside of Skopje in 1970's. Today in Skopje, the bride does receive a dowry that will balance the amount her brother will receive as his inheritance. As well, her dowry, or the wedding gifts and money received from her parents are intended to support her and her husband. Today the fact that the bride moves to her husband's family's home is not viewed as joining the groom's family, but as a purely economic decision, pragmatic in nature, required until the young couple is able to support themselves. Similarly, currently siblings are not seen as economically responsible for each other, though there is a great emphasis on family support. Nevertheless, the ideals put forward today are corresponding to family ideals of Western Europe and socialist Yugoslavia. In order to illustrate the changes from pre-socialist Macedonia to socialist Macedonia to today, I will examine the family history of Slobodanka and Ljubomir and how they received their inheritance and divided their property⁷⁹. An economist, Slobodanka, 54, and Ljubomir, 62, a teacher, originally from the Kriva Palanka area, are married and live in Skopje with their two children, Lydia 25, an engineer and Sasho, 19, an engineering student.

In Slobodanka's paternal family in the beginning of the twentieth century, the women received a dowry: sheets, blankets, clothes and carpets. However, the land and the

house, according to 'the old people's rules' as Slobodanka termed them, had to be passed down to a son. Consequently, everything, the house and the land, was passed to her father since he was the only son. Her paternal family owned a workshop which was also inherited by her father but taken away during nationalisation in the 1950s.

In Slobodanka's maternal family however, the property was divided in 1952 when her grandfather, Sinadin, was still alive. Sinadin wanted to divide his money between all his children and the younger son used his entire share to open a café in Skopje and to buy himself a motorbike. The family house was divided into three parts, one part for Sinadin and the other two parts for his two sons who were both married. The youngest son died at the age of 21 leaving a widow and 3 daughters and his family took over his inheritance. After Sinadin's first wife died, he remarried in 1969, because one son could not accept his stepmother, he went to Skopje and sold his part of the house to his brother. Because the older brother stayed with his father and took care of him, he received, after his father's death in 1993, the whole house. At his younger brother's death, the family of his younger brother took over his inheritance. The three daughters received a dowry containing blankets, carpets, clothes and sheets.

Slobodanka received £3000 when her father died in 1989, whereas her brother received the house, land and a tractor. Her father's money was divided in three equal

parts equally amongst Slobodanka, her brother and her mother. When her mother died in 1990, her money went to Slobodanka's brother, although it was initially supposed to be divided up amongst all the grandchildren. After her mother's death, Slobodanka was asked by her brother to appear at civil court to give up her right to her part of the house under socialist law.

Ljubomir's father, Sotir, owned 8- 9 hectares of land. After Sotir's father died in 1944, Todora, Sotir's mother, came to live with Sotir and his family. She had sole title to two homes, one in Kriva Palanka and one in Gradec. Donco, Sotir and Todora's eldest son, lived in the house in Kriva Palanka, because of his right as eldest son.

In the past land was generally divided according to value and not according to size. Compensation was made with stock or belongings from the house for land of lesser value. In Sotir's family, two brothers finished high school while two did not. The two brothers that did not receive an education received more land as compensation. It was argued that money was spent so that the two brothers could receive an education and, in addition, that while they were studying they did not participate in household production. The educated sons who lived in Kriva Palanka rented out the land they inherited. The two brothers who had no education not only got a bigger share of land, but also received livestock.

It was custom that livestock was divided according to value. Neighbours, relatives and respected heads of other households played an important role in the division of land and livestock: they were active in ensuring justice was done. The property was divided into equal parts, lesser land for the educated, and then given to the inheritors. If the family could not decide how to divide the assets, straws were drawn, after first ensuring that specified items went to the person for whom they were intended. It was agreed upon that whichever brother had decided to live with the parents would be entitled to an entire extra portion of the assets, like in the case of Sotir, who received the house in Gradec as pre-mortem inheritance. After the division was decided, the details were recorded at the courthouse. Sotir's sisters received some money and land that together had equal value to the land the brothers received. The sisters sold the land when they got married and moved away from the village.

When Sotir married Cvetanka, Cvetanka sold the land she owned in another village and, with the money, bought land in Gradec where they lived. Some of the land they rented out to others. When Sotir died in 1982, the land and house were divided.

Ljubomir's brother, who lived with the parents, inherited everything in the house as well as the right to live in the house permanently. In addition, he inherited the money in Sotir's private account. Nevertheless, the remainder of the assets, the house and the

land, was divided equally between the five sons. The children liquidated the inheritance assets and invested the money through purchasing property, two houses in Kriva Palanka and a flat in Skopje, now owned by Ljubomir.

Unlike Slobodanka's family, Ljubomir's family did not divide the assets according to the traditional process. Even though the youngest brother received some special consideration because he stayed with the parents, the inheritance was divided simply according to real money value. Traditionally, the head of the household, often the eldest son, was given special consideration. In Ljubomir's family, all the brothers, being independent of the family through their work in Skopje, Kriva Palanka and Gradec, had received a relatively equal share of the assets considering their specific circumstances. For instance, the brothers and Slobodanka had bought the flat in Skopje while Ljubomir was in Russia, so that, upon his return, Slobodanka and Ljubomir could live in Skopje. The two houses in Kriva Palanka are shared equally between the three brothers living in Kriva Palanka. After Sotir's death, even the house in Gradec was divided into equal portions. The youngest brother lives in the home, but each of his brothers still has rights to it, which illustrates the distinction between the right to inhabit and/or use property and actual ownership.

Under this system the house was divided according to the layout of the house: the ground floor went to the youngest brother, the upstairs was divided amongst the other four brothers. The tools and machines necessary to work the land and inhabit the house, items such as an electric motor to pump water, the cart and the tractor stayed in the village and were used by all. It is an unanswerable question as to whether sisters would have received an equal share of the assets if Ljubomir had had sisters. Although, the inheritance was determined more by Ljubomir and his brothers than it was by their father, Sotir, it is safe to assume that the brothers were acting according to socialist values, having chosen the teaching profession within socialist Macedonia.

For Slobodanka and Ljubomir there is no question that their assets will be divided equally between their son and daughter and not as in Slobodanka's family where the son received a lump sum. However, as Lydia, their daughter, is preparing to get married, they are investing much money now in buying her furniture for her flat at her future parents-in-law's house. Slobodanka has linen and household articles to give to her daughter; it is understood that their son, Sasho, will receive the flat they live in and its household goods. Their money would then be divided equally. If Lydia had not found a husband with his own flat in his parent's house, and would have had to live with her family and her brother had, in turn, been able to live in his future wife's property, then

according to the family, the division would have been reversed. Nevertheless, it is difficult for Slobodanka, Ljubomir, Lydia and Sasho to imagine the reverse situation, even after I suggested it. Even though there is no social rule demanding virolocality, the social practice in Skopje does enforce it.

Virilocality

Skopje is an urban centre and, as such, social restraints are not as strong as they are in other areas. The strongest judgement expected if a man broke with custom and moved in with his wife's family, is that he would be called weak. There is not a great social stigma attached to such practice.

Traditionally in Macedonia, descent was understood and practised as patrilineal, and kinship was traced through male ancestry. When asked about their ancestry, many people produced what we would call a kinship tree, designed as circles around each other with the inner circle as the most distant known male ancestor, surrounded by the next circle of his sons, then a circle of his grandsons and so forth. There is no report of prescribed categories of relatives. This practise is most prevalent in the eastern part of Macedonia, while in the western area, uxori-local marriages are still practised today.

In modern Macedonia, under the influence of socialist ideology, descent is not a matter of discussion, but can be compared to the definition of kinship by David Schneider in *American Kinship* (1968:29) where kinship is a relationship defined both in terms of blood and by the fact that people behave like relatives. Women still keep their fathers name, but in discussing the issue with my friends, there is clearly a tendency to alter the tradition of taking the groom's family name. Ultimately a discussion of culture and its changes in Macedonia is useful.

Leach's model of the social world wherein the social world works precisely because it never completely corresponds to anyone's ideal of how it should be, is relevant to Macedonia's 'kinship system' today and in the past (1990 [1954]). Today, new imagery that is clearly derived from western-made television broadcasts, helps determine new values in relationships. One of these values is neolocality, which socialism had already begun. To move virilocally is a defeat in itself, but to move to the wife's family is seen as even greater break with what should be the norm, a norm that refers to the past and, as such, to continuity.

Why is there such strong adherence to the social rule of virilocality today? The answer lies in how couples understand marriage. First and foremost, a marriage should offer stability and security. Even though expressed with hesitance, the prevailing feeling

is that a son-in-law moving in with his affines produces more friction than the bride moving in with her in-laws does. Such opinions arise out of a long tradition of virilocality, which, although suppressed by socialism as it channelled practice towards neolocality, arises again because of economic necessity: Neolocality is more difficult to achieve in Skopje today. It is felt that a wife working in her mother-in-law's household, cooking with her and sharing the care of the children, creates more affinity between affines than the other way round.

Ultimately the household is understood as a female domain. Du Boulay's report is relevant for both Macedonia today and socialist Macedonia:

"The woman is thought to hold the house together not only by her physical activity in making the place a sanctuary from the outside world in which food, warmth, and peace are to be found, but also by the ritual activities by which in a metaphysical sense she guards and protects her family."

(du Boulay 1994 [1974])

Because of this, it is believed that a stronger household is created by the participation of the bride in her in-laws household as opposed to the son-in-law moving in with the bride's family and not participating in the household through active work. This view is held, not only because of women being associated with the house, but also based on the

association of women with the house and men as more mobile as Pina-Cabral describes uxoricity (1986:68). It is the combination of patrilineal values that still sees the 'house name' based on the husbands family name and gender imagery that creates this specific idealisation of living arrangement under the given economic circumstances. It is felt that the groom's non-participation in the household would set him too far apart from the rest of the household. Thus, the bride, through her housework, is able to integrate herself into the new household far more effectively and efficiently than is possible for the groom. These living arrangements obviously indicate a very specific perception of gender.

Women are seen as mothers and have all the rights to their children, a practise that arose in urban Skopje under socialism, even though the whole family was sanctioned ideologically and politically by the socialist state. As well, women are seen, as keeper of the house and the creator of a home. Although with socialism the women went to work outside the home, their positions in the home did not alter and led to what is termed 'the double burden.' In contrast to other post-socialist countries, the structure of women's lives continues to be determined by this social structure unless altered by the economic hardship of privatisation. There is no evidence that indicates an alteration of these socialist structures is occurring.

Wedding Gifts

At the wedding ceremony, a ritual gift exchange takes place: there are presents for the groom and his family, for the bride and for the couple. Such ritual gift-giving is arguably the most traditional aspect of the wedding. For my informants, they exercise this ritual gift-giving, even though they oppose the traditional meaning of those gifts.

The groom's family receives clothes from the bride. The bride receives gold jewellery from the groom's family. The groom and bride receive presents from the wedding guests that are, for the most part, for the household. Larger items such as televisions, refrigerators and furniture are bought by the bride's parents and close kin. Close kin today is a relative term and includes anyone that feels close to the bride: aunts and uncles, cousins, godparents or close friends of the family. In some ways, these gifts pose a contradiction in today's Macedonia as dowry and inheritance are seen to be the same today. In contrast to Korea in Kendall's ethnography (1996), married Macedonian women are not regarded as less productive members of society and therefore needing a dowry to compensate for this. Nonetheless, in the ceremonial gift exchange, the bulk of the gift giving lies with the bride's family. There is a distinction between pure ceremonial wedding gifts and gifts that establish a household. The bride's family does supply most of the larger household items, however, the groom's family is responsible to

provide housing either with the family or independently if financial circumstances permit. In two cases, where the husbands moved into housing supplied by the bride's families, the grooms' families were responsible for providing the household items and a car.

The ceremonial gifts that are given at the time of the engagement or church wedding depends on whether or not there is an official engagement party which is seen as the even more traditional aspect of the wedding. If the gifts are given at the wedding, then this will occur before the church ceremony, as this, again, is seen as the more traditional event of the wedding. It can be concluded that the ceremonial gifts are closely tied to the notion of tradition. The engagement party is seen by most of my informants as a remnant of the matchmaking process and is regarded by the younger informants as a nuisance rather than as an event to celebrate. It is at the engagement party that the two families meet and are entertained by the family of the bride.

The bride shops and prepares the gifts for the groom's family herself. If she has her own income, she will use it to do the shopping. These gifts can include pants, sweaters, underwear, umbrella, socks, silk scarves, virtually anything that falls under the category of clothing, even including personal effects such as watches. Most of my young female friends rejected the idea of these tokens to the groom's family, declaring this exercise a

hassle and waste of money. The women spend time worrying about whether their gifts of clothing will fit the recipients and if the recipients will like the gifts especially since they often do not know the people very well. Presents are given to friends and people with whom one generally has had personal contact. The goal becomes giving a gift suiting and appreciated by the recipient.

Presents given at the wedding dinner by the wedding guest fell under two categories: those given by friends and those given by guests. Gifts given by guests would most likely include Kras⁸⁰ wrapped boxes of chocolate which would be unopened and found at the next wedding the couple themselves had to attend.

The ceremonial gifts given to the groom's family by the bride are seen as an obligation to the groom's family. The implication of this gift-giving was a reference to a past that emphasised the sole dependence of the bride on the groom's family, an association women in Macedonia today do not favour. Kendall notes that in Korea the ritual giving of silk to the groom's family by the bride is celebrating patrilocality insofar as the bride's gifts are intended to nurture benevolence among her husband's kin (Kendall 1996: 173). In Macedonia's past, the clothes, woven, sewn and decorated by the bride's hand, were to symbolise the ability of the incoming bride to supply the family of the groom with quality clothes. In exchange, the gold jewellery given to the bride

was a recognition of the bride as part of the family by demonstrating her social worth. The jewellery is not often worn, but is kept safe in the house and is taken out only on special ceremonial occasions, such as weddings. Gold is seen as a sign of beauty, but has lost much of his public meaning in the urban environment of Skopje. Gold does, however, have another meaning for men: wealth. However, for a man to wear gold excessively today in Skopje connects him to the notion of *seljak*, a peasant, and it is believed that only an uncultivated, uncivilised man would wear much gold jewellery. Interestingly, it is said that the typical *nouveau riche* can be recognised by their gold, but such a show of wealth is also put in connection with Albanian and Rom men. Johnson notes for the Southern Philippines:

'The struggle to redefine the value and meaning of gold jewellery as an object invested with one's own and not someone else's memories, is only one way in which an image of femininity is expressed by women separate from that as being the embodiments and guardians of familial or ancestral identity.'

(Johnson 1998: 228-9)

Similarly the gold jewellery received by brides is mostly unrelated to the idea of 'taking the bride in,' but a friendly gesture towards the daughter-in-law, despite its ceremonial context. The jewellery belongs to the bride, even in a case of divorce and the quality of the gold does not differ from that she receives from members of her own

family, as a gift or portion of her inheritance. The meaning of the ceremonial gifts differs today as the gifts are not part of a kind of commodity exchange, but are linked to the ceremonial aspect of a wedding. The ceremonial gifts appear traditional and enchanted with good will, interestingly presented as opposites. Subsequently, the ceremonial gifts today have no significant bearing upon the bride's married life. As Kendall points out, 'actual presentations of things, of tangible and enduring material gifts sent by the groom's family and brought by the bride, seem to be no more significant than the documents and gestures of the rites in signifying a wedding,' (Kendall 1996: 180) and citing Bourdieu, Kendall (1996: 182) maintains that 'the fundamental units of marriage exchange were this, above all, units of 'social capital' in Bourdieu's (1977: 171,180) sense: events which demonstrate an elite knowledge of ritual form and social propriety.' Today Macedonia is virilocal and ceremonial wedding gifts might suggest an asymmetry of gift exchange: the bride leaves her home with gifts brought into the household of her husband and receives gifts from her husband's family where the gifts are not seen as either presents or as inheritance. Larger items of furniture for example are often stored until the couple will be able to set up their own household, using until then the items already in the household of the groom's parents.

Dowry Today

In Skopje, dowry now forms a part of inheritance, even though it is partially dispersed at the engagement ceremony. Most people have similar arrangements to Ljubomir and Slobodanka and my informants expressed a similar concept of dowry and inheritance: dowry is used to help couples when they first get married. This is the same for both sons and daughters as help is given equally but each family determines how this is organised. The family support given to children has greater monetary than symbolic value as it becomes a pre-mortem inheritance which will be followed by equal shares in a post-mortem inheritance. These divisions depend on the specifics of each family situation and not on social values. The social values, stressing equality regarding the establishment of a young couple in marriage, pre-mortem inheritance, were introduced by the socialist government. Slobodanka is bitter that she gave up her legal rights to her parent's house, since in her family, family values overrode social values. However, this is a private family matter and cannot be seen as a fixed rule. In marriages in Skopje today, these family values are not common amongst the Slavic population, however, it should be noted that outside the urban centre, different value systems can be found. These systems vary between totally excluding women from inheritance to allowing women to inherit both house and land and the husband living uxori-local⁸¹.

In socialist Macedonia, Rheubottom still found that in neither timing, value or their means of allocation, did dowry and inheritance resemble the other (1980:231). Today in Skopje this does not hold true as dowry and inheritance resemble each other, not in timing, but in the value and in the manner in which they are allocated. The sibling that leaves the family house will receive something similar to a dowry, but this assistance is seen as help for starting a conjugal household and not a measure of the siblings' worth rather than the value that the bride will bring to the household of the groom's family. These specific values are important for newly independent Macedonia, whether it be concerning the framework of the country or my informants creating their own life, signifying freedom, independence and equality. These values are typically seen to be represented by Western Europe and, to a smaller extent, by the United States. Concerning inheritance, dowry, ceremonial gifts and engagement, it must be emphasised that the meaning of the word and subsequent action change over time; that, in fact, traditional elements come to contradict their own meaning. Images of 'tradition' and 'modernity' are constructed which alters valuations of 'past' and 'present.'

CHAPTER 9

MARRIAGE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Both the theory and the practice of weddings indicate how people define themselves today. The theory being practised in Galichnik is different in some ways from that in Skopje. Today's Macedonian ideal of a wedding, the Galichnik wedding, emerged from a local wedding celebration custom in defiance of socialism in order to present an independent Macedonia with roots.

Even though traditional Macedonia is emphasised in current wedding celebrations, marriages today differ from marriages in the past. Previously, marriage was much more a step from adolescence to adulthood than it is today, though the difference is still a matter of degree. In the traditional wedding ceremony a man and woman are ritually created, however there was a difference from region to region of what being a man or woman, husband and wife entailed. In western Macedonia, women often inherited the family house and marriage was uxorilocal while in Eastern Macedonia, patrilocality and dowry dominated. These differences had implications regarding the specific obligations created by the marriage however. Obligations, were always directed towards the family and kin group. Today in Skopje, these obligations are largely missing⁸². Today, while

women still define their identity through their roles as wife, mother, daughter and bride, they do understand themselves to have an identity that relates to their activities outside these realms⁸³. Men's identity also differs from men in the past in that their entire being no longer lies in the obligations they have towards their own family, household, kin and towards the kin of the bride.

In the past, the dowry, the trousseaux and other wedding gifts created the social identity of the bride while dress related directly to the developmental status of both men and women as every region of Macedonia had specific dress codes which distinguished between the unmarried and the married. Today there is less emphasis on an individual's identity as a family member or as a member of a specific generation and, instead, a broader identity, that of being a Macedonian, has been created.

Marriage and Social Change

There are important changes to note regarding marriage ideology and wedding ceremonies in Macedonia⁸⁴. The foremost change centres on virginity and matchmaking which were two very important elements as they illustrate the most important factor in the grandparents' generation: marriage was a union between families and kin groups.

If, at a wedding ceremony today, the two families meet and claim a connection, then

this is focused towards the individual needs of the two families and their friends. The reception party at the wedding ceremony is the most important venue for the recognition and utilisation of kin relationships to create, in the modern urban setting, connections that can help an individual member of a family in their search for work, increased access to certain resources and related benefits. This change, marriage as a kin activity to marriage as an individual enterprise, occurred as a direct result of the political changes introduced under socialism(see Appendix E) . Specific policies were brought in to prevent matchmaking and to oppose the traditional concepts of virginity.

The Changing Meaning of Marriage

Marriage is constantly under negotiation and under the direct influence of society and its institutions. As concepts of virginity and matchmaking regulated marriage in Macedonia successfully in the past, enduring the contempt of today's society, so did the Brak i cemejstvo Institute in the former Yugoslavia. As the people of Macedonia search for a new identity, ideas of marriage are being re-negotiated. However, this ongoing process has not resulted in the supremacy of one idea. Mr. Minovski's allusion to the illegitimate pressure applied by the institute and the discussions around dissolving the institute and replacing it with general education in the schools, points towards Western

European models for teaching about marriage and sexuality. However, that the Slavic population sees a threat in the high Albanian natality rate⁸⁵ points toward the possibility of an increase, not a decrease in the regulation of marriage. If an Albanian family did not conform to such regulation, their marriage is deemed a 'non-Macedonian' marriage and they would have excluded themselves from Macedonian society. At a time when the biggest threat to Macedonian society is the conflict between the Slavic and Albanian populations, this would certainly be a way of defining Macedonian identity.

In addition to the influence of society and its institutions, there are two factors that impact on the meaning of marriage in present day Macedonia: firstly, the notion of parenthood and the importance of children, seen, for instance through the number of marriages that occur because of pregnancy; and, secondly, the historical meaning of marriage and its impact on social mobility and property transfer, which involves a short discussion on virginity and matchmaking.

Marriage and Motherhood

Although Mr. Minovski discussed parenthood; his ideas are not really in accordance with the general conception of parenthood. Male and female informants do not talk so much about parenthood as they do about *motherhood*. In the case of divorce, children

often stay with their mother: children are not seen as the state's treasure, but as women's treasure. This idea is significantly different from what has been reported about *zadruga*⁸⁶ life in the past: "The strong patrilineal identity of the *zadruga* meant that a widow, upon remarrying, left the children of her first marriage with her former mother-in-law. They were, for all intents and purposes, the children of the *zadruga*."

(Karakasidou 1997:93) Children are very much a part of the identity of women in Macedonia: to be woman is to be a mother. An unmarried woman in Skopje today is still greeted as a *devojce* girl, a girl unable to procreate because she does not have the necessary male counterpart. Only with marriage, which eventually leads to motherhood, does a girl become *xena* woman. The persistence of the concept of motherhood, rather than parenthood, is a strong indicator that state ideology has not infiltrated the most basic unit of society. Since Yugoslavian times, marriage is a part of private life despite efforts to revive a national identity throughout the wedding enacted in Galichnik. The attempt to curb population growth through the promotion of birth control and the two-children family by the marriage school and the infringement into private life that this represents is, after all, directed towards the 'stranger' within. Within the Slavic population there is no attempt whatsoever to increase the natality rate to counteract the supposed strategies of the Albanian population. Abortion remains legal as it was in

Yugoslavian times, and there is no movement underway to alter this. Since independence, the supply of contraceptives has increased throughout Macedonia. In Skopje, there are attempts to offer sexual education in schools. These measures are considered 'European'. Upon being told that abortion in Germany is illegal, my friends expressed astonishment: "I thought Germany was a civilised country." Civilisation is often, but not always, equated with northern Europe and, in accordance in Macedonia the family as a unit in society is seen as the locus of 'private life' and therefore should not be influenced by state ideology.

There is another correlation between motherhood and re-appearing patrilocality. In the past, patrilocality or virilocality would bring the wife into the household of the husband and she would, in exchange, bear children, especially sons, and thereby guarantee his family's continuance. These sons would then bring women into the household who would then have sons. Today, neolocality, the couple living on their own, is not economically possible, and many, if not most, couples in urban Skopje must move in with the parents of the groom, a situation which can be termed factual patrilocality. However, even though such a move is based on traditional values, the ideology underlying this move is very different. The inability of young couples to afford their own flat is a very recent phenomenon, before the fall of Yugoslavia state flats were

freely available and only with the subsequent privatisation, has housing become not affordable for most young couples. However, people also expect that the state will eventually intervene. This means that, although people acknowledge the changes since Yugoslavian times, they expect these changes to be temporary. Even if the situation today suggests that people will retreat into a more patriarchal structure, the bride moving in with the groom's family for example, none of my informants understood the situation to be a revival of the past and its traditions. In reference to a woman moving in with the groom's family, people refer to a structure that has always been there and is simply being put into use and there are no grounds to argue that an elaborated ideology lies behind such a structure. In the urban environment of Skopje, with its socialist past, there have been no power structures within kinship groups, that is to say, that no family within a group is superior or inferior to another. It can be concluded that it is the couple, and not the extended family, that is seen as primary unit of the state. These are ideals that are in accordance with the values presented on American and Western European television, where the prime caretaker is the mother who ensures the physical and emotional well-being of the child, whereas the father is presented as the financial supporter.

In the past, motherhood was the means by which women gained recognition within their husband's family⁸⁷. Today, however, many young women are becoming wives

through motherhood. 75% of marriages in Skopje occur because of the woman's pregnancy⁸⁸. After marriage the young wife and mother moves in with her husband - and in practice this usually means moving into the flat he shares with his family. This is quite the opposite of the way their parents began their married life. During the Yugoslavian era, generally, both parents had jobs and a flat supplied to them. They could buy furniture cheaply and put their child in free day-care. Most Slavic families I know could even afford a cleaning woman to come in once or twice a week. Today a young couple may be faced with unemployment for themselves and possibly for their parents.

A typical couple, both engineers and employed in state organisations, would have joint earnings at a maximum of 600DM a month. If their parents or relatives did not buy an additional flat prior to 1993, then the couple will have to spend at least 300DM/month to rent a tiny flat. Electricity and water will cost them another 100 to 150DM a month in wintertime and food, even if subsidised by their parents, will cost another 100DM monthly. Day-care will cost 25DM/month and although there are free childcare spaces they are very few, as many child-care facilities closed down. Thus, marriage and motherhood today are inter-linked in a very different way than in pre-socialist and socialist Macedonia. Children are more closely connected to their mother

than to their kin. In the case of divorce in pre-socialist times, the children would have stayed with the father and his family and in socialist times the state would have decided what would happen to the child if the parents could not agree upon custody. Today, according to information given by the law faculty of Skopje, in most cases the mother keeps the child and often moves back with her family: the only economical viable solution. Alimony is hard to come by and is little more than no support. The father continues living with his parents until he finds a new wife. The mother usually remains unmarried and is supported by her parents. It would be difficult for her to remarry because children today are seen as a financial burden and the State does not support the care of children as generously as it once did in socialist Yugoslavia.

Wedding Presentations

Most of my informants cannot afford their own flat and have no choice other than to add themselves to another household. Wedding gifts and dowry reflect these circumstances. Today a young couple receives work or money from relatives or a luxury item such as a television. The parents of the bride may help repair and renovate the place where the young couple will live or they will buy some furniture or baby clothes. The husband's family will receive clothes from the family of the bride and, in

turn, they will give the bride gold jewellery. Wedding transactions today are mostly determined by the wish to give the young couple the best start possible in order that they can then create an independent life for themselves as soon as possible since the couples do not expect to stay with the groom's family forever. It is understood that in order to form a family the young couple should, at some point in their lives, be able to live by themselves. Although not immediately possible due to the financial situation, through the wedding ceremony and subsequent transactions, it is quite clear that the ideal marriage is understood to be neolocal.

Since motherhood initiates marriage and is seen as the purpose of marriage, it is also the case that both generations agree that the contentment of the marriage partners is the most important aim. This contentment is understood to come from the fulfilment of a progressive ideal itself initiated by socialist ideology: both marriage partners working, two children, neolocality, owning their own flat and the ability to travel - all together, these circumstances define the perfect marriage.

If today the aim is to have a progressive, European marriage, what is considered a non-progressive marriage? The answer lies in the grandparents' generation and their concept of marriage which is believed to still exist amongst a large part of the Albanian population. This concept of marriage is defined by my informants as contempt towards

the in-marrying woman, the importance of the agnatic kin who see children as their property, and the ultimate inequality of women. Many times I was told of the terrible ways Albanian women were treated: "I do not like the Albanians, but I really feel sorry for their women," was a common remark. When I expressed the wish to meet some Albanians, I was reminded by my Slavic informants that I should not bother because Albanian men treat women very poorly. But not only is such an attitude towards women true for the Albanian population, my informants, pointed out that this was the way their grandparents grew up too until progress came in form of socialism.

In the wedding presentations these concepts are actively scorned, and even if the custom of different presentations towards the groom's and bride's kin is practised, careful attention is paid to equal value exchanged between the families. The groom's family receives clothes from the bride's family; the bride receives gold from the groom's family. Nevertheless, the meaning of these gifts today, is different from the meaning in the past where such gifts emphasised the status of the agnatic kin and the 'taking in' of the bride. As noted by Rheubottom (1980:231), in the past, dowry was not equated with inheritance. Embedded in the values put forward in wedding transactions and in ideals about marriage today is the notion of progress that my informants define as: "advancing or developing towards a better state." A better state is defined as 'European,' 'Western,'

or 'civilised:' these states are characterised by autonomy, individuality, freedom, fulfilment of dreams and achievements, terms which neglect values of kinship and state - or nationhood.

Wedding in Skopje

Except for the gift giving and the church service, there are no similarities between weddings in Skopje and weddings in Galichnik. A wedding in Skopje has three important stages: the engagement ceremony, the church ceremony with the magistrate and, finally, the wedding party. While the engagement is meant to be traditional, often the family of the groom will determine which of a great variety of regional rituals will follow, all of which require specific gifts to be given to the groom's family and the bride. Even if the bride brings items in to the marriage as women do with a trousseau or dowry, these items are not presented to the guests.

After 1991 and the fall of Yugoslavia, church weddings were no longer frowned upon by the socialist but elected government and people began to get married in church again. Consequently the church service in the wedding ceremony is far less an act of rebellion by people whose beliefs are suppressed, than it is a way of defining who those people are at a time when established identities have collapsed. The church service defines

those who participate as orthodox in opposition to the Albanian minority and thus also distinguishes them from a non-European, Islamic, eastern identity. The practice of Christian religion is seen as a modern, western European habit. In addition, by choosing to revive orthodoxy, people began to separate themselves from their Yugoslavian and socialist existence and, at the same time, create a new identity which involves orthodoxy within the country and, for the outside world, the projection of a modern European image.

Economics and Marriage

Since 1991, there has been a noticeable drop in the number of marriages⁸⁹ in Macedonia, while the number of women between the ages of 20 and 25 getting married has decreased more significantly than in other age groups. The group of young female informants are representative of this change: most of them would like to finish university, find work and then marry. This involves certain calculations on their part: even if the housing situation is not economically viable for young couples initially, they will eventually live together in their own place. In order to accomplish this, both partners will have to work. It would be an enormous drain on resources for the couple to get married, move in with the groom's parents, support themselves with only one, or

even no salary and possibly have a child to feed as well. A couple's parents would not be able to afford this, even though both families would support each other as much as possible.

Case Studies:

Bojan and Anja, Tanja and Tomas, Liseta and Vladimir

All three couples were married before the women had finished university and all three women had become pregnant (before they were married). The brides moved in with their husband's family, although Bojan and Anja split their time between his family and her widowed father. Despite the fact that Bojan's flat was much smaller and more crowded than Anja's flat and Anja and Bojan's mother did not get along, it was still Bojan's family's flat which was considered to be the appropriate home for the couple.

Liseta left her husband after having two children and was ostracised by her family with the exception of her sisters. Liseta had not finished university and had great problems finding a job and supporting the children by herself. She now lives with her boyfriend in his rented flat. His family strongly opposes him marrying Liseta on the grounds that there would be too many children to feed as she already has two of her

own, and Vladimir will want two children of his own with her as well.

Bojan and Anja do not think they will ever be able to have their own flat. Anja is finishing her last exams, but they are in such dire financial straits, as are both sets of parents, that Bojan and Anja are seriously contemplating emigrating to Australia, despite the fact that Bojan earns a reasonable wage.

Tanja and Tomas live in Tomas' parent's apartment in his parent's bedroom, while his parents sleep in the living room. Tanja is close to finishing university, but finds her living situation very uncomfortable as she cannot even pay for diapers herself; she does not like being completely dependent on someone else's family.

These cases are far from ideal. The young women want to work, so they can give something to the household. Even though they might help their mother-in-law with the housework far more than any son in law ever would, they, nevertheless, would like to be able to use their own money to buy what's necessary. With their own income they can also pursue their goal of buying their own flat and making their own decisions about their children. If pregnancy does not force a young couple to seek an early marriage, it is the norm today for both partners to finish university, find employment and then slowly work towards setting up a household. This means that they will live for a few years in the husband's parents' flat while saving the money that, with the help of both sets of

parents, will allow them to buy their own flat.

This ideal of neolocality, which was implanted in the urban population by socialist ideology, is still strong despite the fall of Yugoslavia. It replaced a patriarchal past that is understood to still exist amongst the Muslim population. As soon as resources allow, neolocality is chosen, a choice which is emphasised in the wedding ceremony. The census carried out over the last ten years indicates a steady increase in the number of households in Macedonia. In 1991 the largest number of individual households were comprised of 3 members. This tendency, a slight but constant reduction in the number of members of a household, is characteristic of the emphasis on neolocality.

In order to understand the implications of the wedding in Galichnik, it has to be compared with a wedding in Skopje and with its ideological and economic circumstances. Both events will give a good insight into how my informants construct themselves as Macedonian citizens.

A 'Modern' Wedding

When Galina and Ivan, both engineers at the university faculty, decided to get married, a wedding date was set immediately. The engagement was to take place first with registration at City Hall followed by a cocktail party with the church wedding

following a few days later. Spreading out the wedding was unusual: generally, a couple has the church wedding and registers at City Hall on the same day. Depending on schedules, the couple can have either the church service or the registration at City Hall first. Of the weddings I knew about, the church ceremony would only happen before registration at City Hall if registration occurred immediately following the service.

Galina wanted her wedding small, practical and quick; a modern wedding, she called it. Since her parents wanted a traditional wedding, they decided to compromise. This is a common situation most of my informants found themselves in when they decide to get married. With the exception of Stojan, my informants dreaded the idea of a traditional wedding and saw it as a crazy fancy of one or the other's parents. Despite this, they had traditional elements included in their wedding.

For instance, Galina and Ivan agreed to have both sets of parents meet officially at Galina's place to announce the engagement which included a ritualised gift giving. Ivan's family came to visit and received three presents for each of them and nine, three multiplied by three, the odd number for good luck for Ivan. Galina also received presents: gold, flowers and cake. At this point, the ritual required that Galina's father say to Ivan's parents: "What did you come here for?" Ivan's parents are required to answer: "We came here for a good thing." However, Galina thought this *seljacko*, not

urbane, and insisted that this exchange be skipped. She also broke with tradition by giving her relatives presents. She was, however, upset that her parents did not receive any other presents and felt this was unjust, as it was her parents who financed the engagement ceremony. As Galina said "...they [hers and Ivan's relatives] just came to the party, everything was served and they got lots of presents. This was not right. Times are changing." The engagement celebration was hosted by Galina's parents and not by her family as would have been traditional. It was at their engagement party that her and Ivan's family were invited to visit and join in food, drink and dance rather than at a party after the wedding.

To a certain extent, Galina was successful in having a modern wedding. The party at the end of May was called a cocktail party and included only 30 people, while at the City Hall earlier, the guests had numbered 50. Family members and friends were present and brought gifts. However, Galina's family members were chosen and invited by her. Galina wore not a white dress, as most of her friends did at their weddings, but a pink suit with a tight long skirt. She wanted a buffet or *svedska masa* at the cocktail party, but eventually this cocktail party took place in a hotel and was served.

Before the couple went to the City Hall, Ivan's family, the witnesses and some of Galina's relatives came to her parents flat and were served food. She gave an expensive

sweater to her *kum*, godfather and silk to her second witness⁹⁰. After this giving, they went to the City Hall where the rest of the guests were waiting and the congratulations and photographing took place. All the guests went in the hall and took their seats. Ivan and Galina came in last, as in America. They registered and then had champagne. Then, the *kum* threw coins, chickpeas and candy to everyone, according to custom. After the lunch at the Hotel, the younger guests followed Galina to Ivan's place where they had drinks.

Galina was able to have such a significant influence on their wedding proceedings, because her parents had sole financial responsibility for it and were able to accommodate the wishes of their daughter. Galina commented, "I made a compromise with my parents. They can have the engagement their way, I'll decide about the wedding." In a departure from tradition, Galina invited the people she wanted at her wedding while kinship obligations were fulfilled at the engagement party. Galina also insisted that there would be no traditional music or dance. It is normal for parents to have a far more influential role and for 200 -300 people to be invited - as they say, it is one of the few occasions in life when all relatives can be welcomed to a single event.

Wedding in the Church

The traditional church ceremony gives rise to heated discussion amongst young Skopjanici, particularly the statement: "the husband is the head that determines the relationship, whereas the wife is the neck that carries the marriage." Many young couples do not view marriage in this way, nevertheless they include it in the ceremony, saying that it is only tradition and words do not mean anything. They argue that the statement comes from the distant past and should be remembered even though it has nothing to do with today's world. Galina and Ivan, however, insisted that this passage not be included in their ceremony.

The ceremony at City Hall is limited to immediate family of the bride and groom and, as such, the ceremony negates the importance of the wider kinship affiliations and connects the wedding partners and their close family directly to the state. The ceremony at the City Hall was the most important aspect of a wedding in Yugoslavian times, the only ceremony when the parents of my informants were married. The importance of the City Hall ceremony has remained the same but has acquired a religious aspect.

People generally speak about tradition rather than religion when discussing church weddings since the church ceremony is seen as a traditional element of a wedding. In Yugoslavian times, when the wedding ceremony in Galichnik was performed by actors,

the climax of the whole ceremony was the church service. The wedding ceremony was, and still is, more an appeal to the past than a religious service. Since most ceremonies are spoken in old Slavic, a language only understood by the priests, it is the festivity which is special, as it appeals to the emotions of the participants, not to their religious belief. The darkness of the church, the candles, the icons, the dress of the priest, all these linked the participants not necessarily to a higher order, but to a mystical past of which they were a part. This ceremony gives my informants the feeling of belonging, not to a wider kinship group, which in Skopje is not emphasised, but to the past, to a people and to a nation. The state, the community, is not sought in city hall, but it is found in the church. Today, to identify yourself with Macedonia, means to identify yourself with a people. Ironically, the identification that is chosen relates directly to the 'millet' system of the Ottoman Empire⁹¹, in which a group identity was created by a religious confession. So today, those Slavic Macedonians whose ancestors converted to Islam are not seen as Slavic Macedonians, even though they speak only Macedonian, but are linked to the Islamic Albanians and Roma. This distinction is reflected in the church ceremony, to which everybody is invited, but only those of orthodox background attend, despite their socialist-atheistic attitude towards religion.

Engendered Elements of Change

My informants emphasised that weddings are actually celebrated for the parents and not for the two people getting married. They stated that it is the actual marriage and not the wedding that is really important. Even though weddings give the participants an identity - as Slavic Macedonians and full members of the Macedonian State - it is the marriage itself that is felt to provide closure after the events of 1991. One informant told me: "I am glad I am getting married now, I hope I find myself. I am so scared and I would like to leave, but maybe things will work out just fine. I feel there is nothing else I can do anyway."

The study of weddings has revolved around the folklore and the notion of exchange. However, in Macedonia today the wedding ceremony is a ritual that both describes the changes in society and produces an image of the search for a new identity, an image that becomes more visible if one considers how weddings were celebrated in the past and how they are celebrated today in Skopje.

First, there is the change in the meaning of dowry. Today, dowry is given to help the young couple towards the establishment of their own home in the future. Also, men receive a small dowry from their parents, though most of the household goods are given to the bride by her parents since it is expected that the bride will take care of the

household. The role of the husband in establishing the home, is understood to lie outside the household, in earning money. Questioning my informants about this division of labour, they pointed out that it was just the same as in the West. It was important for them to point out that their relationships were similar to Western relationships.

Nevertheless, the economic reality in Macedonia makes it necessary for women to work as well and women are generally paid the same wages as men. Only a few women I knew voiced the wish to quit their job and become responsible solely for the household.

All the young female informants insisted that earning their own money and having a good education was just as important to them as being a good mother and housewife. They had looked at their grandmothers, who never had the chance to work outside the home or have an education, and saw that they were very dependent on their husbands and his family. The informants insisted on having control over their lives, as they had seen their mothers have and described themselves as modern working women which was emphasised in the wedding ceremony. In the ceremony all references to the bride's virginity have been removed, as these references are counter to the image of a modern, self-confident, free woman. By not referring to the virginity of the bride, which still happens in the ritual weddings in Galichnik, a change in power relations between groom and bride, but also between the generations, is acknowledged. Even though the couple is

very likely to move in with the groom's family, this is understood as a temporary solution, pending sufficient economic resources to allow the couple to set themselves up in their own flat.

For my informants today, the structure of a wedding represents the ideals of their particular historical time - that is a period of time in which there is a strong search for identity. An ideal of identity is found in Northern Europe, referred to as 'Western Europe' with its implicit gender construction. This is lived out in the wedding celebration, and in marriage, though the tension that is produced between the 'ideal' and 'what always has been' is most visible in the church service at the wedding ceremony. I suspect that either the church service will change, becoming a more American ceremony or it will lose its importance. It has to be remembered that the church ceremony has had only a very recent re-appearance. After all, Galina and Ivan decided not to be married in a church.

Wedding Ceremony and Kinship

Rituals within the wedding ceremonies are preserved in rudimentary forms, but to a great extent have lost their former meaning. Wedding rituals today create a connection with the past and provide an idiom for the unity of a people, the creation of an identity.

Wedding rituals today give the feeling of continuation in a time of great interruptions.

Weddings today do not emphasise kinship structure. Kinship groups have lost most of their relevance in the urban environment of Skopje; the important relationships within the city are accommodated differently, but not with a wedding. House visits and invitations to dinner have become very popular, business dinners are very common. Connections, *vrski*, are very important and can be equated with rudimentary kinship relations. Such 'kinship relations' are so extended, however, that kinship has to be defined as a group of people who, in one way or another, have friendly connections: it might be family, it might be peers, friends or comrades. People know about distant relatives, but as one informant jokingly said, if one had to invite all the relatives one would have to invite the whole of Macedonia. Thus, today kinship relations are chosen to a large extent, in meaning not in structure, whereas in the past, like the wedding in Galichnik, kinship was the element of social structure and meaning. One could argue that the term 'kinship' in Macedonia today is used to connect everyone to the state structure, whereas the term 'family' can include chosen family, godparents and generally people one has contact with in the city and in the 'hometown' as well as immediate 'genetic' family⁹².

Weddings in the past were an important factor in terms of inheritance, whereas today

inheritance is solely a matter of dividing the money equally. Weddings are not about exchange anymore, as Rheubottom suggested (1980) or by a ritual analysis of the Galichnik wedding. Only a rudimentary gift giving is practised in current wedding ceremonies. Again, this ritual has less to do with kinship relations than with forming a connection to the past. Until a wedding actually happens, a family is unlikely to know about the appropriate custom - some read it in books or follow the instructions of relatives. The handing down of this knowledge was interrupted by socialism and is now being rediscovered in the search for a Macedonian identity.

Whereas the mother of the groom is the most prominent figure in the Galichnik wedding, as she starts the ceremony with her dance of sorrow and generally respect must be paid to her, today the couple together are celebrated as a unit and greet guests, dance, accept presents and collect money together. The fact that the bride will likely move in with the groom's family is portrayed as a necessity and not a moral issue of kinship. The bride is not welcomed ritually by the groom's family and neither is she then taken to the groom's house, as in the Galichnik wedding.

What is Marriage?

Accounts of Three Generations

Marriage and all its aspects: the financial problems, living with your spouse's family, children and responsibility, actually broadens horizons more than many of my informants expected before they were married. They seek the responsibility because they want to commit to something, to actually create something, to make a marriage work: marriage provides them with the best opportunity to alter their feelings of powerlessness.

These women, Daniela, Aleksandra, Milka, Anja, Sonja and Slobodanka from three different generations, had expectations reflecting the times for their marriages; expectations which were not always fulfilled. The parent's generation had quite different experiences from their parents of their marriages, in fact, they felt their marriages to be in total contrast to those of their parents.

Daniela, second generation, describes her marriage with Sotir in Yugoslavia: "we had love and understanding and we planned everything together." Aleksandra, who, in 1974, moved to live with her husband's family, describes the ease with which one could move into one's own flat then and why:

"My friend's were wondering how I could live with his family and I

said, 'he has his parents just as I do, and although I won't love them as I love my parents, I will respect them.' But there were problems, they had their own lifestyle and habits. My husband used to say that I was more charming and free when I was away from the house. I was supposed to do all the work in the house, my mother-in-law never helped, not even with the baby. They thought I was very cold, and we had problems so we moved. We received a flat from the company and had our own life. I am glad I have my daughters, so I will never be a mother-in-law now.⁹³"

Besides the new stress on equality between marriage partners, some people, in the changing times of socialist Yugoslavia were also faced with the, sometimes forced breakdown, of kinship ties. Certain expectations, however, such as the importance of having children and the fulfilment of social obligations remained.

Milka spoke about her problems: she was unable to have children and her family had been dispersed in the war, so she was alone. She gave the reasons why she never got married:

"In the 1960s a chef at the restaurant fell in love with me, but I did not want to get married because my life was shortened since I could not have children. I thought it would be better for me to live alone. He had a family and if I had married him I would have had to give them presents, the dowry and since I could not afford the gifts and dowry, it was better to be alone."

Anja described her marriage just after the creation of the state of Yugoslavia:

"I was married very young, when I was 19. My parents had to agree

because my husband asked for my hand. I stayed at home for 10 years as a housewife and did not enjoy it. My friends were working and I now regret those ten years that I spent at home. A woman should go to work even earlier than the man does, if she is talented and capable of working. It gives her independence."

Anja's working at home conflicted with socialist ideology. Today, according to the women I interviewed, working outside the home is a privilege. This was real progress: working outside the home, earning as much as their male colleagues and interacting freely with people, not as a member of a family but as an individual. Both women and men alike, still emphasise this as the greatest achievement of socialism.

There is a perceived move backwards today though because of the housing crisis. Ivanka tells me: "Today young people want to live at home, which is right. I would not mind if my son-in-law lived at my place which is really different [uxorilocality versa the socially accepted virilocality], but unfortunately, we are moving backwards due to the economic situation and young people do not have enough money to live on their own as we did."

Another woman, reflecting on her own marriage was hoping that her daughter would not get married, though she would love her daughter to have a child:

"If my daughter remains unmarried, she would have a much more liberated life than if she is a wife here in Macedonia. If she remains

unmarried she would be free, independent and have her personal life organised in the way she would, organised by herself and not by anyone else. If she gets married, in a foreign country, I think she would have a more successful marriage, because, though I may be mistaken, the men there are on a higher cultural level than our men."

My informants know they do not want to move backwards, but they are uncertain how the future looks.

Sonja, who was married in 1993, reflects on the situation today and on her understanding of her marriage:

"Before I was married, I did not have a clear understanding of or expectations for my marriage. I got married because of love and understanding. I felt that he respected me, understood me and that we could live together and create something. We have not created anything yet, we still live with my parents, but there is a good understanding, it is a good marriage. I could not say how it is going to be in ten years, but for now I am satisfied with my marriage. I think that marriage is an institution that is exactly as you create it and its success depends primarily on both partners and then the circumstances. The financial base is also important. You strive for the marriage to be successful because a successful marriage is a satisfaction for everyone."

A friend of Sonja's describes what she expects of a marriage today:

"In a marriage there must be compromises, but they must be equal. For example, if I gain personal pleasure from doing my job, I would not let him stop me from doing it because otherwise I would be personally discouraged. If I want to prove myself, for instance in my profession, I would not allow anyone to prevent me from doing it. A compromise must be found."

When a young Slavic woman was asked if she could imagine marrying an Albanian man, she answered:

"If one did marry an Albanian, there would inevitably be conflict with his family. In Macedonian society, the family has no influence on my marriage. With an Albanian family that would be different: they are under the strong influence of their elders because of their religion."

Slobodanka talks of her marriage:

"There is a large monastery in my village and my future husband came there in 1958 to attend pre-military training. The cook in the military barracks was from my village and he, together with my husband and his friends, came to the co-operative store in my village. I was there to buy something and we noticed each other. I liked him and the cook introduced us. We met in his house and thus it happened. At first, my mother was against the marriage, because he was living in a poor mountain village, but I loved him and we were married. I was 22 years old and he was three years younger, but when there is love, age is not important. So we were married immediately without a wedding ceremony. We registered at city hall with two witnesses present and that was all."

The sentiments expressed in these passages give some indication of what marriage means today in this time of change for Macedonia. Looking at marriages today in Skopje, it appears that traditional elements, such as the church wedding, are consciously reintroduced in an effort to return to one's roots, to define oneself in relationship to what

one imagines was the Yugoslavia of old. However, with the image of the Albanian being equated with an image of the past, in the revival of tradition there is an inherent contradiction, as the revival of tradition is not actively sought. Instead, there is a combination of what people valued in socialist Yugoslavia and what people see as Northwest European.

Marriage and Macedonia as Modern Society

From the oral accounts I collected during my time in Macedonia and through the privilege of attending weddings in Galichnik and Skopje, I observed the effort expended to emphasise that Macedonia was a modern state not a memory or a recollected past. The statement at the wedding in Galichnik '*we exist just by living*' overshadows the emphasis that is made to present oneself as member of a modern state. It is *how people live*, that is the important locality of Macedonian identity. Since the Galichnik weddings are celebrated as a folklore activity supported by the socialist state I believe they will lose their importance in future years. In the interim, these weddings were an act to hold on to the past, a past that was believed to represent the roots of the Macedonian people. I, however, believe that these weddings in Galichnik should be seen as an act of holding on to a more recent past: the past of Yugoslavia.

The weddings in Skopje define their partakers as modern insofar that an old-style wedding was seen as a reminder of Macedonia's rural past and the rejection of the marriages of the recent past. The world of the grandparents was associated with family authority whereas the emphasis in a Skopje wedding and marriage today is on conjugality. Kendall (1996:67) points out for Korea that "both women and men suggested that women want to be married in a wedding dress and veil, to participate in a romantic image of nascent womanhood purveyed through the media, as in the west." She cites Peacock's suggestions that certain ritual and performance phenomena may be best understood as 'rites of modernisation,' that is, the symbolic content and spatial arrangements of action in these events are, to the spectators eyes, evocative of 'modernity.' Kendall asserts that the effect of such 'rites of modernization' is difficult to prove. I find it difficult to single out one 'rite of modernisation' in the weddings in Skopje. White wedding gowns and church weddings are seen as 'modern' and are imitations of weddings in 'the West,' but there are other equally 'modern' aspects of weddings in Skopje. I suggest that what is modern at the weddings in Skopje has to be seen in conjunction with the wedding in Galichnik today.

The public display of the wedding in Galichnik in conjunction with the 'actual' weddings celebrated in Skopje does rest "on a profound rethinking of the old wedding

sufficient to transform a domestic celebration into a commercial service, a rite of kinship into an austere celebration of national identity" (Kendall 1996:76). Galichnik is not about restoring a local tradition, but linking wedding celebrations to the national idea of identity formation and in the name of national heritage.

The wedding in Galichnik highlights Macedonia's opposition to certain ideas and traditions and does not present a Macedonian identity rooted in a recollected past. It accomplishes this, not by negative implication, but by reconnecting to weddings in Skopje. As a single celebration, Galichnik presents the image of a Macedonia in touch with its history. There is a second strand of meaning however, a meaning that is created by considering the Galichnik wedding in conjunction with the weddings celebrated in Skopje, an active process all my informants undertook. What is understood as Western becomes a profound statement on what Macedonia would like to be: a modern country that re-establishes folkloristic traditions in order to free itself of its meanings. It is at that moment of contestation that weddings become the locality of social statement on marriage and modernity. The wedding in Macedonia presents a vision of marriage and Western life-style. In contrast to Kendall's observation for Korea, the past is not reclaimed and transacted in Macedonia but is used to create a clear distinction between the past and Macedonia's envisioned future. As Kendall rightly asserts: "[these] are not

trivial matters of fashion" (Kendall 1996: 81).

Conclusion

Rheubottom (1971:148-149) describes the meaning of marriage for the villagers of Crna Gora, a village close to Skopje, as follows:

"It is not important that husband and wife have a romantic attachment. The couple may be in love, indifferent, or hostile. The youth is told that a good wife should be a willing worker, strong and congenial. Her beauty or his romantic interests are, at best, of secondary importance. He is told that he will grow in attachment as they work together, endure trials, and bear children. Similarly, the potential bride is told that she should seek a respectable husband and household where she will be welcomed, cared for, and where her work will not be burdensome."

He describes the community's attitude towards marriage as household members saying 'we have taken a bride.' Are the attitudes towards marriage in Skopje different, and if they are, what has changed and why?

In interviewing three generations of women about their feelings toward marriage, a very different picture emerges for each. Talking to older women or women from the countryside, the attitude Rheubottom describes was prevalent at the time of their marriages. For their daughters, marriage was directly linked to socialist ideology, the family being the smallest unit of society. The ideal, following Engels, was that the

family as an economic unit, had to be dissolved and that production had to be taken away from kinship groups and organised at a society-wide level with women brought back into the production process. The aim was to create a classless society in which the family would be based on a new individually experienced love, with everybody in the household taking an equal part in society's production process (Engels 1884). In this respect, marriage was directly linked to the fulfilment of a model society and its ideals, and was not understood as a project aimed for personal fulfilment, though it did promote encouraging content parents in order to produce and raise happy children, an objective formulated by the Brak i cemejstvo' Institute.

When examining the expectations of marriage of young Macedonian men and women today, one must consider the reference points they use to define the meaning of marriage. Anthony Giddens' definition of the inter-relationship between sexuality and reproduction describes the counter reference point that can be seen in the grandparent's relationships:

"Sexuality and reproduction in the past structured one another. Until it became thoroughly socialised, reproduction was external to social activity as a biological phenomenon; it organised kinship as well as being organised by it, and it connected the life of the individual to the succession of generations. [...] For seen in relation to a cycle of generations the individual life was part of a more embracing symbolic order."

(Giddens 1995:202-3)

Today in Skopje, kin ties have lost some of their importance, children do not belong to a family, but to their mother. Matchmaking and virginity, the outward idioms of the importance of kinship and patriarchy, are only mentioned in reference to one's own peasant past and to the present Albanian population. The present ideal model of marriage for my young informants follows what Giddens calls the democratic model of relationship: "In the arena of personal life, autonomy means the successful realisation of the reflexive project of self," (1995:189), strongly emphasising a particular image of the West and its implicit gender perception - equality with femininity.

Socialism which united a couple in the city hall is being re-negotiated, its values are upheld, but assets seen as the foundation of a Western European life, have been added to its form, that is romance is placed in the church. Nevertheless, the world of the grandparents and parents still exists in the world of my young informants. Their relationships refer to this past, but there is also the wish to be equal to the world that emanates from the television and through their memories of free travelling. All these factors are combined in today's understanding of marriage in Skopje.

Marriage is more than a reflexive project of the self; today it represents a strategy that defines one as a person and as a member of the new Macedonia. Sant Cassia and Bada (1992:195) write:

"Many modern-day Greeks and Cypriots would agree with Macfarlane's characterisation that marriage for 'compassionate' motives is a hallmark of North Western Europe; indeed many village leftists in Cyprus and Greece, for example, would widen this premise to include 'developed' countries, such as Russia. Yet while they contrast this to the Greek situation, in which dowry is still often required, the ideological point of their statement should not be missed. For what they are implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, pointing out is that in the absence of economic development, 'the Government' (i givernisis) should assume the obligation of providing young couples with housing, thus relieving the parental generation of such crippling debts and allowing the couple to choose partners for compassionate motives. In other words, they are implicitly contrasting the 'developed' external world of North Western Europe and Russia (according to their ideological preferences) with the 'undeveloped' internal world of Greece."

Sant Cassia and Bada continue by pointing out that such a notion is an ideological one and that in many instances modern Greek marriage is still initiated by the parents or the family, despite the notion of companionship and love. The same surely holds true for the villages in Macedonia, but in relation to the world of urban Skopje and the Slavic orthodox population of Skopje, Sant Cassia and Bada's description fits only to a point. It is the outside 'Northwest European' world that is seen as developed and that which they seek to imitate.

It is seen as the responsibility of the Macedonian State to overcome current economic problems and ensure a secure future for the people. In the case of young married couples this means that the state is expected to provide the opportunity, at some point,

for young couples to move into their own flat and thus be independent of kinship relations. The current economic and political problems have made these expectations of the state even higher, as well as making the image of Northwest Europe and socialism even more desirable. In contrast and, in opposition to, the world of the village and the concomitant world of the grandparents which was characterised by exchange: dowry, services, work and procreative capability; and a strong emphasis on procreation and patrilocality; the world of the young people in Skopje today is characterised by the weakening of kinship ties through the ideal of neolocality, parenthood as fulfilment of the individual and the denial of procreation as social obligation. The image that is used in discussions specifically about social reproduction is that of Albanian families, who are seen as understood to enforcing natality as a strategy to increase the population and to fulfil a religious calling: this image is seen as the negation of Macedonian identity.

In the Chapter 10, I will discuss the image of the Albanian, the internal alien, and how it can be identified as at least a partial reason why Macedonians are neither strongly nationalistic nor religiously ambitious. Another phenomenon specific to Macedonia, as I have tried to emphasise, is the nostalgia for Yugoslavia and the political system that existed during that period. In interviews, politicians, lawyers, economists and professors of political studies have all, without exception, indicated that they see the ideal model

for Macedonia in Sweden's socialist democracy. As such, Macedonia cannot be described as post-socialist. As shown in the matter of inheritance, whose pattern came to change under socialism, and is today even stronger emphasised, bilateral inheritance seen as a given by the younger generation, the socialist value system is seen, by providing the means to education, as the most important Yugoslavian legacy.

Swetla (1992) told me in an interview:

"Socialism brought equality between men and women and it should continue that way, there is no need to establish new relationships between men and women, and if Macedonia is recognised and formed as an independent state maybe we will get over this crisis more easily."

I argue that in Skopje today, marriage gives meaning to the lives of my informants. What people expect from marriage and their views of their parents' and grandparents' and Western European marriages and relationships, identifies who they want to be. They do not long for the past, though they remember it and they do not reject their socialist history, particularly in gender relationships. In their eyes, socialism brought progress and opened up the world for all Macedonians. Combining these elements, they have created a new understanding of marriage, an understanding which, following Giddens, can be described as being based on a democratic model or, as my informants would term it, a 'European model.' Choosing marriage today is facing the challenge to

be Macedonian and taking the decision not to run away by emigrating. It also means a completely new life as partners and as parents, gaining a firm position within their society and looking towards the future.

CHAPTER 10

MAPPING OF URBAN IDENTITY

Map of Macedonia

Would it be possible with such
aloofness,
with two or three talkative lines and
with two or three conversational
colours,
to splash on a canvas the idea of
one's native land?

Well yes, it would be possible!

Our destiny is framed
like something turned upside down
doubled up in pain the horizons of
hope,
crushed the visions labelled refuge,
Truth spread out on the palm of the
hand

and the pictorial perfection of no way out.

But all you see is a compass and a map
and many pencils scattered about it,
sharpened if not smoothed,
so they can prove themselves in a proud role:
looking at lines we look at grief,
we look at our history-

What we have framed here is not just a sigh
preserved in another colour -

That, too, would be possible; quite possible.

Gane Todorovski

Discourse of Identity in The Republic of Macedonia: The Effects of the Disintegration of Yugoslavia

As the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia took place, the overarching
'Yugoslavian' identity which had encompassed the diversity within the state ceased to
exist for most people. People were initially left to their own devices in identifying

themselves as Non-Yugoslavian. Over time, a move from this negative identity of Non-Yugoslavian began and a new form of identity emerged in the tension-filled vacuum left by the collapse of Yugoslavia. This new identity is derived from Orthodox Christianity and a land-owning peasant past. However, even though the old socialist state has ceased to exist, The Republic of Macedonia is still governed by a socialist party and in the urban environment of Skopje this new identity is not easily accepted. Furthermore, certain characteristics of the past, such as strong local patriotism, appear to be counterproductive to a national ideal. Such composition necessarily conflicts with a socialist identity that still is expressed through the adoration of Marshall Tito.

As I outlined in Chapter 1, Yugoslavia ceased to exist for Macedonia when the Yugoslavian National Army (YNA) withdrew from Macedonia in February 1992 and fear escalated that the situation may develop into a second Bosnia. Until September 8, 1991, when a referendum on independence of the Republic of Macedonia, as it was called then, was held, the president, Kiro Gligorov with the Bosnian leader Alija Izetbegovic had tried to preserve the old state in a federation. The tragic events in Bosnia-Hercegovina led to a drastic change in attitude towards the Former Yugoslavia, now renamed 'Rest-Yugoslavia,' for Macedonians.

In the summer of 1992, the responses to my interview questions: "Who and what are you?" tended to elicit the response: "We were Yugoslavian, but we always have been Macedonians as well. Now we have ceased to be Yugoslavians." By 1995 all my informants declared themselves Macedonians. More importantly, they defined themselves as Orthodox⁹⁴. When I asked why they declared themselves as Orthodox Christians in the 1994 census, I received the stereotypical answer: "Otherwise they [the Albanians] will outnumber us [of Slav origin]." These responses indicate the strong sentiments of Macedonian internal social discourse. The Albanian population was seen as representing the Muslim world that uses its fertility rate to overpower and eventually eradicate the Christian-Orthodox belief. This argument can be traced at least to the events of Kosovo Polje in 1389 where Serbia was defeated in trying to stop further Ottoman conquest. From this point of history and into the present, Macedonia has found itself under Ottoman rule through the Albanian population which, because of its Muslim belief, was often equated with the Ottoman occupation itself.⁹⁵

Considering individual identity, two interesting issues emerged from my fieldwork:

- 1) firm atheists' claim of an almost instantaneous identification with Christian Orthodoxy and
- 2) the denial of an urban identity.

People from elsewhere in Macedonia view *Skopjanici*⁹⁶ as having a distinct identity although this view is not shared by *Skopjanici* themselves. It is not only that they define themselves on the grounds of neighbourhood, profession and school attendance but, furthermore and even more exclusively, many of my informants claim their origins in Stip, Strumica, Veles, Prilep or Galichnik. The places they name are their grandparents' and parents' birthplaces even though nearly all of them are first-generation, native-born *Skopjanici*. It is also apparent that one's ascribed origin naturally conferred attributes: women from Prilep are very mean; women from Galichnik are good to marry; people from Skopska Crna Gora are especially prone to black magic and people from Kriva Palanka are aristocrats.⁹⁷ All of these places thus carry a distinct local identity. What these young *Skopjanici* are stating is their inherited connection to a specific rural area of Macedonia with a specific past. It is this rural past that is claimed to be the root of the modern Macedonian state in public discourse. The heroes of the national struggles in Macedonia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are mostly associated with villages or small towns (Brown 1994: 791)⁹⁸. Brown suggests that in Macedonia's past, an extremely local patriotism rooted in the symbolic spaces of their own village and its history without wider extension is the most significant force of identification (Brown 1994:792). I see this classification of a rural past as central to the understanding of my

informants of their own past, assuming similar attitudes to still be prevalent in the present. In a political context people tend to identify themselves with a specific place rather than with a political unit. Many Macedonians feel at odds with their current state and its wider political arena, as they see their politicians working for personal power and material gain. Where the Yugoslavian state has ceased to exist, a personal identity is offered by a specific locality that is given by one's rural past. Furthermore, today the state can only offer an identification as citizen but not as a 'people'. It would be a 'nation' or *narod*⁹⁹ that could represent 'people' or 'ethnicity.' It is here where Christianity, dominating most local rural pasts, comes to bring Slav people into a single group, into *narod*. In this respect belonging to a rural area of Macedonia is belonging to a particular past which mitigates against isolation as it allows belonging to an extended family, tied by kinship with others to a specific place, a specific land. However, in opposition to this rural identity stands the highly impersonal space in Skopje after it had been transformed into a modern city following the earthquake 1963.

Youth in the Urban Environment of Skopje

I have chosen to focus on young people in Macedonia with particular consideration of the only urban centre in The Republic of Macedonia, the city of Skopje which boasts

almost half the population of the entire state. When my informants see their origins in the countryside of Macedonia, it is a spiritual belonging to the soil that they present as their identification. While the 'socialist' world of their parents has ceased to exist with the collapse of Yugoslavia, it is the grandparent's generation which provides some sense of identity and moral ideals to the young people. On Macedonian TV, documentaries about the past lives of elderly people, the idea of *narod*, is frequently presented and has increased over the years. In its educational role, the television instructs viewers on the celebration of Christmas: tree, presents, Christmas man. The television informs 'its' people of their origins by focusing on the countryside in narrations on its people, folklore and history told through first-hand accounts of people who have lived through this history thereby invoking the rural identification that is evoked by the public and political discourse.

Most of the social discourse today within the city of Skopje is centred, not surprisingly, on the future. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia the possibility of a positive future seemed bleak; a living example lay in the events of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sarajevo. In 1992 Macedonian society was in shock. However, new perspectives were slowly disseminated, due mostly to the strong presence of 'the western world' in the form of the UN, EC Commissions, Americans, embassies and consulates and many

NGO's. Many university graduates today are involved in some manner with such organisations and thus communicate with the 'western world'. Because of this exposure, the young people are very clear, perhaps not in their identity but certainly in their goal: to be equal to Western Europe. The barrier, as they see it, are those things 'Balkan,' a term which suggests backwardness. Albanians stand, symbolically, for the backwardness of a Balkan regional identity while a Macedonian nationalism may associate itself with the 'modern world'¹⁰⁰ and struggle against an Albanian 'internal enemy.' However, the ethnic violence experienced in Bosnia and a real fear for Macedonia is seen as deriving from a 'Balkan principle' as well. In addition, in the process of today that is creating a past and a future, it seems that there should be a process of forgetting. Yet, forgetting is a slow and painful process in the Republic of Macedonia that has not sought independence through its own will. Many people have not forgotten and sometimes even idealise the state promoted co-operation between the different ethnic identities .

The film, 'Before the Rain' by Milcho Manchevski, short-listed for an Academy Award, gained tremendous popularity in Skopje. In this film, the journalist Aleksander returns from London to his village in the countryside of Macedonia. Skopje is only presented in a series of fleeting images captured whilst driving through the city by bus

and eventually coming face-to-face with the vastness of the country. It is the countryside where the decisive struggle between Albanian and 'Macedonian' is fought and the church is presented as unable to prevent the slaughter. With nostalgia, the past is regarded as a time when the opposing nationalities co-operated and were even friends: they worked on the same land and visited the same schools. Yet, the conclusion of the film is a rather depressing one: the individual is unable to prevent the cycle of violence which, as the movie suggests, is not yet completed. At the end, Aleksander is killed by his own people for standing by his Albanian friends. However, it is he who utters the important words: "You have to take sides," and it is he with whom the young people empathise. The rain, the metaphor for violence, will come, but the present is a period "Before the Rain." Today my friends recall that in the past there was unity through ideology, that was able to overcome animosities between different people. Young people remember waiting for Tito to drive up and wave at all of them. When such image is evoked, people do not talk about 'us' and 'them.' Tito united everyone, and in Skopje there are pictures of him everywhere, in *Stara Carsijia*, the old Albanian part of town or *Stopanska Banka*, the modern Macedonian commercial centre. "Under Tito all this would not have happened," is the pervasive sentiment expressed.

In a similar manner, people recall that the city promised a better life economically to its inhabitants in the past. It was pointed out to me that many villages had no electricity, running water or flush toilets while in Yugoslavia, the better economic situation allowed the city dwellers to experience the world abroad and to take summer vacations outside the country. Many young people have mixed with the 'Inter-rail Community,' mainly back-packers of Western Europe. Today is the first time in recent history that access to the western world has been restricted by visa regulations. The Macedonians feel that these visa limitations label them as second-class citizens in Europe. Unrestricted travelling had been unique to Yugoslavs in the 'socialist bloc' and the young people took much pride in this fact, as told to me in 1993: "We could travel wherever we wanted. Yugoslavia was very different from communist countries like Bulgaria or Russia. We were socialist. [...] If the war would not have happened, we would have joined the EC very soon." This nostalgia embraces the idea of unity, even though it contradicts Yugoslav reality and causes more ambivalence in the construction of a specific Macedonian identity. Today more than ever, economic equality with the West is the goal:

"We are going for the money now. Do you know that this year [1994] there are more first year students in the economics faculty than in the engineering? Everybody wanted to study engineering and now they all want

to study economics and become rich very fast. You can only get the girls with a 'fancy' car now."

In this world consumerism has become a major concern, as I illustrated in chapter 4. Computers, Benetton, Levis jeans and other designer clothes are a must. Prices in Skopje are high and far exceed what is easily affordable on an average income. Nevertheless people buy these items and consequently endure many financial sacrifices to outwardly aspire to the world of 'Beverly Hills'. Nevertheless, the sophistication of their own literature, art, poetry and music is largely drawn from previous themes and is not yet an imitation of the 'western model.' Consequently, there is not an overall denial of the rural by the urban youth and intelligentsia and such preservation and revival of tradition and traditional themes is endorsed by the state.

In this respect the young people in Skopje are faced with ambiguity in understanding who they are and what Macedonia can be. Even though their opposition to the Albanian population defines them as a distinct group of Slavic-Orthodox people, the example of Bosnia and Yugoslav nostalgia leaves their mind open for co-operating with the Albanian population. It is the wish to be modern and equal to the West. Not being from the Balkans lets them endorse a mental separation from the Albanian population which represents for them the 'Balkan.' However, such a strategy is not an easy one either, as

they and the state define their roots in a peasant past that can easily be seen as mirrored by the Albanian population.

Peasantry

The urban identity of my informants opposes a rural identity; their youth today opposes youth in the past and, thus, depicts the present and the future. However, there were some very picturesque images of the peasantry found throughout the former Yugoslavia. Such positive images, I believe, looked upon the past in order to create a solidarity in the diverse structure of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia: a common origin was shared which allowed people to feel superior to their bourgeois neighbours, as one of my informants described it. A negative image of rural identity was based in a future that looked proudly into its past and what had been achieved: the victory of modern society and the self-determination of the peasantry who had simply accepted a fate-driven existence. Young people inevitably had an ambivalent attitude to their peasant origins: on the one hand their peasant past indicated a backwardness which is in conflict with their aspiration to be mobile, modern Europeans. On the other hand, it was only personal and social identity which could overcome the estranging effect of the urban environment¹⁰¹ in which they were living.

They were taught to look back and be proud of the rural past. The life of a peasant was now pictured by my informants as a life lived on small, independent farms and working with members of the extended family. Peasants are seen as producing everything they need by themselves and are modest in their needs for comfort. Plenty of food¹⁰² and reserves of gold coins¹⁰³ are seen as their wealth. They had a rich treasure of folk songs and most astonishing variations of *oro*, a round dance which plays a major role in weddings, birthdays, new year celebrations and party-organised meetings. I was told that those who dance *oro* and eat plenty of peppers and tomatoes are truly Macedonian and are connected to the community. This represents a rather cosy picture that has to be conveyed through the official 'folklore' level of Communist discourse.

Even though the urban youth today state their origin as the countryside, nevertheless there is still the negative imagery projected on the countryside and the ensuing lifestyle. For my young informants such associations derive from the wish for a different, 'western' future and is not related to one's own history or family ties, but projects definitions of 'the Balkan,' Ottoman Rule, its 'Turkish inheritance' and of the Albanian people. But there is another picture the young people would draw on as well when recalling the past of their country:

"We were the raya, the cattle of the Ottomans. You see this every day here, don't you? What should we do, we are told to give the table to the rich friends of the café owner, so we get up and leave. You argued, but did you get your letter delivered?"¹⁰⁴

Even though there are many positive connotations of peasant life and people were taught to think of themselves as peasants despite living in the modern urban environment of Macedonia,¹⁰⁵ to be a peasant still means to be from the Balkans. The Balkans stand in opposition to the modern, 'civilised' Western World. In comments made on the Balkans, my informants define this term as 'non civilised.' "What do you expect - this is the Balkans," was a common statement used to explain many occurrences including the tragic and violent conflict in the former Yugoslavia. In addition this backwardness is named in ethnic terms: it is the Albanian who represents all negative aspects of the rural.

In the ensuing ambiguity, described by the features above, the urban landscape of my young informants will illustrate how they perceive their identity as an ethnic group.

The Landscape of the City of Skopje

After the earthquake of 1963, The United Nations along with 'Western' states rushed to Tito's aid to restore Skopje. Many of the old buildings that were still standing were

pulled down and replaced with concrete structures. Interestingly, it was the Turkish remains of *Kale*, *Stara Carjia*, the mosques, *Han's* (Turkish 'hotels'), Turkish baths and *Bit Bazaar*, the Turkish marketplace with its Minarets, that remained. Today these buildings are the identity signifier for the Muslim and mostly Albanian population, whereas old 'Slav Christian' buildings disappeared and socialist architecture left nothing specific and identifiable for the people who came to Skopje after 1963 in the course of rural/urban migration¹⁰⁶. People were starting to live in the homogenous, identical and then modern apartments, which belonged to the socialist state. These apartments represented the state's values, both physically and symbolically, and denied any links in their urban landscape with the villages and small towns from which they had come.

In time, peasants became the *rabotnicki narod*, the working people of the Yugoslavian socialist society, where socialism came to stand for the modern. The modern meant in this case standardised dwellings and stood in opposition to what was believed to have been the past. The negative image of the rural past and the implications of what it meant to be a peasant were born in the construction of the modern socialist world of Skopje. Skopje was supposed to embody everything that the peasant lifestyle was not.

Skopje before the earthquake appears to have been similar to street scenes that exist today in many towns like Ohrid, Struga, Bitola or Strumica. Social life happened in the streets, gossiping and discussions, children playing, men arguing about politics or just sitting in the shade of large trees. Remnants of this continue to exist in the café life of Skopje which holds high social value for the young people, or the table and chess games of men in the park in front of Trgovski Centre, the older shopping mall in the centre of town existing against the odds of modern urban planning. The earthquake though, made it possible to create Skopje as an 'ideal' human community, and allowed for the reconstruction of the city as a symbol for the triumph of socialism standing against the "chaotic forces of terrestrial and infernal nature"¹⁰⁷, "such as earthquakes or 'unordered' street-life"¹⁰⁸. Landscape became a system of signification and expressed the authority of the socialist state. Intrinsically the city as landscape became the origin of individual and collective action, the origin of knowing, objectively and subjectively and the origin of idealist and materialist explanation of the world around¹⁰⁹. As such the landscape of Skopje as a city became imposed on its inhabitants and signified the social transition of the country¹¹⁰. This process of internalisation of Skopje's urban space was prevalent mainly for the first generation, those who were born in Skopje and did not live a rural life.

When asking for directions, it becomes apparent how difficult it is to make one's way around the maze of the city. Organised planning is demanded for the simple task of supplying oneself with the bare necessities although different categories of people create their respective maps in the maze of the city¹¹¹. People walk only in very specific areas of the town and, therefore, the individual does not create their own relationship with the city since the relationship is ascribed by their group identity. For example, there is, not a large intersection of space amongst the Slav, Albanian and Roma population of the city.

The city is lacking personal space that could be usurped for social communication and interaction as well and, instead, one can only go 'along the streets.' There is a vast area of unused land functioning as a refuse dump of sorts. It gave rise to an interesting dispute between members of different NGO's and some of the inhabitants. This resulted in the NGO's abandoning their attempts to cultivate, clean and beautify such unused land. Cows continue to graze and trample everything down. Garbage appeared there faster than they could clear it away. *Skopjanici* laughed at this desperate attempt which was eventually subsumed under the rule of the city: people only care for the immediate self and property since they lack any connection to the space and people around them. Like much post-war building in war-damaged Europe, the city planners chose the

cheapest solutions, used concrete very freely and left little or no green space of which the residents might have made use¹¹². Not only green space but also the climate and accommodation of nature was neglected: people often mention that in certain areas of the rebuilt city there is no circulation of wind. As a result, Skopje is turned into a hell of blazing sun and scorching pavements in the summer and is close to uninhabitable:

"I cannot imagine how it will be to work this summer and not be able to leave the city. It is too hot, how am I suppose to work? I have to run around when the day is the hottest and at night when it cools down I cannot go out because I have to go early to bed."

(Informant, 1995)

The only goal of *Skopjanici* in the summer is to leave the city for the countryside or the coast. In the winter the fog is recorded as worse each year and renders the city virtually inaccessible by air.

Thus, life in Skopje is a series of isolated events, nodes of activity between home, shopping, recreation and work, made accessible by a no-man's land of streets. One feature becomes more and more prominent in Skopje's landscape: the shopping mall. It developed from the need to provide a commercial and social focus no longer found in the street system. Thus, the city as construct imposes conformity and denies social and environmental diversity.

Adjacent to this world of 'modern' Skopje stand the quarters of the Albanian and Roma populations, a division which is not only linguistic but also physical. The division in the city is drawn between the South and the North of Vardar, between *Stara* (Old) *Carsijia*, the area of *Bit Bazaar*, the quarter of the Albanians, the shanty towns of the Roma and the South of 'modern' Skopje with its racked apartment buildings of the Slav-Macedonians. In a state account 'advertising' the Republic of Macedonia, they could not avoid commenting on the actual appearance of 'modern' housing (Andreev [et al.] 1993:124): "In the field of housing, however, non-economic relations and all kinds of experiments were predominant for a long time. As a result, there was relatively swift degradation in the newly-built housing facilities, while insufficient attention was paid to the fact that depreciation should be countered by renovation."¹¹³ Thus, as degradation occurred, the South of Skopje 'lost its soul' while the shanty towns of the Roma and *Stara Carsijia* of the Albanians, even though they run counter to the image of 'modern' socialist society, are the most lively areas of Skopje. These areas have busy street corners and are the centre of a lively black-market economy and money exchange activities. *Stara Carsijia* houses the largest 'Green Market'¹¹⁴, with its plethora of wares catering to diverse customers, and lies across from the newly built shopping mall. The new shopping mall is mostly frequented by the 'modern' *Skopjanici* and offers

predominantly consumer goods. While at *Bit Bazaar* the streets are humming, busy with people, the long floors of the shopping mall are nearly empty and feel sterile in comparison. Interestingly it should be noted that the government is trying to newly define the role of the 'Green Markets' by a state enactment in July 1995 limiting it only to 'green' produce, while previously virtually everything could be found at the market at a reasonable price. This enactment was to protect the shopping malls with their private enterprises of expensive consumer goods. However, there have been demonstrations against discrimination as these markets are predominantly Albanian enterprises.

The city and its environment establish many of the preconditions for the perception of identity prevalent amongst young people. The limits and challenges the city sets on the mind are embodied in the search for a new definition of oneself and 'the other.' The young people of Skopje struggle for a particular form of identity that they see emanating from the outside world, much of it derived from Western Europe and American TV and much of it perceived as missing from their city.

The young people tend to identify themselves as 'modern' Slavs through the north and south divide of the city with the Slavs living in the south. The placement of a person in the geographical landscape of the city is important in defining an Albanian or Macedonian. To be Albanian suggests, for example, having many children, women

wearing the veil, the buying of women, criminal activities such as drug cartels, Islamic fundamentalism, *Gastarbeiter*, foreign workers abroad and being from the North of the city. In contrast, to be Macedonian is seen as conferring true Yugoslav citizenship, the ability to be a tourist abroad, having a limited number of children, a modern, socialist person from the South of the city¹¹⁵. Being socialist in this context means to have risen from the rural past, marked by the 'cattle-like behaviour' of the peasant under Ottoman Rule, and to be modern. Yet, the city's construction of 'ideal modern-socialist' nevertheless gives its inhabitants a difficult and contested relationship with such terms. Moreover, with the 'other' within, the mind is set for a diversity that is to be found again in the indecision of defining an identity merely on a rural past and Christian identity. The rural past and Christianity, as the terms modern and socialist, gain a more twofold character.

The Past

After considering the urban environment of Skopje and its influence on the perception of one's identity, an examination of the past that has been constantly evoked in the discussion of Macedonian identity is a vital step in order to understand how the past is reflected in present-day actions and beliefs.

Macedonia as a geographical area has undergone profound demographic changes which have caused instability and political change which, in turn, have resulted in shifting allegiances and group identities. In addition, the mountainous area made communication between people difficult and led to a compartmentalisation rather than to a unification of Macedonians. For administrative purposes, the Ottomans created the *millet* system, a system that divided its subjects not according to ethnicity, language or nationality but by religion. Thus, religion has been one of the main factors in differentiating between various groups. Poulton (1995:45) writes that essentially the Ottoman Empire, "[...]was non-assimilative and allowed the separate Balkan peoples to retain their individual cultures and identities -this aided by the geography of the region." The Macedonian socialist state tried to pull these diverse people together by creating a modern city, the city of *rabotni'cki narod*, the working people. However, when they created the monument of modern socialist society, Skopje, the city lost its rural roots and a sense of belonging. For the people of Skopje, the sense of belonging was only evoked through folklore. The modern city was meant to give its citizens a new identity and a future, whereas the countryside came to stand for the past and people's origins.

Religion

For the Macedonian people, the modern city negates the rural ties that are assigned as a means of identification. Instead the urban/rural divide is translated into an ethnic divide with the assignation of modern/backward characteristics to Slav-Macedonian/Albanian. As the new Macedonia has again to define its future it has to solve the puzzle of this dichotomy. The most obvious solution for a state that has supposedly¹¹⁶ thrust off its socialist past would be to present religion as a new common denominator of unity. However, this creates another level of friction: the Christian/Muslim divide. In recent years, Skopje has been confronted with increasing numbers of state organised Christian rituals, establishing the Christian Macedonians as inheritors of the Macedonian state. Poulton writes (1995:182): "It is hard to assess accurately the strength of Orthodox religious belief in Macedonia but it appears that many see the church as the key to nationhood. This role of the church as an essential constitution inevitably alienates the predominantly Muslim Albanians." In 1990 the *Soborna Crkva Kliment Ohridsko*, the Congregated Church of Kliment of Ohrid, was completed. The date of this in the summer of 1990, was rumoured to be the day that the earthquake would strike Skopje a second time. People were in panic. It seems now this rumour had more truth in it than many people realised at that time, at least

metaphorically. The Macedonian emphasis on Christianity excludes the growing Albanian population from the state. The earthquake may then appear to be an appropriate metaphor for a civil war as one informant suggested. It is significant that in the struggle for an Albanian University in Tetovo¹¹⁷, the University of Kiril and Methodi is now the University of the Saints Kiril & Methodi. In this respect, it is the Macedonian population, although they may not explicitly agree with this analysis, who are taking on the role of the cultural aggressor, imposing state symbols derived from a Christian source. Thus, it seems, Christianity might be desired in the formation of nationhood and identity, but it has not succeeded in this role until now. Under *millets* organisation by the Ottoman Empire, religion stood as the defining factor of a group. When people say they are Orthodox, they are claiming not the religion so much as their Slav origin¹¹⁸. As I indicated earlier, the people of Macedonia, largely because of their historical and geographical position, felt affiliated to a specific soil, to a specific village and to the church of a place, but never to an outer whole. This complex series of attachments we again find in the group of my informants, who identify themselves as belonging to a specific place. There is another aspect of religion that becomes vital. Christianity does not seem compatible with the youths' strife in the urban environment of Skopje to become a modern, western people, as they see the western world as a secular world¹¹⁹.

As the above shows neither the idea of the past nor religion are points of easy departure for creating a 'Macedonian identity.'

Conclusion

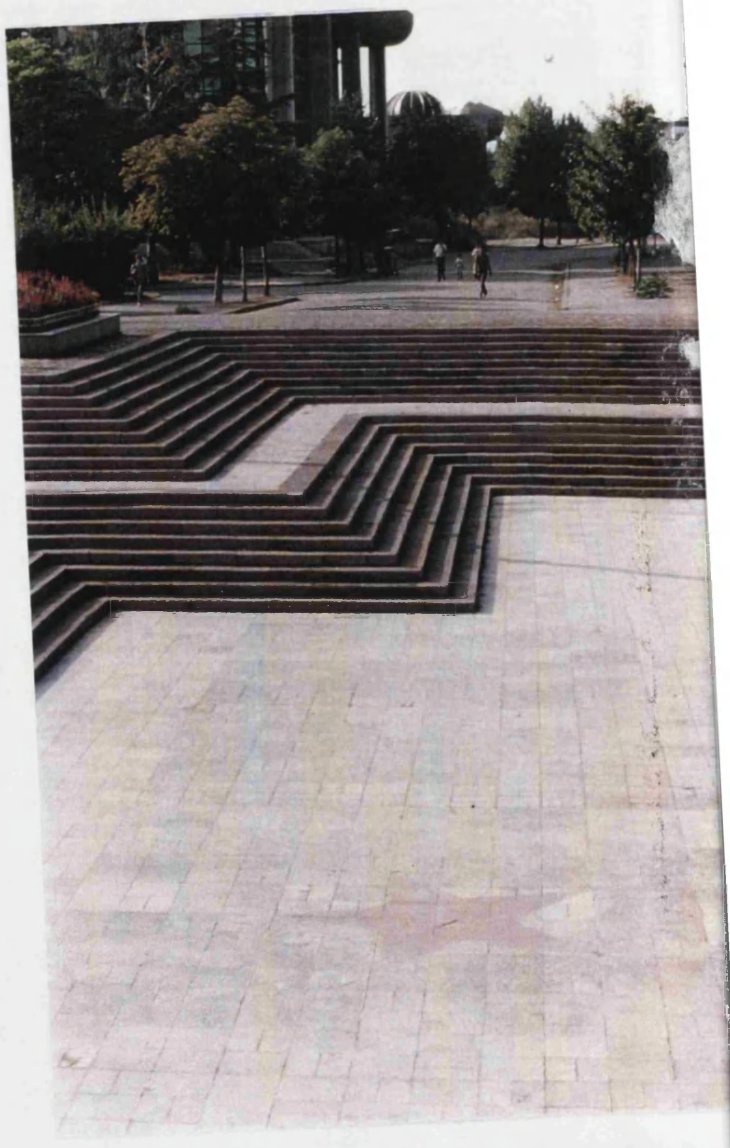
By drawing out the different threats of identification for the young people of Skopje several things become apparent:

1) It appears that people are not decisive about their own identity and cultural heritage which is seen in how young people in Skopje seem to be caught between worlds. This leads to the possible conclusion that the state has not succeeded, or perhaps does not wish to succeed, in forging a distinct Macedonian culture into an object of consumption. A distinct Macedonian culture appears to lack attractiveness to its citizens. Even though people might be presenting themselves as 'proudly peasant,' belonging to the Balkan heritage is equated with backwardness and not in itself a condition to which one aspires.

2) This rural past is seen as lived out today in a negative sense by the Albanian population. There is the situation where a cultural heritage is acquired by people yet that heritage is a negation of everything one wants to be.

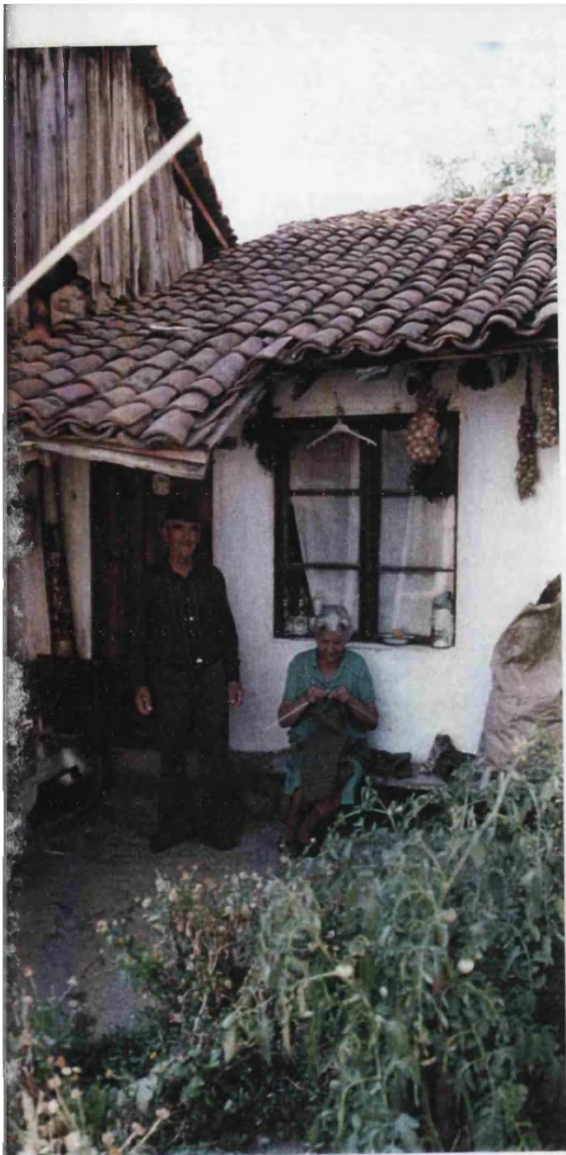
























In this respect the state cannot use 'culture' as an object of 'worship' and a fundamental legitimisation of its power. Further, given the external contest of its identity as a state, The Republic of Macedonia must attempt to achieve an understanding with the Albanian population for the state's own survival since The Republic of Macedonia needs strong internal co-operation and integration in opposition to external forces. There is a very real threat of civil war that only seems to have been avoided by the negative example of Bosnia and the careful response of some intelligent moderate politicians to potentially similar situations being repeated in Skopje.

3) Religion is not seen as a belief but as a denominator of identity. My informants and the church officials I spoke with represented religion as connected to oppression, through socialist ideology as well as through the fact that religious power in the past, through, for instance, teaching positions in the schools, was held by Serbian, Greek or Bulgarian authorities. As a denominator of identity, religion has become a powerful instrument to distinguish between 'us' and 'them:' Orthodox Christianity versus Muslim identity, but also non-belief versus belief or modern versus peasant and 'West' versus Balkan. Skopje itself is a powerful metaphor for the experiences of my friends and informants after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Their boundaries were redefined and the whole country started to look at Skopje and not Belgrade for leadership. Essentially

what Skopje represents is differentiation between various strands of 'identity' that together weave the new country. Within it, this tapestry carries the thread for the future of Macedonia. Skopje represents the differences between the rural and the urban, the young and the old, Slav and Albanian, Christian Orthodoxy and Islam versus 'modernity'/'western,' Balkan versus the 'West' in an ongoing dialog. Within this dialog, space is recreated, space that mediates memories of other places. Some of this space is created through the memory of a rural past, some of it through media and foreign aid agencies. By assuming the role of dependent recipient in the global aid economy, Macedonia creates the idiom of the 'West' as a commodity just as the socialist state had created folklore as a uniting commodity. The rhetoric of the non-civilised Balkan versus 'The West' collapses time and space such that my young informants see themselves today on the margins of a meaningful universe as consumers of an externally generated material modernity¹²⁰. The landscape of Skopje however, in the midst of 'conflicting spaces' also creates a relationship between the life lived and an imagined existence of what Macedonia could be. As such, the landscape of Skopje describes a process, its transformation and its power to transform.

CONCLUSION

My emphasis on this group of urban informants, namely, young female engineers in Skopje, is a result partially of my intention of taking women's points of view during a time of great change. Rather than examining those usually considered, that is men and their politics or the rural perspective, as often the countryside is perceived as most vulnerable to change, I chose to consider the lives of young, professional and urban women. During the war in Bosnia and the conflict between Croatia and Serbia, the media focused on how the politics of change were imposed on and exercised in the countryside. It was stressed that it was the countryside which was more prone to propaganda and violence and when women were discussed in the context of recent events in former Yugoslavia, women were represented as victims of rape and oppressive politics. This is a very sad and real aspect of life in the former Yugoslavia. In the film, 'Before the Rain,' the conflict is introduced as arising in the countryside and with women as the first victims. Not denying the importance of understanding social change and crisis within rural communities, I meant to concentrate on the urban environment to determine how the disintegration of Macedonia influenced this specific population and if

and how a process of the construction of a sense of cultural identity was taking place. I found that the sense of identity is constructed in an ongoing process which, by implication, speaks of the contested nature of Macedonian culture itself.

My research differs from other studies done in Macedonia and the Balkan area in that, while most of them are interested in continuity and thus survey traditional practices, I am more interested in the way in which this meeting of the past and present is perceived and renegotiated by my informants. The manner in which the past informs the present interests me less, although I do not disregard the past. Macedonians are represented, and often see themselves, as people without history and, as such, without grounds to formulate an 'identity.' This I believe could be named a search for identity. Of course this does not mean that Macedonians have no identity or no history, though there might be parties that would be interested in arguing this. What I mean is that it seems that Macedonians continually search for what they could be because history has imposed on them this need to define themselves.

Moore (1988:1) suggests that women have always been present in ethnographic accounts, primarily because of the strong emphasis in anthropology with kinship and marriage. This has resulted in viewing kinship and marriage as central for the organisation of gender. In my research, I wanted to go beyond such a conception and

follow Moore (1988:2) when she points out that the real problem about incorporating women into anthropology lies, not at the level of empirical research but, at the theoretical and analytical level. I hope to have demonstrated with my research that one can gain insight into a changing society through the eyes of women, their perceptions and concerns in these extreme times. Certainly, I cannot conclude from my small group of informants to have clear understandings of the whole of Macedonia, but I can grasp through their eyes an insight into the working of this society that is not centred around kinship and marriage only, but rather that deals on a day-to day basis with the political and economical environment surrounding it.

In my work, I suggest additional points of entry for the study of a society in change and crisis and for urban research. I suggest that my informants, in presenting themselves to the 'Other,' internally the Albanian and externally the 'West', respond to the way they would like to control their future. The question is whether the binary of 'us' and 'them' as an abstract perception is really relevant. It is apparent however, that my friends see their world as a network of perceptions and an ongoing discussion of what was, what is and what could be. It is at this intersection where I believe we must consider the complex role women play in this dialogue which is crucial to the discourse on the identity of Macedonian society. One must not forget that in a world where individuals

are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options (Giddens 1991:5), the choices between the 'West' and 'Balkan,' 'us' and 'them' is only one of many.

I have found that my group of informants provides an excellent lens on a changing present precisely because they will not submit to any fixed position within their society. That is, they are presenting a gendered picture that goes beyond marriage and kinship. Indeed kinship and marriage are contested grounds because of past and present changes within their society. Discussions in the preceding chapters embraced questions of what it means to be Macedonian, female, urban and 'western.' Those are, however, binaries and the other half of those binaries feeds into the definitions of those terms for my informants, so that the 'Balkan', the 'Albanians' and the countryside and past become counter references through which the graduates understand their world. The spatial and symbolic content and context of my friends' obsession with beauty and western consumer goods, their marriages and weddings, and their working lives are integral to their construction of their adult identity within an independent Macedonia.

Traditionally, anthropologists have treated the past as the legitimising tool for the present, including the numerous discussions about 'imagined communities' and 'invented traditions.' I, however, explored the opposite, namely, the future. In this respect, I see the future to be the legitimising tool for the specific life choices my informants make.

My argument is that if the past made my friends what they are today then it is also the notion they have of the future that transforms them into what they will become. This statement underlies an idea about globalisation that Appadurai describes as being disseminated through global advertising as the plethora of creative and cultural well-chosen ideas of consumer agency. And as he states, 'the globalisation of culture is not the same as its homogenisation, but globalisation involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenisation (armaments, advertising techniques, language hegemonies, clothing styles and the like), which are absorbed into local political and cultural economies.' Further, he states his belief that the central feature of global culture today is the politics of the mutual effort of sameness and difference (Appadurai 1990:307). Thus he is introducing globalisation as a value system, a value system which I believe has been taken up by the young urban *Skopjanici*. As I introduced their lives in The Republic of Macedonia, I introduced their consumer agency as well as the changing Macedonian political and cultural economy. What became apparent is that today Macedonians, specifically my informants, are involved in a highly political discourse of sameness and difference and they define their future around such a concept.

The extent of change in Macedonia has been greater than most of my informants, and probably myself, have yet realised. When you live through the changes, it is sometimes

difficult to see them on a day-to-day basis and only upon reflection from some distance do certain aspects become apparent. The change has not only happened in Macedonia on a local basis, but a dramatic change has happened on a global scale with Macedonia being only a small part of it. This change has led to the breakdown of stable group membership. Today it is not as easy to talk about 'identity' as it was just a few years ago. Today we speak of the 'identities' of a person. Identities today derive from a multiplicity of sources: nationality, ethnicity, gender, age and education, for instance. Those identities overlap and sometimes oppose each other and create their own fragmented identity mix. So the experience of conflicting identities for my friends is not something that is specific for Macedonia. Far from it, it makes my friends part of the general global society, specifically through this multiplicity of identities. Despite this though, my friends have a specific location in this world and it links them to the society they live in. I have demonstrated in my research how this specific dynamic is conceptualised by the graduates and how they make sense of the social, political and economical changes around them. Their view on their surrounding world gives an insight into the workings of an 'interface' between the individual and their social setting. Their present social setting gives them an idea of who they are, who they want to become, how they relate to others and how they can understand the world they live in. It

explains to them how they are the same and how they are different. In this respect their identity becomes a specific moment in time, unfixed, fluent and negotiable.

Yugoslavia today is understood to be a region of war, conflict, people hating each other and as I and many others watching this conflict argue, people hating each other senselessly. When I came to Macedonia the first time it did not differ very much from the other republics of Yugoslavia, and even today I cannot see specific reasons why Macedonia was not involved in any ethnic war of some sort. There are some political reasons, wise political decisions, foreign interest, disinterest from Serbia perhaps. Nevertheless, I think one can argue that Macedonia theoretically could have been put through the same sort of terror that destroyed Bosnia and Yugoslavia as a whole. People had shared fifty years under Tito and had experienced, even though it was manipulated and enforced, unity within this framework. They had shared a very similar day-to-day life. People in Macedonia still talk about 'our Adriatic sea.' Why were people suddenly so different that they were ready to kill each other? Was it because they could not live with the difference of 'the other,' whoever or whatever this was?

As is visible throughout the chapters on Macedonia, this difference gained great importance within its own borders, but also in relation to the outside world. If I were to describe the war in Yugoslavia, I would have to say, it is a war about sameness and

difference. In Macedonia, as in the other republics of the dissolved Yugoslavia, as the latest temporal point for this conflict, which obviously started far earlier, (we will leave the historians to ponder on the exact date of origin), the common discourse on unity was turned to the other extreme, a common discourse on difference. This is the red line going through all the chapters: the (pre)occupation of people with difference. What is visible throughout the chapters however, is that this definition of difference is in direct relation with the others' sameness, either of the threatening sameness between the Slavic Macedonians and the Muslim Albanians or the anticipated sameness with 'Western Europe.' This sameness and difference is expressed through things that people use. When I appeared in Macedonia with twenty white cotton socks that my mother had given me, my friends despaired: I should have known that only Albanians wore white socks. So with each daily visit to my flat, my friends brought me a new pair of socks while slowly the white socks disappeared out of my closets. This might seem hilarious but its pervasiveness requires analysis. What my friends construct here is a specific difference that is as social as it is symbolic. White socks are a complex issue, because do Europeans wear white socks? It was inconceivable for them that I should do something that only uncultivated people would. However, my friends were not taken by surprise when my Canadian husband appeared with white socks as well. Nevertheless,

with him there was no issue as everybody knows how uncultivated Americans, and therefore Canadians, are, so I was told. Despite this, my husband was not allowed into some cafés because of his socks.

Throughout the chapters when writing about the West, I referred specifically to Northern Europe. Despite the enormous economic help, American UNPROFOR troops and American business were seen as the old enemy. The uncultured, uncivilised America that Tito created did still exist. What this means is that the assertion of what it means to be Macedonian is historically specific. Sameness and difference is located in a particular point of time, though this temporal divide is variable. In Macedonia this temporal divide starts with the Ottoman rule and not with the Slavic invasion of Macedonia, which in itself is worth exploring. What this portrays however is Macedonians, not as proud invaders and their own people but, as *raya*, cattle, of the Sultan, as the passive recipients of sameness and difference. The next temporal divide then is between 'Balkan' and 'Europe' with Yugoslavia as a political unit still firmly entrenched in the Balkan, something which the graduates were sure to be able to challenge in the future but which has also happened, albeit temporarily, in a specific moment of time, when Ante Markovich equalised the Yugoslavian currency with the

Deutsche Mark and with this brought Europe in a very real economical sense to the Balkans. Only a year later this dream was taken away.

Despite the dominant discourse of difference which my friends are perpetuating and are presented with, they do endorse the cultural confluence of a global lifestyle and are producing new shared identities. The notion of social change that has influenced Macedonia's political life has altered the life of my informants, but not in a way that could be defined as 'post-socialism,' which would suggest that socialism is over and democracy is coming. In their discourse of sameness and difference, the political and social conception of sameness and difference becomes fused. Socialism is a counter reference point to the life of my friends as much as democracy is. Within, Macedonia finds itself in a dynamic discourse on retaining socialist values and endorsing the unity that Tito had offered Yugoslavia, and at the same time striving for political, economical and social democracy endorsing the idea of a future as 'Europeans' and leaving behind the Balkan world of Yugoslavia. Internally this causes discordance between the Slavic Macedonian and Albanian population but even here, through a rural past and the example of Bosnia, sameness cannot be escaped and the inheritance of Tito is, to a certain degree, upheld. The flip side of this similarity is that Macedonia in its political discourse does not seek to return to a lost past; it is a past for which they gratefully

acknowledge Tito, however, they have left it behind and are moving closer to 'Western Europe.' As such, a circle is formed that defines Macedonia's future.

Macedonia's future is formed through the shared idea of its future, that arises out of the circle described above. I define a shared ideal as shared assumptions and representations of what it means to be 'Western European,' Albanian, Macedonian or from the Balkans. Those shared assumptions and representations construct ideas of sameness and difference.

Eventually, I infer from my research that changes are not only taking place on a political or social scale of global meaning, but on a very local and personal level. In particular these changes presented my friends with different places on a global scale from which they formed what they wanted to be.

Individuals live within a large number of different institutions, or what Pierre Bourdieu calls 'fields' (1984). Those are, for example family, friends, work and educational settings. The graduates participate in these fields exercising many different choices in varying degrees, but each of them moves in a specific space or context. How my friends are at home is different from how they are at work and different from who they are with their friends. However, the home, for example, is not only the relationship between daughter and mother, but is also the locality where television is watched and

specific messages are received. This message then is responded to in a specific way of shopping or in the body sculpting studios. The result of the body sculpting studios and shopping, combined with who they are at their workplace and the conflicts they encounter there, comes together with their experience of the place where their grandmothers live, the village and the different stories they are told from the past. This forms their understanding of how they would like to get married and how their adult life should look. This, however, still happens in a specific cultural framework in which the past, and the future serve as reference points. In each and every event and in each and every locality in time and space, my friends position themselves differently to others and themselves, according to the specific person they are at this point in time and place.

How my friends define themselves and what their future should be is through difference. One can argue that this is the most drastic change in Macedonian society. In Yugoslavia the dominant social and political discourse was on sameness and today it is difference that prevails. My friends' subjectivity is forged through the marking of difference. This difference is related to what 'Macedonians' are not, what they do not want to be and what they wish to be.

I have presented here, obviously, only a very one-sided and narrow view of a small group of people. I have left out 'the Other' that is the Albanian and Roma populations.

This is directly linked to my strong 'kin' connection to the Slav-Macedonians. Had I tried to step over this boundary, I would have broken the trust of the Macedonians and it would have been very difficult for me to earn the trust of the Albanian and Roma population. Nevertheless, they were always present precisely because they were the counter reference my informants used to define who they are. However, I do not wish to confirm the stereotypes of the Albanian and Roma population and I also do not want to portray the Slav-Macedonians as racist. The line between sameness and difference is very fine and it is because of this circumstance that sameness and difference are so ferociously defended. This conflict between sameness and difference did not arise with the independence of Macedonia. It was smouldering all along in Yugoslavia, but the accentuation of it, the focus, has changed. Maybe it is just that the world in Macedonia became smaller and the Albanian and Roma could not be overlooked, whereas, perhaps, before the gaze was directed towards Slovenia or Belgrade or Paris. As the world became smaller, fear and mistrust started, but this time also offered a chance to acknowledge 'the Other' and to deal with the problem of 'ethnic' hatred. Despite these pessimistic undertones, Macedonia has done extraordinarily well to stay out of the Yugoslav conflict and has forged a solid path to independence.

I certainly do hope that all Macedonians in The Republic of Macedonia will have a future and they will not be waiting in vain. Perhaps the future lies in recognising that sameness and difference are ultimately connected with each other. So *T'Ga za Jug*, Longing for the South, and 'Waiting for Macedonia' combine the two aspects of the lives of my friends. The acceptance of who they are and where they are, the acceptance of their rural past and the acceptance of the Balkan as their place of origin, a place that has also reared Yugoslavia, combined with 'Waiting for Macedonia' and the wish to be accepted by 'Western Europe,' to be the same as other young female engineering graduates in Paris, London or Berlin, and to have the same future as they have, is their dilemma. These two notions, ranging from the *T'Ga za Jug* to 'Waiting for Macedonia,' are what moves the lives of my friends, defines who they are, defines their subjectivity, and eventually, what The Republic of Macedonia is today.

APPENDIX A

(Libal 1993; Poulton 1995)

Macedonia today:



Greater Bulgaria (including most of geographic Macedonia) of the San Sefano Treaty of 1878 at the end of the Russo-Turkish war of 1875-1878:

1. Borders of 1877; 2. Borders of the treaty of San Stefano (1878); 3. Area given to Romania; 4. Area given to Montenegro;
5. Area given to Serbia; 6. Area under Austrian influence.



Britain and Austria Hungary, fearing a dominating Bulgaria that could be a client of Russia force its abandonment at the Treaty of Berlin 1878:



The Borders after the Balkan Wars 1912/1913:

1. New borders according to the Treaty of Bukarest 1913; 2. Borders of 1912; 3. Area that was won by Romania; 4. Area that was won by Serbia and Montenegro; 5. Area that was won by Greece; 6. Area that was won by Bulgaria



APPENDIX B

Chapter 1: page1

a) This postcard from 1916 illustrates how Macedonians see themselves

seen by Europe.

b) The fading Yugoslav flag in 1994 (Main Square, Post Office)

Chapter 2: page2 The two faces of Macedonia

a) young Skopjanici in Skopje

b) in a village close to Berevo

page 3 Economical breakdown

Chapter 5: page 4 Old people in the village

page 5 Saint with scratched out eyes (to cure eye maladies)

Chapter 6/7/8/9 page 6

a) Galichnik at the day of the wedding

b) Business sponsorship

c) The crowd

page 7 Wedding Ceremonies (1992)

a) Young people accompanying the bride to the three fountains

b) The inviting of the dead

c) The grooms party is picking up the bride

page 8 The Galichnik Wedding (1992)

a) Trousseau

b) Bride

page 9

Church

page 10 The modern wedding

a) Gifts for the grooms family and the presenting of the wedding

Shoes to the bride by grooms party

b) The signing in the City Hall

Chapter 10

page 11 Life in Skopje

a) in the 'Turkish' part of town

b) 'modern' Skopje

page 12 Understanding of belonging

a) Albanian woman veiled following her husband 10 steps behind

b) Image of 'Macedonian woman' in traditional costume on new church fresco

APPENDIX C

Chapter 2 – table on how my young informants reflect on changing circumstances of

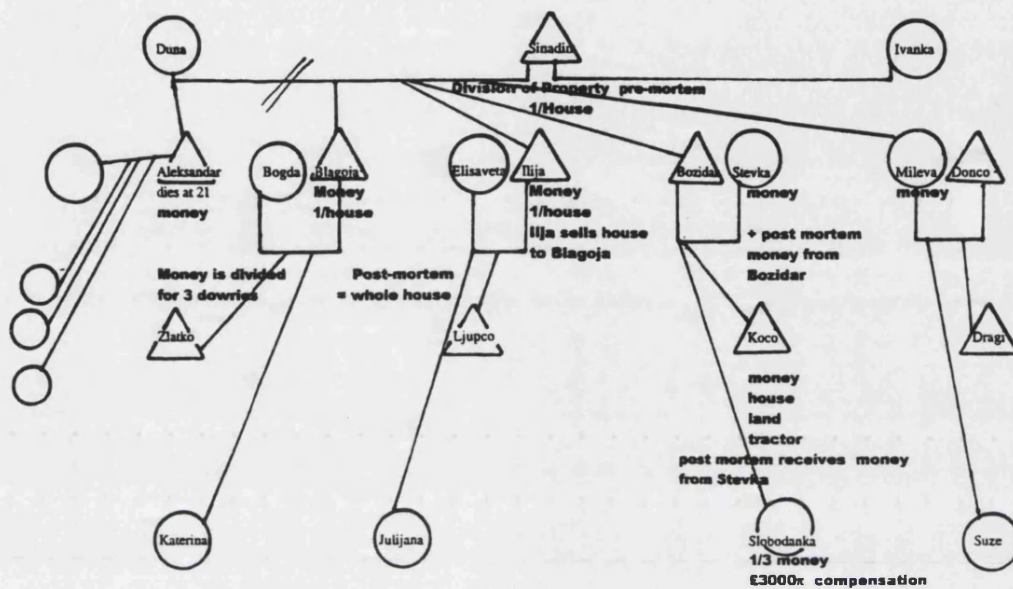
'getting along':

<u>parents</u>	<u>graduates</u> <u>expectations in</u> <u>Yugoslavia</u>	<u>today in Macedonia</u>
achievements through responsibility and hard labour	achievements through advanced knowledge & 'western' attitude	young people = no influence
-> socialist ideology	-> qualifications	-> connections
older generation needs to be reformed from 'oppressed peasants' to older industrial age -> Yugoslavia	older generation = socialist/ 'Balkan' young generation wants to bring Yugoslavia into 'western Europe'	change/reform only possible through connections (with generation) = Balkan principle
labour power through party-membership	career (several jobs) = power	work/job (one job) = no power
young = change	young = change	old = misuse of knowledge & assistance from the 'west' young = no change
ideology = power	knowledge = power	connections = power
security through state	security through knowledge	security through connections

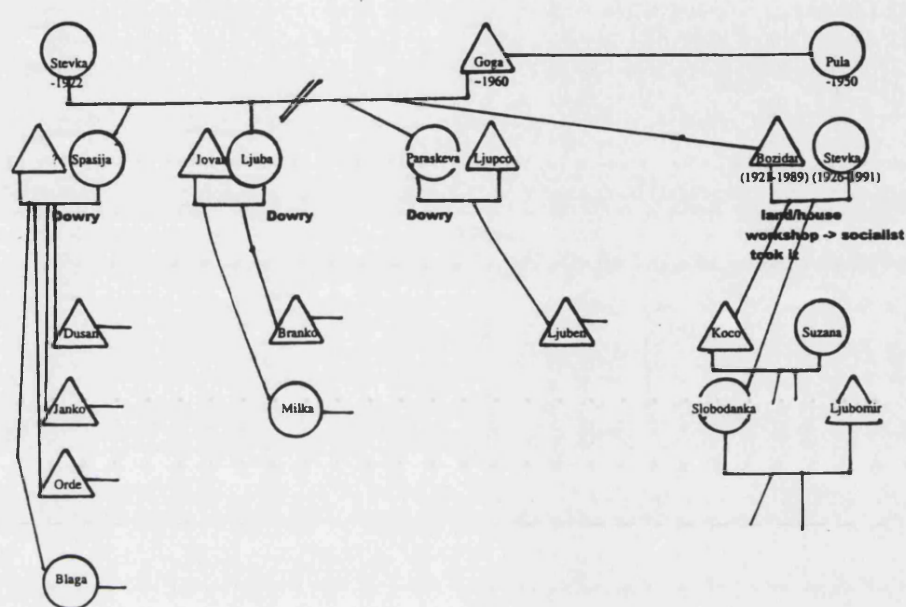
APPENDIX D

Chapter 8 – Inheritance

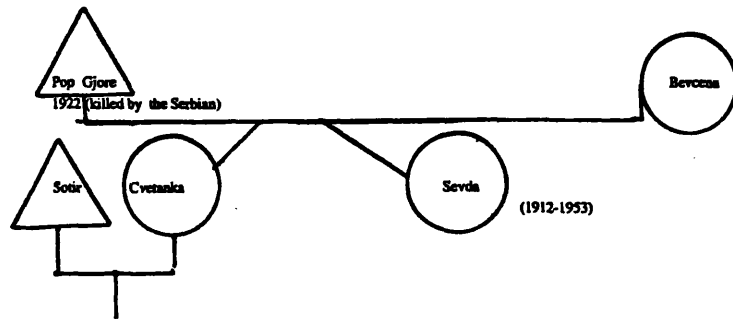
Slobodanka's maternal kin

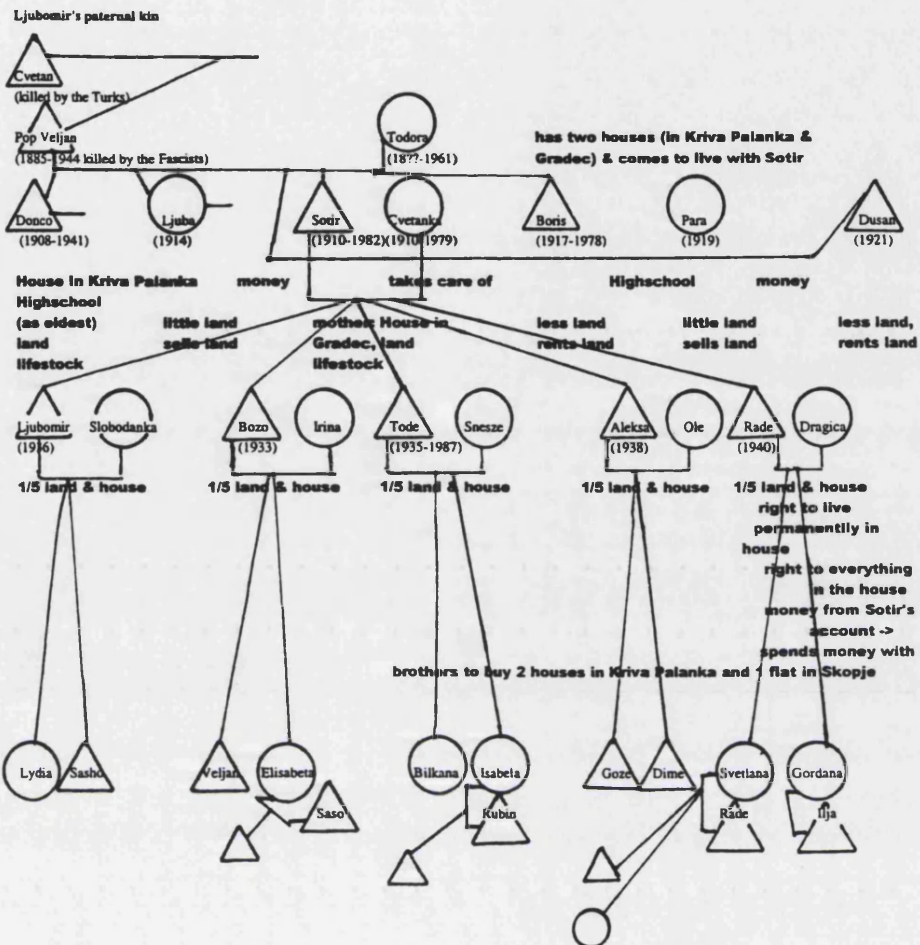


Slobodanka's paternal kin



Ljubomir's maternal kin





APPENDIX E

The Brak i cemejstvo' Institute

One instrument, used by the socialist government in their attempts to change traditional ideas of marriage was the Brak i cemejstvo Institute, the marriage school. This Institute was founded in Skopje by the State in 1965 as a part of the city council, in order to process divorces and take care of children who commit minor crimes. This Institution follows the efforts of the 1946 Yugoslav Constitution to guarantee equality of the sexes both before the law and in social life and the Fifth Party Congress' program of July 1948, which underlined the need for work, as Ramet cites (1995:220) "in educating women in the spirit of socialism, in achieving greater mobilisation of women for the building of socialism, for strengthening the equality already attained, by means of a constant solicitousness for their cultural and political advancement." People might agree that in socialist times it was the Party that was the prime instrument of female emancipation and today, female emancipation is expected (Jancar 1978:199).

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is committed to addressing social problems in Macedonia and supplies financial support in the form of social aid and care of

children from divorced, negligent or abusive families. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy aims to encourage and develop better communication between the sexes, family planning and responsible parenthood. However, according to Mr. Duschko Minovski, the head of the Brak i cemejstvo Institute in 1996, the Institute's main, and hidden agenda, was that of 'progress' for the non-Slavic nationalities, the Albanian and Roma population¹²¹. The directors of the Institute also decided that the purpose and the value of marriage lay in the controlled production of children: marriage should lead to responsible parenthood. Children were regarded by the government as the national treasure and society required the means for raising these children adequately. This agenda lead to the concept of 'planned parenthood' which was directed primarily towards the Albanian population. The Slavic population's fears that they will be overrun by the Albanians; the increasing number of negative comments made by Slavic Macedonians about the high natality rate amongst Albanians; the correlation between this high birth rate and Macedonia's underdevelopment and, therefore, its unsuccessful bids at being accepted as equal by the EC, can be directly connected to the perceptions created by the socialist government and its programme of birth control which segregated the Albanian population from the majority of Macedonians.

In order to enforce planned parenthood the Brak i cemejstvo Institute had to educate

Macedonians about marriage. To be sure that all couples came for the education, the system was altered so that only marriages in law courts were deemed legal and, to be married there, couples required a marriage license issued by the Brak i cemejstvo Institute which they received upon completion of their marriage classes. It was, however, possible to obtain the marriage license *after* being married and *without* visiting the Brak i cemejstvo, as many of my informants were able to do simply because they knew the right people. For most of the people I knew, the marriage classes were merely a nuisance, a source of amusement.

I suspect, however, that this situation would be quite different for an Albanian couple, although I have no data to support this belief. Mr. Minovski stressed that there is a perception that the institute exercises undue pressure but that it is now possible to see the positive results in the marriages counselled. He relates the 'undue pressure' to the forced coercion of the Albanian population to uphold Slavic Macedonian values: marriage for love, without a matchmaker and a maximum of two children. This was termed progress in socialist Macedonia while today, in independent Macedonia, it is the 'modern European way,' a way that leads into democracy and the EC.

My Slav informants did not take the existence or advice of the 'Brak i cemejstvo' Institute at all seriously. Its function seemed to be an attempt at coercive persuasion of

the Albanian population to conform to Slav norms on family size. That the 'Brak i cemejstvo' Institute engaged in rather punitive social engineering measures falls very much in line with Michael Stewart's description of Hungary's policy towards Gypsies who were excluded from capitalist society and, therefore, not in line with the more accepted Hungarian values. Since liberation, Stewart writes, some Gypsies have joined the mainstream, however, the majority is still based in the past and needs to be aligned with the larger Hungarian picture, rather like the Albanians in Macedonia (1987:87).

A similar attitude was expressed towards the Albanian population in socialist Yugoslavia and is still present in day-to-day discourse. The difference today is that the Albanians have become the one factor that damages Macedonia's reputation in Europe and are seen as the one people that hold Macedonia back from Europe. In socialist Yugoslavia there was animosity between the two largest ethnicities in Macedonia, but Yugoslavia itself gave Macedonians the status to be considered an acceptable partner for the EC. Whereas in Yugoslavia, Albanians and Rom were to be brought up to the standard of living of the mainstream Yugoslavian population, today the Albanian population in Macedonia is seen as a direct threat to this standard of living.

The Brak i cemejstvo Institute was meant to educate young couples on what it meant to be husband and wife in a socialist society which involved an alteration to traditional

gender roles. Specifically, women were to be simultaneously mother and worker. In contrast to arguments made by Einhorn (1993) and Pine (1994), I argue that in Macedonia the issue of the double burden, women as mothers and workers, is very much a Macedonian reality today. Women's role as mothers and workers is not contested and women are not expected to leave their job and invest their energy into household and children, despite a high unemployment rate. Regarding Poland, Pine comments:

"The fact of unemployment and loss of income for women has both practical implications for domestic relations between men and women, and cultural/political implications for representations of women and ideologies of gender."

(1994:22)

The Brak i cemejstvo Institute is presented as a practical joke by my Slavic informants, whereas it does represent a coercive tool towards the mainstreaming of the Albanian population today. The rate of unemployment is not higher for women than men, and the cultural/political representations of women have not changed: women are still seen as mothers *and* workers, due to the economic necessity of the double income. Albanian women who stay at home with their children are seen as a counter-reference point for the 'modern Macedonian woman.'

Macedonia still refers to socialist gender ideology despite social cuts like those experienced in Poland. Pine suggests that existing gender ideologies are both reinforced and transformed by a reduction of benefits previously associated with State employment such as subsidised childcare, education assistance, increasing privatisation of medical services and housing benefits, subsidised shops and healthcare (Pine 1994:22).

Although these measurements have serious influences on the daily lives of Macedonians, the implications for men and women do not differ significantly¹²². The Brak i cemejstvo Institute can be seen as an invention by the socialist regime to socially engineer the perfect socialist citizen. Its meaning today, I believe, lies in curbing the Albanian population therefore addressing ethnic, not social, issues. The Brak i cemejstvo Institute does not introduce new gender roles, but rather confirms the existing socialist ideology of women as mothers and workers with all the adherent positive and negative implications¹²³. My understanding of the Brak i cemejstvo Institute is fully supported by the Slavs I knew. However, the Brak i cemejstvo Institute does represent a violation of the private sphere of the Albanian population. International companies are interested in using the institute to further their agendas, which at the least is preventing ethnic conflict in Macedonia, regarding the future of Macedonia and they do so by attempting to impact the Albanian population.

The future of the Brak i cemejstvo' Institute is uncertain, as the government considers abolishing the institute to promoting marriage education in the school system, although this initiative is yet in the planning stages and it will be some time before these changes are implemented. A new discussion will result, as the Albanian population strives to have their own schools and university where they can determine the curriculum.

Considering this development, the government may decide to keep the Brak i cemejstvo' Institute, despite the 'unlawful pressure' it exerts. As Mr. Minovski said: "Things are changing slowly and everybody is comfortable where they are." Although international organisations and private companies have shown interest in taking over the responsibilities of the Institute, according to Mr Minovski, the church has shown no sign of wishing to interfere with marriage as an Institution.

Marriage classes counsel future marriage partners in groups. Equality between the marriage partners is discussed: Mr Minovski states that in the classes, marriage is not described as a union between a man and a woman but rather between partners.

Counselling encourages conversations between couples and, as Mr Minovski was quick to point out, many Albanian couples get to know each other for the first time at the institute¹²⁴. The conversations in the classes are meant to enhance the understanding between marriage partners, which in turn is supposed to benefit the children of that

marriage. The learners are taught that a successful marriage is one in which the couple decides at the outset how many children can be supported both emotionally and economically. Mr. Minovski emphasised that this is a very important point, especially today with the ongoing changes in society. He stressed that children are society's treasure, but today society is not able to give them everything they need. Parents may have time enough because of unemployment but there is not enough money, so the Institute's solution is to regulate the population. He insists that what children need are contented parents and economic security. And this, I would argue, is exactly what marriage in the Skopje of today is understood to provide: contentment and security to its participants.

The Brak i cemejstvo Institute is certainly a remnant of the socialist effort of social engineering: happy children, healthy family, and everybody knows of their duty. These measures created ideas about youth and womanhood that have resulted in a conflict between the Albanian and Macedonian populations. As Nickie Charles suggests in *Gender Divisions and Social Change*:

"The measures for women's emancipation suggested by Marx and Engels were based on an analysis of the family and the position of women in industrial, capitalist societies rather than in agrarian, peasant societies. In such societies the family is not the same family as exists in an urban, industrial context and measures which have been developed and the regimes, committed to the construction of socialism and the emancipation of women, by and large attempted to use Marx and Engels' analysis as blueprint."

(Charles 1993:107)

I argue that socialism created a great divide between the Albanian and Macedonian population, as it defined the 'urban Slav-atheist-Macedonian' and the 'peasant-Muslim-Albanian' with its specific attitudes towards marriage and civil life¹²⁵. In today's marriage, it is this divide between Slavs and ~~ALBANIAN~~ which is addressed more than any social duties or concepts about 'youth' or 'womanhood.'

ENDNOTES

1 See also the work on "Communal Families in the Balkans: The Zadruga" edited by Robert F. Byrnes, 1976.

2 As a member state of the European Community and a Nato military base Greece was not to be opposed publicly.

3 Brima Gallup Report 0194.

4 Office of Statistics, 1991

5 Office of Statistics, 1991

6 Citizens from Skopje, the capital city of Macedonia. See Chapter 10.

7 A highly educated businesswoman not to be confused with the Western stereotype of cosmetician.

8 Most nationalists are nouveau riche, supported by Australian or Aegean Macedonians.

9 See Chapter 10 for more detail.

10 "To describe the difficult situation in Macedonia you have to understand what is going on in peoples' heads. They face the following: mentally, they have to come to grips with the fact that there is no ideology in which to ground their thinking. In fact, their current state really has no ideology whatsoever thus, socialist social protection has fallen away and national solidarity has lost its value. In its place liberal market philosophy has become their god. People expected that the free market would solve all their problems and lead them into a western life style, however, reality has been quite different. They are lacking three substantial features of western democracy: 1) capital; 2) tradition; and, 3) a democratic and civil society. The post-socialist paradigm and its characteristics cause specific anomalies and, despite the fact that they have democratic institutions, they do not function. All they have is a great grey zone of everything, especially regarding the economy and the results have not been as expected. They are a country that uses the Black Market to release social tension. It functions positively because their social policy is not creating equality as it should. But attempts to create equality are handicapped precisely by the black-market and family

solidarity in return. In their society, which was always a rural society, family solidarity is the main principle in their society and especially typical for Albanian families. They are extremely patriarchal, women are not emancipated as much as others and the number of children per family is very high. But it is not only the Albanians and the black-market; on the border with Serbia there are Macedonians smuggling virtually everything. This is the Balkan and post-socialist anomaly. Their social policy is not well-developed and the anomaly of post-socialism is that the black-market is needed. For this discussion, the black market refers to any illegal transaction, such as exchanging foreign currency, selling cigarettes and drugs. There is a specific corner in Skopje on which those transactions take place. When exchanging money, the rates are rather lower than the rates fixed by the state. The result is that you will receive more German marks for your dinars on the black market than exchanging it at the official exchange bureau.

There is disappointment from the new democratic society. It hit people hard, especially through high unemployment. In Macedonia one must consider that there are two aspects pre-dominant in its economy: 1) Today Macedonia is an independent state. When it was a republic of Yugoslavia its production was very dependent on the Yugoslavian market and with its break-up, agriculture became much more important for Macedonia, even though, on the whole, Macedonia lost out since its agriculture had been dependent on export to other Yugoslavian republics. 2) Macedonian technological production and advancement were part of the greater Yugoslavia- their factories were producing parts for products that would be assembled elsewhere. Since Macedonia has to produce for itself, the parts factories had to be closed and people now deal only with trade, not with production. This is a dangerous misjudgement. This year the Ministry for Social Policy has prepared a programme, but it is only a distributive social policy. This cannot be right and I see it as very negative. People will get social aid without doing anything. The situation is the worst in the urban areas, because the magic formula of family solidarity is lost, because of the development into a nuclear family. In contrast to the West, solidarity still exists, but it also means that children never grow up. They get everything from their families and the families go through major sacrifices to finance the car of the son or daughter. It is only a very one-sided family solidarity. The old care for the young, though at some point it should be that the young care for the old. This is not happening however, especially not in the urban centres.

There is now a great engagement of young people in the anomalous private sector; there are nothing like unions and I cannot imagine the possibility of forming unions due to the strength of patronage. Nevertheless many young people are unemployed, even when they are married. They live with their parents so the family manages to reach the next month. Thus the pensions of older people become important for the social position of the entire family, sometimes 3 to 4 generations. Only on this one point are they ahead of Western Countries. One good aspect of this is that old people are not so

isolated and as social aid in Macedonia is not as large and comfortable as in Western countries, it is sufficient because the state can rely on family solidarity. There is another problem: the rural population left the countryside, often without reason. Now everything is concentrated in the urban centres, mostly Skopje with 700 000 people. The government still does not know how to deal with this landflucht, leaving the countryside. They still concentrate on solving the social problems of the urban centres where there is an army of workers, but no industry. For this we do not need 'prevention' but 'cure.' Maybe this year is the most important year as we will hopefully see the first positive results of the privatisation program progress to the next stage.

Socially however, such economical uncertainty restrains people. The divorce rate is rising. There are no flats, young people are unable to establish their own households and the age when people are getting married is higher. More and more people become homeless, there is nothing like social housing and there are new problems such as street children: it is no surprise that people are looking back to Marshall Tito. Families, though, do get help from their program. More than 60,000 families receive social help. However, there is a big problem of distribution, because most money goes to the Albanians. And what is really needed is Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahmen, methods of organising work for people, but for this they did not get money from the EC, they only got money to distribute - and this is where the system has gone wrong.

11 See Chapter 10.

12 To give a rough idea of how much that would be: £10 to £15 would pay the electricity bill for a month for a 4 person family. An average wage for his fellow engineers working in a ministry would be three times as much.

13 In February 1995 the Albanian population of Tetevo was demonstrating for a purely Albanian population. The Macedonian government was not willing to allow such an undertaking with the argument that this would further fragment the country along ethnic lines. During the demonstration police were attacked and shot one Albanian man. He was rumoured to have been from Kosovo. Some people argue that there is strong external provocation from Kosovo to divide The Republic of Macedonia with the aim to declare an Albanian state that would include, Albania, Kosovo and Western Macedonia.

14 Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) - radical nationalist party with many delegates from the Diaspora. Their origins go back to the Ilinden uprising of 1903 with the aim to unite Macedonia.

15 She is referring here to the demands of VMRO to unite The Republic of Macedonia with Macedonian territory on Greek soil – a demand that is used by Greece to argue that The Republic of Macedonia is making territorial claims and therefore does not deserve to be recognised as an independent state. Those claims have been called irrational and non-existent by the official political discourse of The Republic of Macedonia which defines its borders incontestably bound to the borders it held while part of Yugoslavia. See Chapter 1.

16 Many girls had chosen to go to a language high school and chose engineering at university, whereas boys usually went to the technical high schools.

17 In these cases it is argued that there would not be enough money to pay even the bills - certainly true, in part. The suggestion that friends could move in together and use household articles that were saved for their dowry to establish their household, was deemed inappropriate. For young women to live by themselves was not acceptable if it could be avoided, which meant if they had family in Skopje. There were cases of young women living by themselves but these were students from other towns who were studying in Skopje. This was accepted, though often commented on negatively by others.

18 Trouble would mean to get pregnant or lose one's reputation: "running around on the streets like a prostitute" (the mother of a friend 1994).

19 She paid the money back in the following months.

20 He is referring to buying CD's legally and not illegally burnt CD's the consumers would buy on the Green Market or in some new stores that imported such CD's from Bulgaria.

21 My informant is saying this because the public opinion in the Republic was that most of the money that was earned in Macedonia at this time was through illegal activities, through smuggling with Serbia, through smuggling drugs or through dirty deals in the privatisation process. Probably none of the private companies paid taxes nor were 'rich' people thought to do so since both had connections to evade taxation. People were saying that it is only the honest and 'small' people that actually pay.

22 'Positive discrimination' was/is the term for a policy enacted to guarantee equal employment opportunity for the Albanian population, as many Albanians did not have the 'vrski' (connections) to find a job.

23 While she was filling out application forms, she was also filling out an application for immigration to Canada.

24 See Appendix C

25 See Tone Bringa 1995:58ff for a closer discussion.

26 On previous trips to Macedonia, I had had difficulties finding sanitary napkins.

27 The Green Market is an open market arrangement that can be found in different places across the cities in which farmers from outside of Skopje sell their produce and traders sell their cheap illegally imported goods like Levis Jeans from Turkey, tea from India, milk from Slovenia, butter, toilet cleaner, and shampoo from Germany, chocolate from Switzerland and radios from Malaysia.

28 They were not 'Duty Free' shops in the true sense of the word, although originally that was their purpose. Merely a legal term, they sprang up all over Skopje selling 'Western' consumer goods, cigarettes, alcohol, jewellery, wash-machines, barbie dolls, shaving cream, perfumes and vacuums.

29 These are 'Western' fruits and have been available regularly in the shops for only a year.

30 The USA gave a limited number of Green Cards to countries of their choice. In Macedonia, these were bought by a lottery company.

31 I say inaccessible because for the parents to start a new life outside Macedonia would be far more difficult than for their children. Education and ideology and just the fact that they have built up a home in Macedonia would make it unlikely that the parents would leave Macedonia for a longer period of time. Only one parent of a friend is living in Moscow at the time of the research and that is due to a political position.

32 I heard few elderly women talk about how they enjoy watching their little granddaughters taking a bath and many women would make remarks on how beautiful and soft the skin of many of my young friends were.

33 The west; western Europe is actually in the north. In placing identity on the landscape of Skopje this becomes important. It can be approximated that in the north of the city, the Macedonian population lives, whereas the Albanian population lives in the south. Placing this on the map of Macedonia the big city is in the north and the main agriculture can be found in the south and in the east.

34 Most of these consumer 'objects' had previously been brought in by guest workers or by people travelling. However, in the new Macedonia these items gain a 'new' meaning since the access to the countries that produce these objects has become very difficult.

35 For example, teenagers are in some ways defined by the fact that they frequent different areas than their parents do.

36 Many of the images to which they aspire are from American television. However, the 'ideal' world for them is Western Europe. America is often accused of social Darwinism and seen as only interested in themselves.

37 See Chapter 10 for a discussion of the Albanian population.

38 This relates to the different generational meanings of 'freedom' in chapter 2.

39 Village identification is discussed in Chapter 10.

40 See Peter Worsley, 1968.

41 Offering of *slatko* is indeed found in most Mediterranean countries, such as Greece, Bulgaria or Turkey.

42 No one in Skopje failed to make mention of the Turkish occupation and oppression of Macedonia that resulted.

43 The sweetener is used instead of real sugar and is a sign of western life style, neglecting the 'opulence' of sugar.

44 See J. Cowan, 1990, p. 68ff, discussing the sociability of drinking coffee.

45 In general, Macedonians are not aware of the discussion in Europe or America on the problem of long working hours.

46 Something similar is reported by Sheena Crawford in her thesis *Person and Place in Kalavassos: Perspectives on Social Change in a Greek-Cypriot Village*, 1985.

47 The Bridge is seen as an Ottoman inheritance and it was one of the only constructions that survived the earthquake in the centre of Skopje. which has been seen as a sign that the Ottoman influence will never cease.

48 The Green Market is an open market arrangement that can be found in different places across the cities in which farmers from outside of Skopje sell their produce and traders sell their cheap illegally imported goods like Levis Jeans from Turkey, tea from India, milk from Slovenia, butter, toilet cleaner, and shampoo from Germany, chocolate from Switzerland, radios from Malaysia, etc.

49 This means literally no pay – workers come to the factories in order to keep their jobs in the case the factory starts working again, but in the time the factory makes no money and no one receives paycheques.

50 A short breakdown of the income and expenditure of a 4 person household in approximation: mother and father together earn 200 pounds in a month, the children earn as well about 200 pounds (assuming both children work). For food, clothing, water, telephone and electricity the household will spend about 150 pounds. 50 pounds are either spend on extras as repair of the car or it is exchanged into German marks and kept as a saving. This saving is used to buy a warm winter-coat, to send the children to a holiday to Turkey or Bulgaria or to invest in a new fridge. The income of the children is used mostly for their consumption. They might contribute some of their earnings to the savings of the household, they might pay petrol for the household car, pay a sweater for a sibling or buy presents for friends from their own money. The rest of their money is spent for aerobic classes, body building or body sculpture studios, going out in the evening (one evening cost about five to ten pounds, but especially men can spend up to 20 pounds on drinks in a evening) or for buying jeans, sweaters or shoes. In many stores in Skopje it is possible to pay in instalments, so if the cost of shoes or sweater exceed the monthly earning, it can be financed over a period of time.

51 This political proximity is a matter of discussion, but for my informants it was Tito's split from the Soviet bloc, his creation of the non-alignment movement, the special position that Yugoslavia held as a socialist country that justified this notion of proximity. In a very real sense they were very close to Western Europe: through the massive influx of Yugoslav guest workers to Germany, who in turn brought German currency, consumer goods and proximity. In 1990, after Ante Markovich, the financial minister of Yugoslavia, tied the Yugoslavian dinar to the German Mark, people felt that: "Soon we will be part of the European Community."

52 Many informants in Macedonia believe that Europe views Macedonia as an impoverished republic on the brink of extinction; a republic to be pitied and not an equal.

53 See Chapter 2.

54 Bourdieu (1984) demonstrated that value in the contemporary West is not just a question of demand, but I wish to emphasise the difference of the actually assigned value in Macedonia in comparison to Western Europe. Certainly one can find extremely high priced scarves in Parisian shops that only a privileged few could afford to buy. However, for most of the middle class, there are options to buy scarves that have a similar value as that of the Parisian exclusive shop, but a more demand adjusted price.

55 Plot Outline: Focuses on the pleasures and problems of a group of rich teenagers who go to Beverly Hills High-School. The adventures of twins Brandon and Brenda soon evolved into one of the most popular teen/young adult ensembles to hit the TV airwaves. Basically the plot is about the beautiful people who live within the area possessing the zipcode 90210. In fact, the zip and city became synonymous. For my Macedonian friends the city represented the world in the United States of America. 90210's cast was engaging, attractive and lived an enviable and privileged, albeit troubled, lifestyle. Fans were preoccupied with who Kelly was finally going to end up with in the revolving relationships as it seemed that only Brenda and Brandon - barred from such things by relation - had not coupled up. Could Donna could lose any more weight, along with her virginity?

When the series first started, it focused on Brandon and Brenda (theirs was the only "family life" consistently depicted) and their friends: brooding Dylan, pretty Kelly, jockish Steve, bookish Andrea and tag-along David. Beverly Hills, 90210 made pin-up idols of its toothsome male leads, alleged bad boy Dylan and overly empathetic Brandon and an anti-star of Brenda. Meanwhile, most of 90210's maturing cast made the transition to the fictional California University, where they wrestled bravely with the campus "issues" of the day, AIDS scares, cocaine habits, cults and innumerable ratings-pumping misadventures. As the entire cast face graduation jitters, there is some concern that the show will not survive the rigors of a post-grad job search.

56 See Chapter 10 for a detailed discussion of these issues.

57 I add the proviso 'so-called' because the fragmentation of Yugoslavia is not understood by my informants to be about ethnicity as much as it is about political power and the disassembling lacks justification.

58 Even though this is an odd terminology I feel it describes most adequately how my group of young informants would like to identify themselves.

59 See Chapter 10 for further details.

60 'Modern' and 'Western' are used interchangeably by my informants.

61 Skopje is the definite centre of consumerism in Macedonia.

62 One setback in some of my interviews was a woman who came to 'control' what was said. I was not able to determine her role and learned only that she was the milk mother of my friend's father, his aunt. She would just come into the house sit down and listen. She intervened when the topic turned to magic - she insisted that there was nothing like black magic, that this was all nonsense. The women interviewed would then be much more careful in what they told me and in one case I had to stop the interview because the interviewed woman suddenly became very silent. Dina in Skopje who had left the village because of black magic refused to talk about this woman. However, as my interviews were about birth, baby care and 'making children' we only touched slightly on the topic of black magic.

63 'It is important to add that most of the guests are not literally 'strangers' to the host. Indeed most of the guests are kin, affines, neighbours, and close friends....' (Rheubottom, 1976: 24)

64 Later on this woman explained that children can be made any time, even if the woman was menstruating.

65 The relationship between mother and daughter is a relationship of intimacy that nevertheless emphasises generational hierarchy. A mother will not treat her daughter in a woman to woman manner, but always in the power structure of mother to child. In every family, in every house it is the mother, the prototype being the 'mother of God', who takes the central position.

66 In many families, generational conflict took the form of the parents following socialist ideology and the grandparents trying to circumvent them by secretly having their grandchildren baptised.

67 She refers to her holding onto bed, chair and table while giving birth and breaking the actual bed frame.

68 I asked them what the ideal number of children would be for them and they told me that many children were good as they could help in the fields and would support them when they were old, but that probably too many children (more than six) would mean great poverty for the family. However, they told me that there were never that many surviving children. Many children died very young or later in the war.

69 Women here are equated with house and the house with the womb. An idea Du Boulay (1986: 141) suggests for Greek society: "There is thus an identification between the woman, the house, and the family - an identification that is striking when it is pointed out that the family is the fundamental unit of the community, which in this society, means that it is the main solidarity group." Such solidarity group determines the identity of every single individual. In this respect the birth giving mother becomes the centre of her society, the centre of life.

70 Marriage means, for women, having children while for men it is primarily about economic links between affines. Men are supposed to help the family of their wives, but they also gain a 'connection' they can utilise.

71 Today, at divorce, children stay with their mothers most of the time.

72 See Chapter 10.

73 Skopje was hit by a devastating earthquake on July 26th 1963 at 5 a.m. 85% of the buildings were destroyed and more than a thousand people were killed.

74 See Chapter 10 for detailed information on the informants.

75 Rheubottom, *Dowry and Wedding Celebrations in Yugoslav Macedonia*, 1980.

76 Regarding migration and gender relations see: Pina-Cabral, *Sons of Adam, Daughters of Eve* especially p. 85ff and Gardener, *Global Migrants, Local Lives*, p. 119.

77 'Real' understood as a couple married by a priest and not played by actors as in socialist Macedonia.

78 For further discussion of the interrelationship between dance and social identities, see Cowan, *'Dance and the Body Politics in Northern Greece'*, p. 97ff.

79 See Appendix D for illustration

80 Kras is a Croatian chocolate factory and supplies all of Yugoslavia with 'chocolate gifts,' chocolate for own personal consumption is most likely bought at the market and comes from Switzerland or Germany.

81 For possible causes of this difference, see *Changes in Property Transfer among Greek Cypriot Villagers*, Loizos 1975b.

82 See Chapter 10 for further reference to Skopjans as displaced villagers.

83 See Chapters 3, 4 and 10 for further discussion.

84 The degree of changes in marriage ideology and wedding ceremonies which have occurred in each particular region of Macedonia and in what time span these have taken place are beyond the limits of the current discussion.

85 There are many stories amongst the Slavic Macedonian population of Albanian clergy and elders visiting Albanian households to urge families to have more children for the greater glory of the Prophet.

86 Zadruga is a Slav word for a general form of joint family organization found in many parts of the Balkans. See for example J.M. Halpern and B. Kerewsky-Halpern, 'A Serbian Village in Historical Perspective' and E. Hammel "Zadruga as Process.

87 See Chapter 5 for further discussion on motherhood and recognition.

88 According to an unofficial estimate of the health authorities in 1996 the rate of pregnancies is high for several reasons: 1) contraception was not readily available. 2) It is seen as immoral for a young girl to go to a gynecologist as this would suggest her sexual activity. The moral sentiment in the population is that young people have sexual relations, but sexual intercourse should only be acknowledged in marriage. 3) Condoms are available, but two factors mitigate their popularity: they are believed to be of poor quality and men think condoms hinder their virility. 4) Abortion is the most practised form of 'contraception' and is generally understood, by the public and doctors, as cleaning. However, it is seen as dangerous to abort the firstborn as there is the chance of infertility after abortion and every woman should have at least one child.

89 Census 1991, 1994 conducted and published by the Government of The Republic of Macedonia, Statistical Office of The Republic of Macedonia, available at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Republic of Macedonia, "Dame Gruev" St. No. 4& 6, 91000 Skopje.

90 The nature of the gifts is remarkable here as it is presented as a sacrifice, for further reference see Chapter 4.

91 The Ottoman empire was not divided according to language, ethnicity or nationality but by religion. This is called the millet system. See Poulton for further reference.

92 Identity is discussed further in Chapter 10.

93 Her statement of not wanting to be a mother-in-law refers to the fact that she assumes that her daughters will move in with their husbands and that no son will move into her household, so she would have to be a mother-in-law to her daughter-in-law moving in with her and experience the same difficulties she herself experienced.

94 Numbers can be drawn from the 1994 census.

95 For a thorough discussion on the Macedonian - Albanian conflict see Poulton, 1995.

96 Skopjanici are the inhabitants of the city of Skopje. Albanians and Roma living in Skopje nevertheless are always Albanians or Roma.

97 How these attributes came about would exceed this discussion and my understanding of the folk tradition of these places.

98 One can follow them on the street map headed by the Boulevard of Marshall Tito, the centre of town that had to see the attempted assassination of President Kiro Gligorov, going to Dame Gruev (Stip), to Boulevard Gotse Delchev (Kilkis/Novo Selo close to Stip), Krste Misirkov, Yane Sandanski, Boulevard Koco Racin, Boulevard Illinden Boulevard Makedonija, Boulevard Partisanski, Boulevard Makedonija, also Boulevard Jugoslavija and Boulevard JNA.

99 See Tone Bringa, in *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way* for a further discussion on the Yugoslavian understanding of the terms *narod*, *nacionalnost* and *narodnost*, p.25, 1995.

100 The term 'modern world' or 'modern life' is frequently used in Skopje. Modern stands for up-to-date as well as for stylish or fashionable.

101 My informants never expressed a feeling of estrangement. Many people are indeed proud of their city especially the nightlife and 'café culture,' nevertheless, people did apologise for the 'Balkan feature of their city.' They did so assuming my 'Western European standards' and were relating 'Balkan' mainly to dirt and destruction throughout the city not to the overall appearance of city planning. The estrangement I have extracted from comments by my informants about their origin.

102 A resource that is still heavily stressed in social interaction.

103 Gold today plays still a major role in family relationship. It is gold that expresses kinship - the presentation of gold emphasis kinship ties.

104 The post-office was to close at 7:00 and I had tried to post a letter at 6:30, nearly impossible. When angry about this I was confronted with reactions such as: "you should have gone earlier " There are other examples: there are discos and loud cafés built into the apartment buildings and people surely complain about the noise. It is quite significant that the reform of closing the cafes in apartment areas at 11 p.m. which is the time that the young people start to go out, was supposed to take place in October 1994 and which they tried to enforce again in the spring 1995, did not make an impact. The cafe owners simply bribed the police and there was no sleep for so many from young children to old people. Some tried to take defence by pouring water on the guests standing outside, but this was seen as adding to the excitement of the night-life.

There are other cases, probably seen many times in other socialist countries, of people in the public services bluntly refusing service. For my argument however it is important to note that this "feature" of society is not so much blamed on socialism in Macedonian society, but on "peasant" defiance.

105 The connection with the soil is evoked every weekend when the urban population pays its tribute to Vodno with a pilgrimage to its summit and gazes out onto the mountains of "their land." Many times these walks are accompanied by partisan songs that the youth have learned in kindergarten or with the pioneers. After climbing hours and hours with hundreds of other urbanites ("just like a big family" as an informant noted), the whole valley and mountains over mountains are welcoming to the eyes. Skopje becomes a spot in the landscape and there can be a sense of "whole" and "belonging" felt. The wild mountains seem to symbolise the praised hardship - men against nature. It is on Vodno that Skopjanici come to grasp the sense of belonging they need more than ever, and have needed for more time than history can tell.

106 This was enforced by Tito's destruction of "rural bourgeoisie" that left many villages deserted, which then were taken over by the Albanian population. It was due also to an influx of Albanians from Kosovo. As Slav Macedonians claim rural origin they are very bitter that the countryside in many places have been taken over by the Albanian population.

107 See Baker, Alan R.H. "Introduction: On Ideology and Landscape" in: Baker, Alan R.H. and Gideon Biger (eds.), *Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992, p. 4.

108 I was always told that houses were designed by Japanese architects and as such earthquake-proof.

109 See Baker, Alan R.H. "Introduction: On Ideology and Landscape" in: Baker, Alan R.H. and Gideon Biger (eds.), *Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992, p. 10.

110 Interestingly, as I mentioned, is the fact that the Muslim signifiers stood untouched. In the discourse between the Macedonian and Albanian population this spatial arrangement becomes vital as the Albanian population does not have a problem with its own identification of what it means to be Albanian.

111 See Rotenberg, R. and Gary McDonogh (eds.), *The Cultural Meaning of Urban Space*, Westport, Con.& London: Bergin & Garvey, 1993, p. xii-xiii.

112 It may be interesting to trace the development of this planning philosophy but that is not my task here.

113 The government today, in trying to privatise the housing sector hoping to achieve a greater concern with the "own property," offers its citizens the use of their frozen foreign currency savings to buy their own flats.

114 The 'Green Market' is called 'green' because supposedly it is a fruit and vegetable market, but really everything from toilet paper to sweaters and jeans from Turkey and shower head's, tools, watches, glue, cigarettes and alcohol can be found.

115 In the 1994 election, the division of the city was more apparent. The inner city (South) voted predominantly for the "Reform-Socialists" under Kiro Gligorov. VMRO gained strong support in "Slav" areas in the North which also houses rising numbers of Albanians.

116 I say supposedly here, as it is not clear if Macedonia really has set its socialist past aside. Kiro Gligorov is an "old communist" and so are many others. What is now called the Social Democratic Union has been formerly the League of Communists of Macedonia. Many people have called the system Neo- Communist rather than Democratic . However, the government includes many young professionals who did not belong to the socialist party and certain democratic freedoms, as the freedom of speech, are, as far as I can tell, guaranteed. Though as Poulton (1995: 206) points out: "there were few dissidents in Macedonia under the old Communist system, which is perhaps an indication of the lack of any democratic culture in the Western sense."

117 An Albanian was shot dead by the police in Tetovo while demonstrating. However, far from belittling this, I want to mention that the man shot was a Kosovo Albanian.

The Kosovo lately have started playing a major role in militarising the Albanian population of Macedonia.

118 There is a problem of Slav Muslim Macedonians I am not clear about. As I feel, but I have only very limited information on this, the Muslim "Macedonians" as they call themselves (in opposition to Albanian and Turks) do seem to tend to identify themselves as "Slav." The Macedonians do not equate them with the Albanian population and the two groups mix without evident difficulties. Only in regards to inter-religious marriage, even if both partners are atheists, would religious affiliation play a role. "Two religions are not to belong under one blanket" is a Macedonian proverb.

119 A discussion in my own country on the subject of abortion was received with astonishment. When told that a majority in my country seek to make abortion illegal on religious grounds, I was confronted with the outcry "We thought you were a civilised country."

120 See Fabian, 1983.

121 For further discussion on the ethnic conflict between Slavic Macedonians and the Albanian minority refer to Chapter 10.

122 Please see Chapter 2 for a further discussion.

123 The 'double burden' is certainly an issue but few middle-aged women have expressed interest in the idea of staying at home and being full-time mothers and housewives. None of the female engineers have expressed this desire, but rather expressed the great importance it has for them and their position in society to work in their profession. Women from the working-class as well held that they valued their independence as wage-earners. None of the women, though, challenged the assumed role of the woman in the household. The household and all its activity is seen as female domain by female and male informants of all ages alike.

124 Such a comment has to be seen in the light of the ongoing discussion regarding Macedonian identity, much of this sense of identity being based on not being Albanian. To be Albanian means to be like one's ancestors in archaic times. Even though there is understood to be some relationship between peasant Macedonia and the Albanian population (this distinction is made by informants and not by the author) nobody would suggest the idea of 'sameness' between the Albanian and the Slavic population.

125 For further detail see Chapter 10.

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