

Fodor's Field Diary and the Writing of the Hungarian Imperial Self during World War I

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Steven A.E. Jobbitt,

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Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 17.3 (2015)**

Thematic Issue ***Life Writing and the Trauma of War***. Ed. **Louise O. Vasvári and I-Chun Wang**

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol17/iss3/>>

Abstract: In his article "Fodor's Field Diary and the Writing of the Hungarian Imperial Self during World War I" Steven A.E. Jobbitt analyses a field diary written by the Hungarian geographer and botanist, Ferenc Fodor, who took part in a two-week geobotanical expedition to Bosnia-Herzegovina in the summer of 1917. Sponsored by the Hungarian Academy of Science, the expedition was part of a much broader Austro-Hungarian imperialist project in the Balkans during World War I. Close scrutiny of Fodor's field diary as a particular form of life writing provides important insight into the masculine-imperialist fantasies that informed Hungary's mapping of the Balkans as both a geopolitical and civilizational space, and in so doing points to the conceptual tensions and existential anxieties that lay at the center of Fodor's own conception and negotiation of self. Jobbitt's analysis suggests that although not obvious, Fodor's field diary written during World War I represents "trauma" in its both personal and extended perspectives.

Steven A.E. JOBBITT

Fodor's Field Diary and the Writing of the Hungarian Imperial Self during World War I

On the evening of 20 June 1917, the Hungarian geographer and botanist Ferenc Fodor detrained at Bosna Brod, a border town in northern Bosnia-Herzegovina situated where the Bosna River meets the Sava. Traveling under the auspices of the Hungarian Academy of Science's Oriental Committee (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Keleti Bizottság), Fodor was part of a five-man scientific expedition on its way to conduct a two-week geobotanical survey of the Bosnian region. It was his first excursion to the Balkans, a region of colonial interest to Hungarian nationalists and would-be imperialists alike. Filling him with a sense of power and purpose, the simple act of setting foot on the railway platform at Bosna Brod triggered what might usefully be called the "masculine-imperialist fantasy" that Fodor harbored as a conservative-nationalist Hungarian intellectual engaged in what he and others considered to be field research of great scientific, and ultimately geopolitical, import. As he would record in his field diary later that same night: "With my first steps I walked upon Balkan soil just as Caesar once did in Egypt" (unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine) ("Első lépésemmel úgy járok a Balkán földjén, mint annak idején Caesar Egyiptom földjével" ["Botanikai" 4]). Fodor's dramatic pronouncement suggests that his hand-written, fifty-page field diary was much more than a mere mechanical collection of disinterested notes and geobotanical observations. Though Fodor's field diary is undoubtedly of a scientific nature, there is still a remarkable intimacy to be found within it, largely because it is self-referential throughout. One obvious way of looking at Fodor's field diary, therefore, is to read it as a form of diary itself, one which, though it only records a twelve-day excursion, provides important insight into the complex negotiation of his own "narrative persona" (Smith and Watson 266).

Building on the conceptual foundations laid by a number of poststructuralist theorists and scholars, I examine Fodor's Balkan field diary as a particular form of life writing that can help unlock and problematize the perspective of a unified masculine self he enacted with his first steps on Balkan soil and that he attempted time and again to play out over the course of the expedition. Informed by what we know of Fodor's life and work (see, e.g., Hajdú; Jobbitt), what emerges is the story of a young man in his early twenties struggling to negotiate not only the destabilizing spaces of a foreign land, but also the inherently complex psychological landscapes of modernity itself. Rather than acting as a passive, reflective screen against which he could exercise what Rosi Braidotti calls the "transcendental narcissism" of the detached, autonomous, and ultimately colonizing self (38), the landscape and people of Bosnia offered some stiff resistance. In the end, what was reflected back to Fodor was incomplete, distorted, and fundamentally destabilizing. Driven by the hope for ontological totality, Fodor was instead forced to confront the inevitable fragmentation of his very being.

It is telling that Fodor should choose to describe his first encounter with the Balkans with a reference to Julius Caesar's arrival in Egypt in 48 BCE. Although the analogy is obviously a bit of a stretch, this final chapter in Caesar's successful military campaign against his erstwhile political ally (and former son-in-law) Pompey did have a few general points in common with Fodor's geobotanical expedition, albeit in a way that is only possible within the exaggerated bounds of the nationalist-imperialist imaginary. Much like Caesar, whose pursuit of the intransigent Pompey ultimately involved him in a civil war which had important implications for the future of Roman control over Egypt (see, e.g., Goldsworthy), Fodor and his team were part of a much broader imperial mission in the Balkans, one which, if successful, would serve to quell the forces of political dissent and disorder in the region and would ultimately see Bosnia-Herzegovina drawn more closely into the cultural and political sphere of the Austro-Hungarian empire. This part of the Balkans, in fact, had long been an object of Habsburg imperial desire and the war provided an opportunity to control and possess it fully. As Fodor himself indicated in the first entry in his field diary, the Hungarian Academy of Science used the war as a pretense to begin its planned scientific research in the Balkans, noting that "the very conditions of the war have made it easier to undertake this research since virtually the entire Balkans are under our military control" (1). The fact that they were not only granted military permission for the expedition, but also had the active support of the army and the Austrian-appointed governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina, suggests that the expedition had an important empire-building role to play. However, whatever broader, Habsburg imperialist purpose the expedition may have fulfilled, there can be no doubt that for Fodor and the rest of his colleagues this purpose overlapped with, and was likely dwarfed by, a more narrow, nationalist agenda. Indeed, as Robert Nemes reminds us, in the pre-Trianon period, Hungarian nationalists "pursued their aims within an imperial framework" (8).

Given this nationalist and imperialist frame of mind, one that was reinforced by the expedition's commitment to scientific inquiry, it is no wonder that Fodor recorded in his field diary that he had been overcome by a sense of power upon crossing the border into the Balkans for the first time in the summer of 1917. This elevated sense of self, and with it his confident self-identification with Caesar, was further amplified by his own personal investment in the expedition, one that went well beyond the geopolitical. Having spent the war years working as a high school teacher in the provincial town of Karánsebes (today Caransebeș in Romania), the expedition provided Fodor with an opportunity to play out his own masculine-imperialist fantasies, something which had been denied to him in August 1914 when he had been declared medically unfit for military service in the Austro-Hungarian army (Fodor 8). The invitation to join the Academy of Science's Balkan expedition, therefore, came not only as an honor to Fodor, but also as a relief. For three long years Fodor had watched his colleagues and students marching proudly off to war, and now he was finally given an opportunity to prove his worth as a man. On this more personal and even fundamental level, then, the muscular image of Caesar represented for Fodor the pinnacle of his own masculine fantasy of subjective unity, a fantasy that was

underscored by the illusion of the self as an autonomous ontological totality capable of exercising sovereignty over himself and others. This more or less post-Kantian conception of the self, one that conceives of the independent human agent as the sole author of his or her actions, was the cornerstone of Fodor's identity, not only as a man, but also as a scientist, and as a nationalist. As it has been for so many other European colonizers both before and after him, the Balkans served (or at least were supposed to serve) as a passive "Oriental" (or "semi-Oriental") stage upon which he could enact this fantasy of the self (on the question of Orientalism, see Bakic-Hayden; Rac; Said; Todorova; Wolff). To frame Fodor's masculine fantasy, the Balkans were posited as both a physical and narrative space within which he could project himself "to the height of imperial consciousness," and, in so doing, mask his own inherent fragmentation under "the performative illusion of unity, mastery and self-transparency" (Braidotti 12).

Fodor's brief "Julian" performance at the train station at Bosna Brod was just the first of a never ending string of performances that he enacted and then recorded in his field diary during his nearly two week tour of southwest Bosnia. Through these gendered "performances" (see Butler), Fodor attempted to play out his masculine-imperialist fantasy of an integrated self, thus demonstrating to himself and to those around him (and, indeed, to those who might later read his field diary) that he was the man he imagined himself to be. However, these performances were blocked and disrupted, so much so that his interconnected self-image as a civilized, male, Hungarian scientist was undermined, and thrown repeatedly into question. Despite the holes that would ultimately appear in Fodor's masculine-imperialist fantasy, the rush of power that he felt during his late-night stop on the Bosnian border only seemed to be confirmed the next morning, at least temporarily. Having slept a mere four hours, Fodor woke at dawn, and, after having noted the progress they had made in the night, wrote in his field diary: "we have already penetrated deep into the Bosna Valley" (5). From the window of his compartment, Fodor surveyed the Bosnian landscape carefully as the train lumbered south towards Sarajevo. In the early morning sun, the river valley appeared to open itself up to his colonizing gaze. With the assistance of Father Kovács, a Roman Catholic priest who was part of the expedition, Fodor compiled an impressive list of the flora observable from the moving train (this list takes up no less than four full pages in the field diary), making careful note of the geological formations of the river valley as he did so. For Fodor this was all very much a *terra incognita*, a land made even more fascinating and exotic by the uncivilized state of the "scattered" ("szétszórt") Bosnian settlements they passed through (12). In spots he noticed evidence of Croatian and Austrian influence, but for the most part the scene was one of "poverty and neglect" (6). This was, in so many ways, a wild place that needed to be explored, studied, and tamed: a presumably perfect space within which he could play out what scholars like Gillian Rose (8-18) and Anne McClintock (1-4) identify as the quintessential masculine fantasy of the culturally superior scientist-adventurer.

The reception that Fodor and the rest of the team received later that morning in Sarajevo only served to underscore, at least in his mind, the importance of the expedition. At the station they were met by an official delegation comprised of three men, referred to in his field diary simply as Pfeiffer, Fritz, and Jetnik. Fodor described Pfeiffer, the region's head forester, as "a most impressive Hungarian gentleman" (12). As a senior government official, Pfeiffer acted as the liaison between the regional authorities and the five-man expedition led by János Tuzson, a professor of geobotany at the University of Budapest. Fritz, a lieutenant colonel in the Austro-Hungarian army, was to serve as their guide while Jetnik, a captain, would also join the expedition as a meteorological adjunct. Against the backdrop of the city's unimpressive and rather "provincial-looking" train station (12), the men exchanged handshakes and then turned to supervising the unloading of the expedition's considerable equipment and supplies. As Fodor would later record in his field diary: "I was completely surprised by the official welcome. Everyone stood ready to help us with exceptional courtesy. Pfeiffer's affable manner immediately won him our trust" (13). After having their documents checked, Fodor and his colleagues were ushered into waiting government cars and then were sped into the center of the city along main streets which, given the apparent backwardness of Sarajevo, seemed remarkably "clean and well-kept" (13). At the Central Hotel, a grand "European" establishment where they were to spend the night, the team was met personally by the manager, a hotelier from Temesvár (today Timișoara in Romania) who greeted them in Hungarian and then invited them to lunch in the dining room. Like the reception at the train station earlier that day, the deferential treatment by the hotel manager appeared to fuel the self-image that Fodor had entertained the night before. He was, after all, an important man on an important mission, a representative of a nation whose self-proclaimed historical destiny was to spread order and civilization throughout the Balkans. Armed with science and culture and backed by the presence of the Austro-Hungarian army, Fodor clung to the masculine-imperialist fantasy of an integrated self in total control not only of his own person, but also of the people and things around him.

What is important to note at this juncture, however, is the inherent fragility not only of the identity he assumed, but also of the subjective position to which this identity was anchored. Even at this early stage of the expedition, definite cracks had begun to appear in Fodor's masculine-imperialist façade. These fissures and tensions were admittedly subtle, but they were there, percolating under the surface of his otherwise confident field diary entries. Indeed, despite the self-assurance with which he catalogued the flora and geological formations visible from the train or the culturally-superior tone with which he passed judgment on the relative backwardness of the Bosnian countryside and its towns and villages, there are hints in his text of potentially destabilizing anxieties, ones which he no doubt carried with him as he crossed into Bosnia the night before and that his "identification" with Caesar could only partially mask. Fodor acknowledged subtly, for example, Hungary's precarious position both culturally and historically within the region indicating perhaps subconsciously that the expedition proceeded from a position of relative weakness rather than relative strength. Whether he was making

note of the predominance of the Croatian language in "the once-Hungarian Szerémség" (3-4) or reflecting on the scattered physical reminders of Turkish occupation from the not-so-distant past, Fodor wrote not only about what Hungary had lost as a result of its humiliating military defeats in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also about his country's limited geopolitical and cultural influence in the region. Seen within the context of geographical space and historical time, Hungary appeared to be shrinking, rather than expanding: its borders threatened by hostile enemies without and its cultural integrity and national memory threatened by alien forces within.

The gaps that had already begun to appear in Fodor's masculine-imperialist armor that morning only widened later that same afternoon as he and József Kiss, a co-member of the expedition, ventured out of the Central Hotel to explore the sights of Sarajevo's inner city. Over the course of the afternoon, the inherent fragility of Fodor's masculine-imperialist fantasy would become much clearer. Documenting his inability to fully penetrate the core of the Oriental mystery being played out all around him, as well as the anxiousness and fear that he at one point admitted to feeling, Fodor's eight-page description of his experiences amidst the Oriental "Other" — a description in which Kiss is rendered virtually invisible — reveals, if only gradually and inadvertently, how his own position as a detached, voyeuristic subject was challenged and undermined within the liminal and, from his point of view, degenerate spaces in which he moved. Fodor's sense of unease within Sarajevo's urban spaces is not, however, obvious at first in the pages of his field diary. In fact, the opposite would seem to be the case. Having briefly explored the "European-style shops" which lined the main streets near the hotel, Fodor and Kiss soon found themselves being drawn down a crowded alleyway into one of the city's many bazaars. Fodor's initial reaction, at least as he recorded it in his field diary, was one of awe, and even excitement (14). Bustling with activity, and teeming with "every item imaginable" (15), the bazaar looked to Fodor like the center of a Turkish city. "Here," he wrote, "an unbelievably colorful world opens up to us" (15). Stalls overflowing with goods stood in an endless row, while butchers, bakers, goldsmiths, fez makers, silk embroiderers, and others lined every street and alleyway working side by side and in the open. Meat stalls stood next to small coffeehouses, with shopkeepers everywhere hawking fresh figs, pickles, and huge pieces of roasted goat meat. Sweets such as Turkish ice cream and jam were particularly cheap and easy to find leaving Fodor with the distinct impression that he had stumbled upon a veritable land of plenty (15-16).

This is not to say that Fodor openly articulated an overt desire to fully lose himself in the chaotic, carnivalesque atmosphere of Sarajevo's bazaars. As titillating as the marketplace may have been, it was nevertheless a foreign, transgressive, and potentially dangerous space, and thus needed to be navigated with great caution (on this aspect see, e.g., Stallybrass and White; Theweleit). While individually and at a comfortable distance the exotic, eastern "Other" could be intriguing, even enchanting for Fodor, up close and *en masse* it was a different story with the great numbers of Muslims and also Jews in the marketplace literally assaulting his senses. Moving from one market to the next, for example, Fodor noted that "the alleys between the bazaars are full of Muslims" adding derisively that "they are a filthy, wretched people, with something of a constant smell of goats about them" (15). He would later note that "the Sephardic Jews, if possible, are even dirtier than their Muslim counterparts," making special note of the Jewish women as being "especially disgusting" (18). Not all the people of the marketplace disgusted Fodor completely, at least not from a strictly aesthetic point of view. Fodor was careful to note that amongst the crowd there were also wealthier and more "distinguished" Muslim women wearing veils made from finer material and young, more educated-looking men wearing European-made suits. These men and women certainly stood out from the others, but there is a distinct sense in Fodor's description of them that they could not be trusted despite their appearance and that what they wore was no more than a conspicuous attempt to conceal what he regarded as their inherent backwardness under expensive veils and European finery. He regarded young Muslim men as particularly suspect noting that the Europeanness of their dress was perhaps too obvious and deliberate and that their "inevitable" fez remained a marker of an underlying Oriental character that these Muslim men could neither overcome nor hide (18).

Fodor's critical, partially "disenchanted" or "Olympian" scientific stance (see Saler; Everdell), provided him with the moral license to pursue and probe — if only imaginatively — the objects of his repressed desire even more intimately. In the inner city, Fodor made use of this self-granted moral license: as if searching for that one bit of information or insight which would unlock the secret of Sarajevo's Oriental mystique, Fodor peeked into everything in his efforts to construct for himself a detailed mental map of the city and its people. He described streets and buildings in minute detail with the layout of a particular bazaar or the inventory of a particular shop carefully scrutinized and recorded. He surveyed people just as scrupulously with neither their movement nor their attitude nor their appearance or smell escaping his attention. Fodor even went so far as to include crude drawings of people's dress alongside his detailed descriptions of what both men and women wore. The typical Muslim man, he noted, wore "large-bottomed" Serbian-styled pants with a short, close-fitting waistcoat, a fez (or, for the older men, a turban), and wooden-soled slippers. The typical woman, in turn, was dressed in garments "much more slipshod and disgusting than the men's" (17). Of particular interest to Fodor was the way in which the women's clothes functioned to conceal much of the body from his view. Noting that the skirt and bodice were sewn together, he added that the bodice did not stop at the neck, but continued on to the head and could be pulled down around the face like a kerchief. The sleeves in particular did much to hide the contours of the female form. Starting from the lower back rather than the shoulders, their looseness did much to block his prying eyes (17).

In fact, try as he might, Fodor was blocked in his repeated efforts to get a good look at a Muslim woman. In part this was due to their clothing, but it was also due to their refusal to be fully seen, at least by men. From the train that morning, for example, Fodor had observed the locals with great interest noting with barely concealed frustration his first glimpse of Muslim women working in the

fields. Describing the encounter in his field diary, Fodor wrote that "as the train approaches they immediately crouch and cover their heads with a sheet" (6). By drawing their veils across their faces they blocked his view thus prohibiting him, if only symbolically, from fully "possessing" them visually. This frustration would dog him throughout the expedition. While working in the mountains five days later, for instance, Fodor would describe a brief encounter with a lone Muslim woman, his diary entry revealing how he attempted, literally, to undress her with his eyes, his gaze following her — even pursuing her — as she rushed past him on the mountain path. Enchanted, but simultaneously frustrated, he wrote: "In the woods a beautiful Muslim descends the mountain path and comes toward us. She has a great figure, and beautiful breasts. When she notices us, she immediately hides her face, and rushes away. Of her body, though, one can really only guess, since it is covered by her baggy, unkempt pants and peasant shoes" (38-39). In the end he could only lament the fact that he was left guessing as to what her body might actually look like, concealed as it was under her unflattering, though curiously titillating, clothing.

The constant challenge to Fodor's autonomy as a masculine-imperialist subject was especially intense on the second day of the expedition as his afternoon "inspection" of Sarajevo progressed. In fact, the deeper he penetrated the narrow alleyways and squalid neighborhoods that connected the larger bazaars, the less control he felt. This disorienting and disempowering sensation became so poignant that, at one point, he actually confessed to feeling afraid. Finding himself in "a neighborhood of unbelievably dirty Turkish hovels in a part of the city just above the bazaar" (18), Fodor admitted that he felt compelled to hurry anxiously through it.

Of course, Fodor's harried flight through a dodgy neighborhood might be explained as nothing more than the sensible actions of a middle-class professional with the presence of mind to realize that he had wandered into a space where he did not belong. But I suggest that there was something more fundamental being played out here and that this moment of panic, however brief it may have been, was indicative of a more pervasive, destabilizing sense of unease that he experienced within the city in general, and amidst the Balkan "Other" in particular. Intimately linked to his frustrating confrontation with the impenetrable and thus unknowable "Other," what disrupted him in the city were the seemingly unmapped, unregulated, and unkempt spaces of the marketplace, spaces that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue are characterized by the overlapping and inherently uncontrollable matrices of deterritorialized, nomadic trajectories. These trajectories were inscribed in Fodor's mind into the very landscape of the marketplace (an amorphous space in which one bazaar appeared to blend into the next) and were further traced out by market goers scurrying between European-style shops and open-air stalls in their ceaseless pursuit of every kind of good imaginable. In their movement between main streets and back alleys, and in their apparent willingness to allow the rich to mix with the poor, and the domestic to commingle with the commercial, this mass of bodies that flowed through the deterritorialized spaces of the market traversed and challenged the boundaries between high and low, and between public and private, embodying for Fodor a radical freedom which, though it may have been tantalizing from an imaginative point of view, nevertheless distressed him when it was played out for real.

On the morning of 22 June (day three of the expedition), Fodor woke at 4 am "still tired," he would later write, "from having gone three nights with little sleep" (21) and exhausted, no doubt, by his ambitious tour of Sarajevo's inner city the day before. After a rushed breakfast, Fodor and the rest of the team were taken by car to the train station where a slow train was waiting to take them into the mountains southwest of the city so they could begin their fieldwork. Given his destabilizing experiences in Sarajevo the previous afternoon, it is perhaps not surprising to discover that the team's departure came as somewhat of a relief for Fodor and that he was obviously grateful to be able to put some distance between himself and the troubling urban spaces which had done so much to upset and disrupt him. In fact, whatever residual tension or anxiety there might have been seemed to dissipate rather quickly as the train passed through the outlying neighborhoods of Sarajevo, carrying Fodor and his colleagues into the Bosnian countryside. From the window of the saloon-car Fodor soaked in "the beautiful, dewy, fresh morning" (22) and busied himself with the cataloguing of passing flora. Everything about the countryside they traveled through was refreshing and reinvigorating. At Ilidža he made note of the picturesque spa that, as one of the favorite holiday spots for Europeans in the area, was a fine example of a pastoral Bosnian landscape (22). Not far from Ilidža they crossed the Bosna River, its surging torrent a product of the wild hills of this mountainous region. To Fodor, it was into a space like this that a man could retreat to rejuvenate himself physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Fodor and his group spent ten days in the mountains southwest of Sarajevo and each day followed a regular pattern. The team typically rose early, had breakfast, and then spent an hour or more making sure that the specimens they had collected the previous day were properly dried, pressed, and stored away. By 10:00 or 10:30 am they would be on the move spending the rest of the day hiking and working either at altitude where they were often at the mercy of the snow and the cold winds that howled above the tree line or in the river valleys where the sun was so oppressive that on one particular day the rocks burned red-hot in the "fifty-degree Celsius" heat (43). The team's work was made much harder by the rugged and sometimes quite dangerous terrain that they had to traverse in order to carry out their geobotanical survey. Even the mountain paths that were maintained for tourists and hikers proved to be tough going, according to Fodor. On most days, work would continue well into the evening, with bedtime not coming until 11:00 pm or even midnight. Despite the rigors of the expedition, Fodor obviously relished the challenge with the unforgiving landscape and exhausting work providing him with a real opportunity to assert his masculinity. In fact, it was here in the Bosnian countryside that Fodor attempted to resume the confident posture that he had adopted when stepping from the train at Bosna Brod on the evening of 20 June. More than just giving him room to prove his manhood to himself and his colleagues, the serene landscapes and simple peasants of the Bosnian

countryside appeared on the surface to provide Fodor with a more or less passive backdrop against which he could play out, and thus ground, his fantasies of an integrated, imperialist self. Fodor relied in particular on observations of the Bosnian "Other" to help shore up his own fantasized self-image. He categorized and dismissed the men of the countryside as being at best only "half-Europeanized" and in turn rendered the simple Serbian peasant women, with their bright "spirited eyes" and "firm, round breasts" as disempowered objects of his masculine desire (46). Objectified and non-threatening, the rural folk were used to reinforce the virile and culturally superior self-image that Fodor wanted to project. As it has been for so many other bourgeois men in the modern era, it was here, in the rugged yet innocent spaces of the countryside, that he could feel, or at least attempt to act, like Caesar again (on nature and men, see, e.g., Blackburn; Schama).

Writing of his strength, power, and capacity for self-discipline, Fodor comforted himself with heroic fantasies of a unified, self-sustaining subject capable of overcoming a host of obstacles and challenges in an otherwise unforgiving foreign environment. However, a close reading of Fodor's text reveals that the destabilizing forces of the modern condition pursued him even here, with every scientific pronouncement barely concealing a growing awareness that his knowledge was both limited and incomplete, and with every judgment of the low "Other" pointing to the fragmentary nature of his own being. At every turn, it seemed, he found the objects of his gaze pushing back against him, and resisting his control. Even here, in the countryside, he found his identity and sense of self under constant siege, with every attempt to solidify his masculine-imperialist fantasy posing a serious threat to the subjective position he was attempting to reinforce. Although the Bosnian mountains may have provided a welcome refuge from the effects of the city, Fodor was hardly able to escape what a host of theorists have identified as the precariousness and conditionality of the modern self (e.g., Braidotti; Deleuze and Guattari; Žižek).

The uncertainty that lingers behind some of the geobotanical pronouncements in his field diary provides insight into the inherent fragility of his subjective position and thus also into certain aspects of his identity and sense of self. In large part, his uncertainty and thus instability persisted in the Bosnian countryside because nature itself simply refused to play the submissive role that Fodor's fantasy had assigned to it. The flora, for example, did not always conform to Fodor's scientific, colonizing gaze and on many occasions posed a conceptual problem for Fodor as he struggled to thoroughly catalogue and map the spaces he encountered. Even on their first day in the field, Fodor and his colleagues came across a number of plants whose species or genus was unknown not only to them, but also to the authors of the two specialized botanical guidebooks that they had brought along with them (27). Far from reveling in the "joy" typically associated with botanical discovery (see Scheinbinger 194-225), Fodor's inability to recognize all the plants he encountered became a source of concern especially as he discovered that the area as a whole failed to correspond to what he had expected to find.

It is clear from his field diary that Fodor did not know what to make of the Bosnian countryside and that he had difficulty determining whether or not the micro-region they were studying deserved the label "Mediterranean" (it was, after all, a Mediterranean model they were working from). Although the climate certainly suggested it was, the botanical and even geological features of this micro-region often railed against such a definition. On the expedition's first day in the field, for example, Fodor took quick stock of his immediate environs and confidently pronounced: "the countryside has no Mediterranean features to speak of" (24). Only two days later, however, Fodor found evidence that would change his opinion, if only briefly. Traveling a short distance by train into the Neretva Valley, he asserted that "the flora here is completely Mediterranean. Olive trees, figs, and brambles grow right beside the tracks" (42). Yet, not a day and a half later, serious doubts would again creep in. Having had time to conduct a more detailed survey of the local flora, Fodor offered a more sobering analysis: "There are few Mediterranean species here" (45). In the absence of relevant plant specimen, Fodor could only declare the valley "a bit of a disappointment" concluding that "it really isn't a Mediterranean region at all" (45). The fact that Fodor experienced so much difficulty in classifying the Bosnian micro-region does not come as much of a surprise. As Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell argue in their historiographical critique of Mediterranean studies, scholars of all stripes and especially geographers, have long struggled to define the contours and meaning of the "Mediterranean" region. Characterized by micro-ecologies which are "fluid, mutable creations," the various sub-regions that comprise the Mediterranean basin "resist mapping" (Horden and Purcell 733). Attempts to delimit them in any "fixed" or "timeless" way, they add, only become more difficult "as one moves away from the sea" (Horden and Purcell 735). As Fodor himself discovered, Mediterranean micro-ecologies either "cease or radically change character" the further inland one goes (Horden and Purcell 735).

Much as in the city, then, where his "ethnographic" explorations of the Balkan "Other" were partially although effectively blocked, Fodor found himself frustrated during his geobotanical survey of the Bosnian countryside by what he was prevented from "seeing" and thus fully comprehending. Of course, the considerable knowledge and expertise it required to pronounce this region scientifically "poor" and "disappointing" may have been somewhat comforting for Fodor and might even have filled him with a certain sense of power, but it was little consolation for someone who sought to unlock not just the epistemological, but also the metaphysical secrets of the world around him according to his own beliefs and perspectives. In the end, the Balkans resisted as much as invited Fodor's masculine-imperialist advances, a fact that seems to have surprised and at times even overwhelmed him. Filled, perhaps, with the hope that he might be able to overcome the disappointment and shame he felt when the army rejected him at the outbreak of war in 1914, Fodor instead found himself confronted time and again with disconcerting reminders not only of the uncertainty of his combined imperial-scientific project, but also of the fragility of his own identity, and his own subjectivity. Far from satisfying his innermost desire for psycho-ontological completion, Fodor's Balkan (mis)adventures left him yearning for a truly safe and passive space where he could remedy these problems, and return to the

masculine-imperialist fantasy which had so thrilled and comforted him that first night on the Bosnian frontier.

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