

When Seve met Bregović: folklore, turbofolk and the boundaries of Croatian musical identity

Abstract:

Popular music in Croatia has consistently been a field where the boundaries of national cultural identity are set, contested and transgressed. The most contentious boundaries involve Serbian culture and the abstract “east”, to which essentialized nationalist concepts of Croatian culture denied any similarity. The Croatian singer Severina’s attempt to represent Croatia at the 2006 Eurovision Song Contest with her song *Moja štikla (My stiletto)* called these aspects into question with connotations which could be claimed as both Croatian and Serbian. Although the song was justified with reference to the (disputed) authenticity of Croatian folklore, it ultimately suggested that Croatian cultural space could not be separated from that of the other ex-Yugoslav states.

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In 2006, the Croatian singer Severina Vučković attempted to represent Croatia at the Eurovision Song Contest with a song arranged by Goran Bregović, the ex-Yugoslav musician from Sarajevo. Before the song, *Moja štikla* (*My stiletto*), had even been released, the Croatian (and Serbian) mass media had questioned its “Croatian-ness” in an escalating sequence of claims and counter-claims to authenticity. Its use of musical elements based on folk song and dance left it open to allegations that it had compromised folk music’s authenticity; those elements’ regional associations (especially *ganga* and *pera* singing from Lika and Herzegovina) connoted spaces which had been marginalized as “eastern” or “Balkan” in comparison to privileged inland and coastal traditions; the involvement of Bregović (represented as Serbian throughout the Croatian mass media) enabled suggestions that the song presented “Serbian folklore” or belonged to the Serbian genre of “turbofolk” – and all this in the particularly sensitive context of a competition which was supposed to symbolise Croatia’s full European membership.

The “*Štikla* case” demonstrated the construction of an essentialist concept of Croatian cultural identity, the process of setting and marking its boundaries through symbolic means, and the re-presentation of national identities in various fields of contemporary life. Moreover, the particular hinge of the *Štikla* case – can music conceived of as “eastern” be “Croatian”? – exemplifies the “interstices” described by Homi Bhabha: the places where “domains of difference” overlap and where “nationness” is performed and negotiated.¹ This re-statement of Croatian musical identity and its boundaries involved four phases: *Štikla*’s candidacy to represent Croatia at Eurovision; the domestic response to its selection; its inscription into broader ex-Yugoslav cultural space during pre-Eurovision promotion; and the circulation of another, less problematically Croatian, version. These phases depended on pre-existing

symbolic contexts, particularly the connotations and musical associations of Severina, and the significance of the main performance space (Eurovision) in Croatian and European entertainment and broadcasting.

Performance and persona: the importance of being Severina

By 2006, Severina was among the foremost entertainment personalities throughout ex-Yugoslavia. Her Croatian prominence had grown after her 1998 single *Djevojka sa sela* (*Village girl*) became an unofficial World Cup anthem, and her position as a supra-national star was strengthened by her widely publicised 2001–02 tour of Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and a first Serbian performance supporting Đorđe Balašević.² A scandal involving Severina and a sexually explicit video circulated online in summer 2004 was likewise supra-national, requiring interviews to (and lawsuits against) media outlets inside and outside Croatia. In the longer term, Severina ironically acknowledged her notoriety through consciously provocative self-presentation, particularly with her 2004 single *Hrvatica* (*Croatian woman*) and its video placing Severina in front of a large Croatian flag accompanied by female dancers (whose flags bore a letter “S”, placed similarly to the “U” of the Ustaša emblem) in stylized pseudo-military choreography. The writer Boris Dežulović attacked this as cynical and populist, and the Serbian patriotic singer Lepi Mića later singled out Severina’s “fascist videos, boasting that she’s a proven Croat” during a protest against Croatian performers in Serbia.³

Dežulović’s reaction reflected a broader Croatian critique which treats Severina’s persona and music as representing or contributing to the banalization of Croatian culture, and which makes her a key symbol for the influence of showbusiness newly-composed folk music (NCFM). Yugoslav NCFM was mainly Serbian or Bosnian music

mixing folk origins (from Bosnian “sevdalinka” songs or central Serbia) and modern instrumentation (e.g. orchestral arrangements in the 1950s, and electric guitars, synthesizers, and drum machines by the 1980s), and its performers were presented through the promotional practices of pop/schlager (“zabavna”) singers.⁴ The 1970s/1980s “new folk songs” developed into “turbofolk”, 1990s Serbia’s characteristic musical-visual presentation of NCFM.⁵ Although NCFM involved various techniques, most Croatian criticism aggregates them into describing singers/songs as “narodnjaci”.

A widespread critics’ and musicians’ narrative excludes narodnjaci from the normative traditions of music in Croatia, and depends so much on a constructed concept of national musical tradition that it could be viewed as a narrative of national identity, which is structured around the classic Croatian anthropological idea that Croatia contains Pannonian/central European, Adriatic/Mediterranean and Dinaric/Balkan cultural zones and proceeds to privilege the Pannonian and Adriatic traditions.⁶ According to this narrative, Croatian popular music once comprised singer-songwriters, central-European “schlager” pop, Dalmatian light music, and Slavonian tamburica music, until Croatian cultural space was nationalized in 1990–91: thereafter Serbian/Bosnian NCFM became unavailable and Croatian musicians, especially the composer-manager Tonči Huljić (through his band Magazin and agency Tonika), began to imitate it and create ethno-politically acceptable “zabavna” versions.⁷ Severina has not collaborated with Huljić, but her presence in the Croatian zabavna myth is second only to his. Her widely-mediatised figure is compared to the 1980s NCFM emblem Lepa Brena, so that Severina could be described as performing a “sequence of orthodox eastern [*istočnjački*] turbofolk themes, showing that the ten-year search for a Lijepa Brijena is finally over.”⁸ “Eastern” (“istočnjački”) is the most common negative description (besides “narodnjački”) of narodnjaci and their “melos”. 1980s Yugoslav

critical vocabulary, in contrast, had offered more possible origins for the undesirable melos (“Spanish”, “Greek”, even “Alpine”), although the largest number of criticisms still related to “musical orientalisms”.⁹

A Croatian imaginary of the “vaguely-perceived musical ‘East’” appears to include the rural music of Dinaric shepherds, Turkish-influenced urban song, and the “commercial folk-pop [...] particularly popular in Serbia”.¹⁰ The “institutionally and psychologically maintained boundaries [...] between Balkan and (Western) European culture”¹¹ were further sharpened in post-Yugoslav Croatia, striving to achieve the European side of a conceptual “Europe-Balkan dichotomy”.¹² President Franjo Tuđman’s nationalist ideology carefully excluded Croatia from the Balkans, while anti-nationalist discourses too could rely on European/Balkan oppositions to project Tuđman’s nationalism as Balkan.¹³ The Balkan referent figures strongly in Croatian discourses on narodnjaci – indeed, more strongly than explicit descriptions of their melos/rhythms/vocalization as Serbian, even if that is what they are euphemistically supposed to be.

Such “symbolic geography” involves constructing a nation’s Other as Balkan and therefore non-European.¹⁴ The landmarks on this symbolic map were connected by one article discussing a rumoured duet between Ivana Banfić (Croatian) and Željko Joksimović (Serbian), who both straddled the zabavna/narodna boundary: it concluded that “Croatian showbusiness was ‘Serbianised’ [*posrbila*], i.e. Turkicised [*poturčila*], a long time ago anyway” and questioned whether several performers, including Huljić’s band Magazin and three musicians associated with patriotic-regional semi-folk showbusiness (Marko Perković Thompson, Miroslav Škoro, and Mate Bulić), were “really autochthonous Croatian products”.¹⁵ Severina in this symbolism represents diluted Croatian adaptations of Serbian originals, or connotes brash post-transition

social values. Her theatrical engagements in 2003/2005 and her 2003 election-rally performances for SDP allowed critics to disapprove of what they perceived as wider populist tendencies within those fields. One critic interpreted her 2003 role in the musical *Karolina Riječka* as “a new horrifying symbiosis” between “zabavna” cheapness and “elite” culture, prompting another Brena comparison and the comment that Brena could never have performed in Belgrade’s theatres; several actresses in 2005 also protested Severina’s lack of dramatic training.¹⁶

Reactions to Severina’s 2003 involvement with SDP showed how value-judgements based on music could help express political identities. Since HDZ’s 1990 rally-concerts, Croatian political parties have constantly hired pop performers for promotional purposes,¹⁷ but SDP’s choices at the 2000 election were rock musicians symbolizing urbanity.¹⁸ This created an expectation that SDP’s musicians symbolically expressed its political identity/priorities, reflecting badly on Severina’s compatibility.

Severina’s co-option by a broadly urban-civic party left its leader, incumbent Prime Minister Iвица Račan, open to accusations of populism.¹⁹ Jelena Lovrić terming Račan’s strategy (e.g. his sudden involvement in a border dispute with Slovenia) “Mala-je-dala politics” – *Mala je dala* being the title of a Severina song mocking post-socialist businessmen – demonstrated how popular music – and Severina – could act as metaphorical reference-points.²⁰ Hiring Severina appeared a deliberate attempt to broaden SDP’s image beyond an urban-civic electorate, according to the same symbolic logic of their 2000 campaign. Instead, while Severina did not personally lose the “mala-je-dala” election, the multiple meanings of her image and ascribed genre were too widespread for SDP to control.

International competition and mediatized spectacle: the Eurovision Song Contest

Štikla's meanings were also conditioned by the site of its performance, i.e. Eurovision – a site where “national markers of difference are displayed for a moment” while disclosing “the structure of economic and cultural centre and peripheries”,²¹ and where a representational practice of folk-pop has emerged to base music, staging and choreography on essentialized national “heritage”/“folklore”: Turkish and Ukrainian victories using this strategy in 2003–04 may have reinforced musicians’ and broadcasters’ perceptions of an advantageous strategy.²² Since 1999, Eurovision has expanded in scale by:²³ abolishing the live orchestra, allowing free choice of performance language, releasing an official CD, awarding points by public telephone vote, moving Eurovision from theatres into sports arenas with larger live audiences, adopting an official logo incorporating the host country’s flag, and (2004–) introducing a semi-final to annually accommodate all competing states. Essentialized folkloric staging has become a regular characteristic, almost a cliché, of Eurovision entries. Unlike the transnational folklorized concept which inspired the mid-1990s’ Celtic-styled entries, today’s essentializations are musically and visually inspired by localized contexts.²⁴ They may be understood more specifically by domestic audiences, but for trans-European audiences they are symbolically escalated into representations of the national.

International sporting events symbolically naturalize an international order structured around the *national* principle,²⁵ and so does the inter-state/inter-broadcaster competition of Eurovision, which, like international sport (with which it now shares venues), provides sites for publicly symbolizing collective identities.²⁶ Indeed, the Greekness articulated through sport during the Euro 2004 football tournament, based on culture/arts and Hellenic antiquity but supposing “a better national performance for

‘external consumption’’,²⁷ persisted into Athens’s organization of Eurovision 2006.

Croatia’s symbolic connection between sport and the nation is also strong, since

Tuđmanist nationalism used sporting successes to affirm Croatian statehood.²⁸

Eurovision participation is likewise understood as reflecting on the Croatian state and nation, with awareness that anything selected for Eurovision will be internationally understood as representing Croatian musical culture.

The early 1990s HTV official responsible for Eurovision, Ksenija Urličić, viewed Eurovision as a purposeful site of political messages, where an international audience would “remember our country and our fate [...] and see our national symbols”.²⁹

Croatia’s first independent Eurovision appearance (1993) was domestically presented as continuing “Croatian song’s successful tradition at this great spectacle of the European continent”.³⁰ The media also argued against former Yugoslavia’s viability and legitimacy using a belief that Yugoslav pre-selections had deliberately rotated the republics and imposed marginally European “Greek or Russian melodies” from eastern republics on Croatia, which had now been “liberated”.³¹ This explicit foregrounding has been absent since Tuđman’s death, but statehood associations persist.

Two events in Eurovision 2004 may have influenced ex-Yugoslav broadcasters in future years: Ruslana’s victory, essentializing musical and visual markers of a given timeless region/people (Carpathian Hutsuls),³² and – more directly – Serbia-Montenegro’s Željko Joksimović coming second. Joksimović’s *Lane moje (My faun)*, also based on an “ethno” melody (with violins and *frule* pipes), operated by “recycling” past national identities through implicit references to medieval Serbia.³³ Medieval associations are a common representational strategy for Serbian “world” or “ethno” musicians, who use instrumental or visual allusions connoting the Byzantine period to produce a positively-valorised version of the Balkans which overlooks the Turkish

legacy.³⁴ This too may have informed Joksimović's concept, which received an unexpected maximum 12 points from the Croatian public vote. The vote was widely interpreted (in both countries) as bringing to light the proverbial underground popularity of Serbian popular music in Croatia. Joksimović had not operated in Croatia before 1991, and lacked the notoriety of certain newer folk performers. He still attracted 5,000–6,000 visitors to his first Croatian concert in November 2004, amid expectations that he might have “opened the borders to ex-Yu[goslav] music”.³⁵

The 2005 Croatian Eurovision representative – Boris Novković performing *Vukovi umiru sami* (*Wolves die alone*) – was often read as directly influenced by Joksimović, as was that year's entire Croatian pre-selection.³⁶ Novković's song appeared to stand for an inland/Slavonian conception, with lyrical references to the Danube and a backing group wearing ducat necklaces.³⁷ Where Joksimović's song had been opened by a *frule* (flute) player, Novković had *gajde* (bagpipes) played by Stjepan Večković, a member of the Lado ensemble regarded as performing “authentic” folk music. Wolf imagery itself is common in ex-Yugoslav folklore, often connoting banditry and heroism, to which Jurica Pavičić alluded when he commented that the song's “chorus sounds like the title of an action film about HOS [paramilitary] units”.³⁸

Lane was more representative of Joksimović's standard repertoire than *Vukovi* was for Novković, who is normally considered a metropolitan “pop-rock” singer-songwriter and not known for folkloric or Slavonian imagery. However, the contrasts between Joksimović's and Novković's stage performances suggested (intentionally or not) some definite narratives of identity. Joksimović's flautist's costume echoed an archetypal Serbian shepherd,³⁹ supported by a video set in a multi-generational village home. Novković, however, wore a black frock-coat, waistcoat, and white shirt evoking nineteenth-century bourgeois/intellectual dress – an implicitly urban, “central-

European” conjunction rather than *Lane*’s primordial shepherd. Commenting on *Vukovi*, Novković said that the Lado vocalists contributed “an added emotional dimension of our folkloric heritage”, and called Eurovision “a festival revealing the secrets of small countries we knew nothing about [...] Maybe this year we’ll get to know Moldova, let’s see their primordial thing [njihovo iskonsko].”⁴⁰ As the composer of *Moja štikla*, Novković would be called upon to further clarify his relationship to folklore, ethno and other representational strategies.

Domestic competition: melos, language, nationhood

A Severina/Novković collaboration for *Dora* 2006 was first reported in late January – as a potential copy of Ruslana – and Goran Bregović’s possible involvement was first publicized on February 4.⁴¹ The 32 successful *Dora* submissions, including Severina’s *Moja štikla*, were confirmed on February 10 by HTV’s Entertainment Editor, Aleksandar Kostadinov.⁴² Novković was named as composer, Severina lyricist, and Bregović arranger, the first occasion a well-known musician mainly associated with another ex-Yugoslav successor state had been involved in *Dora*.⁴³ Bregović is a rock guitarist turned film composer and “world” musician, and might even have been the most familiar ex-Yugoslav musician for an international audience, whose projects have been said to reflect contemporary tendencies for Balkan cultural producers’ and products’ identity to become based on an aestheticized, essentialized “timeless space” for western consumption.⁴⁴ Whether to approach this as the product of late-capitalist “production and consumption of difference” or of decentred “intercultures” reflects wider debates in contemporary ethnomusicology.⁴⁵

In ex-Yugoslavia, Bregović is primarily associated with Bijelo dugme, one of Yugoslavia’s most successful rock groups until their split in 1989. Dugme were known

for fusing rock with Bosnian/Macedonian folk elements, causing Croatian critic Dražen Vrdoljak to describe their music as “pastirski rock” (“shepherd rock”) in the 1970s,⁴⁶ and their last albums used the syncretic effect of various Yugoslav folk musics to “deconstruct the nationalist use of folk music”.⁴⁷ Dugme’s June 2005 reunion (with stadium concerts in Sarajevo, Zagreb and Belgrade) again foregrounded Bregović’s rock career.⁴⁸ Much Croatian reunion coverage focused on generational nostalgia or connected Dugme to 2005’s “retromania” trend, and Bregović too has re-contextualized his Dugme-era work from a post-Yugoslav standpoint, as in his calling the band “the only thing from the former [Yugoslav] state that stayed Yugoslav.”⁴⁹ However, the Croatian media do not always accept his multi-national/trans-ethnic self-representation. This became clear during the first phase of the *Štikla* case, where a deliberately-escalated controversy concerned whether *Štikla* contained Serbian musical and linguistic elements – and, implicitly, whether it was suitable to represent Croatia.

After *Štikla*’s online release on February 20, the Serbian tabloid *Kurir* claimed that it reflected Bregović’s typical style, with “striking ethno sounds” and a chanting chorus (“ojda-ojda-daj-ojda-daj-daj”) recycled from that of Dugme’s *Hajdemo u planine* (*Let’s go into the mountains*), which ran “ojda-da-ojda-ojda-ojda-da”.⁵⁰ Moreover, in referring to “srbijanskim poskočicama” (“dancing songs from Serbia”), *Kurir* claimed *Štikla* for Serbian musical space on the basis of Bregović’s arrangement, conflating Bregović’s multi-ethnic personal biography into a simple Serbian referent.⁵¹ This claim alone might have been expected to provoke Croatian tabloids, which keep a watchful eye on their Serbian counterparts’ reports insofar as they affect Croatian showbusiness. *24 sata*, indeed, summarized the *Kurir* article, but added a description of the song as containing “ekavica in one section”, which would imply that it was in Serbian, not Croatian.⁵² Croatian avoidance of ekavica is the single most consistent distinguishing

factor between Croatian and Serbian showbusiness,⁵³ and ijekavica is used even when Croatian performers cover songs originally in ekavica.⁵⁴ The linguistic criterion threatened to place *Štikla* outside Croatian musical identity even more effectively than a musical critique. *24 sata* escalated this exclusion by inviting comments from a right-wing politician (Luka Podrug) and a war veterans' lobbyist (Goran Zlopaša): Podrug accused HTV of "Balkanizing Croatia" and recalled the hounding of Doris Dragović for, in his words, "flirting with the Serbs" by performing in Montenegro in 1999.⁵⁵

Yet the basis of the ekavica controversy was solely that *Kurir* had transcribed *Štikla*'s lyrics in ekavica – common practice when Serbian tabloids quote from ijekavica. As Severina was forced to explain, the disputed section's original lyrics were in "ikavica", a regional variant of Croatian spoken in Dalmatia, Dalmatinska zagora, Lika, and Herzegovina.⁵⁶ The *Kurir/24 sata* exchange nonetheless set the field for further understandings of *Štikla*. Bregović's involvement could theoretically have been depicted as "retromania", or as another transnational ex-Yugoslav authorial collaboration for Eurovision.⁵⁷ Instead, once *Štikla*'s Croatian identity had been questioned, the manner of its defence combined with existing uncertainty about Croatian popular-musical identity to place it into the turbofolk/narodnjaci discourse.

Representing the nation: folklore, turbofolk, authenticity

Severina and Novković defended themselves by emphasizing *Štikla*'s "authentic" and "autochthonous" nature and its elements from "Croatian folklore", but this itself caused further debates over whether commercialized folklore, or folklore with *Štikla*'s regional connotations, could be accommodated within the boundaries of Croatian musical identity. Once Severina was selected for Eurovision by winning *Dora* on March 4, the

debate became more urgent thanks to Eurovision's symbolic logic. Now, a large international audience might take its content as representative of Croatia.

Severina emphasized *Štikla*'s Croatian origins by enumerating its musical components as “elements of *lindo*, *ganga*, *rera*, *šijavica* and other Croatian autochthonous musical moments”.⁵⁸ Its instrumentation included the *lijerica* (a gusle-like stringed instrument) and Stjepan Večković's *dvojnica* flute, while the “*ojda-ojda-daj*” chorus was now rationalized as “*ojkavica* from *Drniš*”.⁵⁹ These justifications followed the same discursive pattern that the editor of HTV's flagship 1990s commercialized-folk programme *Lijepom našom* (*Our beautiful homeland*) had used to explain his selections of music with “Croatian roots in it, based on authentic Croatian folklore”.⁶⁰ They also involved a contrast between “ethno” and inauthenticity, claimed through Večković's presence, with which *Štikla* was to be understood as “Croatian folklore [*hrvatski folklor*]”.⁶¹ Newspapers prolonged the story by turning to “*etnoglazbenici*” (“ethno-musicians”), i.e. performers of supposedly authentic, non-commercialized, folk (“*izvorna narodna glazba*”). “Ethno-musicians” are not a monolithic professional group: Večković is one himself, supplementing ensemble membership with performances-for-hire for showbusiness musicians.⁶² However, the quoted ethno-musicians consistently excluded Severina's song from “ethno”, estimating that it contained no authentic folklore.

Three of Croatia's most prominent authentic folk/ethno performers distanced *Štikla* from their professional codes of authenticity by terming it “turbofolk”. Lidija Bajuk commented that *Štikla* could not be folklore “because Severina is not an authentic [*autentična*] ethno-singer,” crediting its “elements of musical tradition like ‘zumba’” as “pseudo-folklore”,⁶³ but concluded that “in a wider sense it would still be turbofolk.” Dunja Knebl blamed Croatian radio for not playing “authentic” folk or educating

audiences away from “turbofolk”, while Novaković determinedly excluded *Štikla* as “pure turbofolk” which lacked “any Balkan ethno-culture’s basic traditional elements.”

⁶⁴ *Štikla* was thus positioned as either “turbofolk enveloped into authentic [*izvorni*] folklore” or “adapted ethno, with which Croatia might attract foreign voters’ attention in Athens”,⁶⁵ in a dominant binary framework where “turbofolk” was and “ethno” connoted foreign/European standards. Severina too accepted it by stressing her “Croatian ethno-elements”, and Kostadinov used symbolic acknowledgements of authenticity (instrumentation, vocalization, Lado, regional links to Zagora and Herzegovina) to deny that the song belonged to “turbofolk”, adding: “The guys were wearing costumes from the Neretva region. If someone associates those costumes with Serbia, I really can’t help” that person.⁶⁶

Such value judgements presupposed a definition of turbofolk: Kostadinov’s narrow definition, as “Serbian newly-composed music performed by, say, Lepa Brena or Jelena Karleuša”,⁶⁷ conveniently extricated *Štikla* (for which Kostadinov was professionally answerable as Entertainment Editor) from it. Pragmatic responses like this, or a columnist’s conclusion that even though the song *was* turbofolk (including a Brena comparison) it was perfectly suited to a contemporary Eurovision only meaningful for “eastern European countries and the former USSR”,⁶⁸ prioritized attracting pan-European gazes (even through essentialization or pandering to an “eastern melos”) and confirming Croatia’s recognition within a system of nation-states.⁶⁹

However, Kostadinov’s definition omitted the broader Croatian discursive network around narodnjaci/NCFM, the basis for frequent comparisons between Severina and Lepa Brena (often referring to Brena’s 1983/1986 attempts to represent Yugoslavia at Eurovision). The discursive field could even be applied to support Severina’s potential to win Eurovision: “Severina isn’t the Croatian Lepa Brena, but the Croatian Angelina

Jolie”.⁷⁰ One alternative comparison set Severina against a Croatian referent, ethno-jazz musician Tamara Obrovac: unlike Obrovac, Severina was re-dressing folk “by undressing, as in the famous porn film”.⁷¹ In this comment, the nation’s character was equated with female morality – and transgressing the value-norm became female shame.

Yet, while critical discursive strategies cast Severina as “the Croatian Lepa Brena” and on/beyond the normative border of Croatian popular music,⁷² Croatian consumption of narodnjaci has developed from a private/subcultural activity into a widely-mediatised phenomenon. During 2004–06, a growing frequency of newspaper articles on narodnjački clubs in Zagreb, Rijeka or Split had presented them as hedonistic spectacles requiring journalistic exploration; violent incidents in Zagreb clubs in January 2006 then led to a series of articles connecting narodnjaci with organised crime,⁷³ and this pre-established frame was re-used to explain several subsequent nightclub fights.

Croatian knowledge of the Serbian musical scene has nonetheless improved since 2000. After media attention coinciding with Croatian performances by Miroslav Ilić (2002) and Željko Joksimović (2004), the Croatian media’s most serious treatment to date of turbofolk or Serbian music was a *Jutarnji list* survey of teenagers which happened to appear a week after Severina had won *Dora*.⁷⁴ This report challenged the prevailing implicit definition of turbofolk as a “threat to [Croatian] national identity”, described the term’s origins in Serbian cultural criticism and avoided sensationalist framing or symbolism. Contrary to clichés that Ceca Ražnatović (widow of the paramilitary commander Željko Ražnatović-Arkan) was the most popular Serbian singer in Croatia, the respondents’ favoured Serbian showbusiness-folk singers were two performers with markedly less shock-value, Seka Aleksić and Mile Kitić. This intervention itself may have affected the terms with which narodnjaci were discussed in

Croatia. They themselves could now become symbolic abbreviations of the report's conclusions that 43 per cent of Croatian youth enjoyed narodnjaci.

The *Štikla* case tended not to broaden the concept of “turbofolk”, and the value-spectrum usually ran from “model ethno-example[s]” to “the lowest form of showbusiness-musical kitsch popular in our neighbouring Serbia”.⁷⁵ Another approach nonetheless emerged in Nevenka Mikac's defence of *Štikla*, which treated “turbofolk” as the combining of folk-music rhythms with an “urban symbol” such as high heels – in effect, the idea of “new folk songs” used in the 1980s.⁷⁶ Mikac even saw in *Štikla* “a definition of Croatian turbofolk [*hrvatski turbofolk*]”, which, until then, had been used as an ultimate oxymoron. One columnist had commented in 2003 that violating “ganga, rera, our beautiful kolo [dances] and customs” would lead to “getting some kind of Croatian turbofolk”⁷⁷ – exactly what Croatian showbusiness seemed to have developed by 2006.⁷⁸ By late March, *Štikla*'s capacity to disrupt the commonplace boundaries of Croatian cultural identity was plain. Its impression on audiences who were not primarily interested in the make-up of Croatian culture remained to be seen.

International competition: ex-Yugoslavia, the Balkans, Europe

HTV, like many broadcasters, now promotes its Eurovision representative in other competing countries. Severina's promotional tour included Macedonia, Malta, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, and Belgium, but emphasized Serbia-Montenegro, where two Serbian weeklies had received Severina's victory as indicating that “after years of misuse, narodnjaci are becoming a cohesive factor in the Balkans” or that Croatians were acknowledging turbofolk and the “eastern melos” within their cultural boundaries.⁷⁹ Severina first promoted *Štikla* in Serbia-Montenegro at its Eurovision pre-selection (March 11), *Evropesma*. *Evropesma* developed unforeseen symbolic meaning, firstly

coinciding with Slobodan Milošević's death, and secondly because a Serbian/Montenegrin disagreement curtailed the pre-selection.⁸⁰ The Serbian tabloid *Svet* breathlessly connected both factors:

In the same Sava centar hall where, exactly 16 years ago, the fall of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia began at the 14th Congress of the League of Communists, what little remained of that country finally fell apart too! The irony of history: on the day of Milošević's death, Severina with her Likans and Dalmatians received ovations, and the Montenegrins were chased off stage with bottles and whistles!⁸¹

One tabloid headlined Serbia's consequent withdrawal as meaning that "Only Severina is representing us in Athens":⁸² indeed, without a Serbian representative, Štikla and Hari Varešanović's Bosnian entry *Lejla*⁸³ (written by Željko Joksimović) could *both* be considered representative enough of Serbia. This flexibility of meaning, beyond the song's immediate Serbian connections (through Bregović and Joksimović), highlighted the fluid "domestic" of Serbian showbusiness, where Croatians' and Bosnians' records (licensed to Serbian labels) are catalogued alongside Serbian performers and their videos are programmed into TV's "domestic" blocks. Nonetheless, the award Severina received from TV Pink in mid-April 2006 was for the best female singer "from Croatia" – although, with other awards directed at Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Slovenia, this might have been intended to encourage personalities from each state to attend.

Western European pre-Eurovision coverage might have provided another set of representations to analyze, but most coverage belonged to Eurovision's eventual winners, Finland's Lordi. Interest in Severina was confined to a German tabloid

reporting Severina's sex-tape,⁸⁴ and a British article by Tim Judah presenting *Evropesma* as "war in the Balkans again", writing off *Štikla*'s ridiculous lyrics, and concluding that Varešanović had the "Yu-appeal" lacked by "babes like Severina". Croatian coverage immediately before Eurovision in May 2006 reverted to an annual, anodyne frame of the delegation's preparations, except one column by a film critic claiming *Štikla* as "historic" for representing a Croatian strategy based on cultural markers of the Balkans and "everything which we claimed 15 years ago had nothing to do with us".⁸⁵ On the whole, Severina's coverage before Eurovision was anti-climactic, as was her eventual score: *Štikla* achieved 13th place with 56 points, mainly from all the ex-Yugoslav states.⁸⁶ Even domestic responses to the result paid Lordi's horror-costumed spectacle most attention, and *Štikla* seemed more suitable for audiences literate in its cultural references. Yet, after its near-exclusion from the "Croatian" frame, could it be easily marketed and consumed as a domestic product?

Situating the nation: the internal boundaries of Croatian music

Severina and Novković resolved this contradiction by releasing *Moj sokole* (*My falcon*), apparently *Štikla*'s pre-Bregović version. *Sokole* had a slower rhythm and used lexical motifs familiar in Croatian folk-influenced popular music (mountains, corn, olives, stone, strength, destiny). *Sokole* lacked *Štikla*'s "ojda-ojda-daj" chorus (suggesting it had been added to *Štikla* by Bregović), and its middle eight featured a ganga based on the word "sokole" rather than chants of "zumba" or "sijeno-slama-sir-salama". Especially with its Bregović connection, *Štikla* had acquired a transgressive, if not threatening, reputation. *Sokole* was promoted as something far more comprehensible in the Croatian musical market: a zabavna song with patriotic overtones and musically rooted in the Dinaric region (Dalmatinska zagora, Lika, Hercegovina).

However, *Štikla*'s reception had already been affected by Dinaric connotations. Many of its "Croatian" folklore elements originated from there, as did the backing vocalists' "costumes from the Neretva region".⁸⁷ These associations further layered the cultural boundaries involved, since music from Herzegovina and Zagora (unlike Dalmatian or Slavonian music) often passes through a symbolic framework of internal Othering, particularly in urban centres,⁸⁸ and signifiers of the Dinaric musical tradition were systematically marginalized by the 1990s broadcast media.⁸⁹ During the *Štikla* case, this framework was reflected most sharply in comments from HRT forum-users or readers of *Jutarnji list* online: some insulted Herzegovina's perceived backwardness, and others angrily defended the "Herzegovinan melos" as integral to Croatian music.

Dinaric associations were nonetheless positive for the *Štikla* team, and Severina had apparently described it to Bregović as "a song with elements of Zagora ethno".⁹⁰ Beyond ethno/turbofolk constructions, another nesting polemic questioned whether Herzegovina and Zagora – frequently experienced as a "uniform cultural area" despite the Bosnian-Croatian border⁹¹ – truly belonged within Croatian cultural space. Kostadinov alluded to this in admitting that *Štikla* would make "some people from western Croatia, maybe especially from Zagorje" (north of Zagreb) uncomfortable, but that others might not have liked the "Slavonian tamburica" sounds of a fellow contestant, Ivana Banfić.⁹² Two *Večernji list* articles meanwhile defended ganga as symbolising Zagora/Herzegovinan musical identity and transmitting the historical/primordial continuity of those who sang it.⁹³ Such associations, combined with Dinaric folkloric performance's striking visual identity, might suggest ganga as ideal for an essentialized Eurovision presentation *à la* Ruslana. Indeed, the Bosnian Croat singer Mija Martina Barbarić had already attempted this in 2005 during the Bosnia-Herzegovina pre-selection. The lyrics of this song, *Ružice rumena* (*Rosy rose*),

were also chosen primarily for their sound (“diri-dam-dam-diri-diri-dam-dam, nije ta tvoja ruža moja”) and supported by *ganga*, and indeed contained rather more Ruslana-style prominent drumming and chants of “hej”.

Despite *Ružice rumena* and *Štikla/Sokole*, Dinaric musical elements are more usually the province of male singers. Herzegovinan-style popular music is highly marketable in Croatia and among the Croat diaspora, especially when performed by Marko Perković Thompson (politicized patriotic songs) and Mate Bulić (often incorporating *ganga*). Like Severina, Bulić has defended his music as “Croatian folk [*narodna*] music with ethno-elements” rather than turbofolk – though, unlike Severina, he added that his music was “a barrier against the east”, meaning Serbian folk.⁹⁴ This Herzegovinan-localised music so emphasises masculinity (among economic migrants, medieval knights, named historical figures, or Homeland War veterans) that its space may even be structured by the *absence* of women.⁹⁵ It was nonetheless the context for *Moj sokole*, originally *Hrvatski sokole* (*Croatian falcon*).

This version was superseded by Bregović’s re-arrangement, which apparently required different lyrics to suit its faster speed.⁹⁶ Its full lyrics were first printed on March 7, with images of natural beauty and essentialised gender roles which situated the homeland “tamo iza planina / preko žita, maslina” (“behind the mountains, past the corn and olives”) as a “zemlja ponosna rođena iz kamena” (“proud country born of stone”) and depicted the narrator and her lover as her “heroj” (“hero”) and his “draga” (“darling”). They were thematically consistent with Homeland War-era female-voiced patriotic showbusiness, such as Doris Dragović’s *Dajem ti srce* (*I give you my heart*, 1992) or Hrvatski Band Aid’s *Moja domovina* (*My homeland*, 1991), which apostrophized references to the plains and the sea into markers of coastal and inland (Slavonian) Croatia and aggregated regional distinctions into a single homeland. The

falcon motif, meanwhile, is a common metaphor for heroism in post-2000 patriotic showbusiness, which draws it from designations of warriors in epic and authored poetry.⁹⁷ *Hrvatski sokole* represented the first major female-voiced contribution to post-2000 patriotic showbusiness. However, *Sokole*'s nationalised heroism images risked being read as a message of support to Croatian war-crimes indictees if submitted as an international representation of Croatia.⁹⁸ It is not clear why the lyrics were changed for *Štikla*, aside from the official explanation that its new speed required different words.⁹⁹

Moj sokole was released domestically in July 2006 to compete in Splitski festival. After a brief non-musical polemic regarding eligibility, it was withdrawn from competition, but played on radio throughout summer 2006.¹⁰⁰ *Sokole* was not, however, directed at other ex-Yugoslav markets. Its Croatian release might simply have been attempting to make two hits out of one promotional campaign, but might also have been a compromise solution to *Štikla*'s (over?-)liminal domestic position. Nonetheless, *Sokole* added a final twist to the *Štikla* case: the melody of its instrumental hook, played on the *lijerica*, matches a trumpet melody on *Život sam promjenila*, a song composed by Franjo Valentić in 2002 for Neda Ukraden, whose multi-national biography itself reflects the *Štikla* case's ambiguities.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

Moja štikla never escaped its initial media framing as only ambiguously Croatian. Indeed, its springtime prominence became a “mediatised ritual”, in the sense of a “performative media enactment in which [...] moral ideas of the ‘public good’ are unleashed”.¹⁰² Here, the supposed “public good” was the norm that a) Croatian popular music should contain authentically Croatian elements, and b) that authentically Croatian elements could not overlap with cultural markers understood as “Serbian” or “eastern”.

Internationally representing Croatia amplified both principles. Moreover, the defence of *Štikla* even reflected a continuity of discourse with the period in the early 1990s when the use of folk elements in Croatian popular music was first subject to intense criticism. In 1994, Đorđe Novković had justified his ambiguous 1980s compositions for Ukraden as “ojkanje” from Imotski and Dalmatinska zagora which differed from “newly-composed Belgrade and Serbian folklore”,¹⁰³ in 2006, Severina and his son Boris used the same matrix – emphasizing Croatian elements and denying any overlap between Croatian and Serbian cultural identities.

For Rogers Brubaker, Croatian-Serbian relations illustrate political nationalisms as interdependent fields where struggles to represent both one’s “own” and the “other” nationalism unfold.¹⁰⁴ The *Štikla* case suggests that cultural spaces should be similarly viewed: they contain frequent representational struggles, representations in one field affect those in the other, they are affected by “reciprocal inter-field monitoring” through each other’s media, and advocates of particular “stances” may have an interest in nurturing a certain representation of the external field. Indeed, claims to authenticity can be viewed as discursive strategies which maintain power relations, or which themselves depend for increased contrast on counter-essentializing the other community/culture.¹⁰⁵

Has this occurred with Croatian and Serbian musical identities? True, Serbian identity in folk music has itself been essentialized *within* Serbia to privilege central-Serbian traditions.¹⁰⁶ Yet the Croatian representations of Serbian musical identity are not even that critical. Instead, “Serbian folklore” is swept into an all-purpose distancing strategy of Serbian/Balkan/eastern/foreign, which has assisted nationalist projects portraying Croatia and Serbia as culturally incompatible but is also much more widespread in political and cultural discourse.¹⁰⁷ Throughout the *Štikla* case, its

opponents and its creators both strove to perpetuate a conceptual framework which prioritized the *national* level of identity, whatever content was then said (not) to belong. Yet despite these efforts, *Štikla* emphasized precisely the ambiguities of identification which its creators had publicly hoped to avoid. In contradicting the semi-mythic tradition of Croatian popular music as articulated since independence, it suggested that the 1990s nationalist objective to separate Croatian from Serbian cultural space had not managed to create a lasting fracture.

Indeed, Severina heralded the highest-profile post-Yugoslav collaboration between Croatian and other ex-Yugoslav showbusiness musicians when she revealed in July 2006 that her next album (unreleased as of writing) would predominantly feature Bregović-composed songs with lyrics by the Serbian pop/folk lyricist Marina Tucaković.¹⁰⁸ The Severina/Bregović/Tucaković combination, in fact, resembled the structure of 1980s Yugoslav popular music, when it was routine for Tucaković to work – in ijekavica – with several Croatian composers for a Split band (Magazin) or a singer of Serb background born in Imotski who lived in Sarajevo (Neda Ukraden). Neither was it emphasised that, in the same interview, Severina had finally described one of her songs, *Ajde, ajde, zlato moje* (2000), as “on the borders of turbofolk” – notwithstanding her springtime rejections of the term.

What impact has *Štikla* had for Croatian popular music, beyond short-term occurrences such as Ivan Mikulić’s *Igraj, igray, nemoj stat’* (*Dance, don’t stop*, April) which also featured *ganga* and *lijerica*, plus many folk-costumed dancers when performed live? The semi-folk singer Zorica Andrijašević released an album – recorded before *Štikla* – by Tucaković and Zoran Lesendrić (also Serbian) in spring 2006; Vesna Pisarović released an album track she had described as leaning towards folk; Lana Jurčević’s summer hit *Jedan razlog* (*One reason*), musically accented with Greek-style

bouzouki and percussion, may have had less to do with *Štikla*, more with the glamorous, Latinised Greekness articulated by diasporic singer Elena Paparizou – but could certainly have been marketed as folk if performed by somebody already associated with it.

These post-*Štikla* productions, and *Štikla* itself, certainly disrupt a prevalent narrative of Croatian cultural separateness, but their *subversive* nature may be more doubtful. As Anne McClintock notes, the “formal fluidity, fragmentation and marketing through difference” which take place in “postmodern commodity cultures” may simply enable the privileged to stage symbolic disorder, rather than deeply altering the underlying order.¹⁰⁹ *Moja štikla* – deliberately or inadvertently – exposed the axes of contradiction bounding the Croatian cultural space. Significant changes to those boundaries, however, are likely to be owed more to structural developments such as “the electronic intrusions of transnational media”,¹¹⁰ satellite television and the Internet, which can bypass state broadcasters’ nationalizing tendencies and deliver a broader selection of cultural products directly to the individuals who compose the marketplace.

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¹ See Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community*; Billig, *Banal Nationalism*; Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 2–3.

² Goreta, “Severina u Novom Sadu pjevala s Balaševićem.” On Croatian performers’ activity in other ex-Yugoslav successor states, see Baker, “Politics of Performance.”

³ Dežulović, “Seve i Edo”; “U pamet si, braćo Srbi!”, *Kurir*, 10 January 2006.

⁴ Rasmussen, *Newly-Composed Folk Music of Yugoslavia*, 99. “Zabavna”: literally “light-entertainment” music. Yugoslav-era showbusiness comprised “zabavna” (pop) and “narodna” (folk) music, and this categorization flourishes in Serbia and Bosnia. Croatia’s narodna sector involves only tamburica soloists/groups, Dalmatian klapas, and “authentic” folk-music traditions; Croatian music marketing’s major distinction is between zabavna and “pop-rock”.

⁵ “New folk songs”: see Čolović, *Divlja književnost*. “Turbofolk”, coined satirically by the alternative musician Rambo Amadeus, the term was widely taken up – sometimes pejoratively, sometimes just denoting 1990s NCFM. See Gordy, *Culture of Power in Serbia*; Kronja, *Smrtonosni sjaj*; Goran Tarlać and Vladimir Đurić, eds., *Antologija turbo folka*; Đurković, *Diktatura, nacija, globalizacija*; Grujić, “Inclusiveness.”

⁶ Pettan, “Croats.”

⁷ See, e.g., Ceribašić, “Defining Women and Men”; Gall, “Ljuta trava zaborava”; Dragaš, “‘Balkanizacija’.” This myth reifies the narodna and zabavna genres, and minimises 1980s developments which indicated that they were already converging before Croatian independence. See Baker, “Politics of Performance.”

⁸ Gall, “Prijanja baš uz svaku podlogu” – “translating” Brena’s name from Serbian ekavica to Croatian ijekavica.

⁹ Prica, *Omladinska potkultura u Beogradu*, 87.

¹⁰ Pettan, “Croats.”

¹¹ Rasmussen, *Newly-Composed Folk Music*, xix.

¹² Razsa and Lindstrom, “Balkan is Beautiful,” 630.

¹³ C.f. his 1997 election slogan “Tuđman, a ne Balkan” – “Tuđman, not the Balkans.” See Rihtman-Auguštin, *Ulice moga grada*, 213; Razsa and Lindstrom, “Balkan is Beautiful,” 644.

¹⁴ Bakić-Hayden and Hayden, “Orientalist Variations on the Theme ‘Balkans’.”

¹⁵ Dragaš, “‘Balkanizacija’”.

¹⁶ Gall, “Ikona masovne nekulture”; “Glumica protiv Severine: Uzima nam kruh,” *Index*, November 20, 2005, <http://www.index.hr/clanak.aspx?id=292862>. Severina’s 1998 World Cup connection was retrospectively interpreted this way in 2006 after an unrelated scandal involving footballers visiting a “narodnjački” club: Butković, “Bilić.”

¹⁷ HDZ also adopted a Đani Maršan song as its 1990s anthem, featured “band aid”-style groups in 1995 broadcasts, and featured Toni Cetinski (in military uniform) in 1997: Senjković, *Lica društva*, 88, 153.

¹⁸ E.g. the bands Majke and Parni valjak, and the singer-songwriter Gibonni: Senjković, *Lica društva*, 108-9.

¹⁹ Prica, “Na tlu trivijalnog,” 148-9.

²⁰ Pavelić, “Severina jedra kao Sanaderovo samopouzdanje”; Lovrić, “Mala-je-dala politika.”

²¹ Rasmussen, “Southern Wind of Change,” 109.

²² On Turkey 2003, see Solomon, “Articulating the Historical Moment.”

²³ On Eurovision as spectacle, see Bolin, “Visions of Europe.”

²⁴ On occasional earlier uses of the strategy in Scandinavia, see: Jones-Bamman, “From ‘I’m a Lapp’ to ‘I am Saami’”; Pajala, “Northern Exoticism.”

²⁵ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 8, 86.

²⁶ Bolin, “Visions of Europe,” 190-1.

²⁷ Tzanelli, “‘Impossible is a Fact’,” 497.

²⁸ Bellamy, *Croatian National Identity*, 114.

²⁹ Lacko and Hančić, “Hrvatskoj predviđaju gornji dom.”

³⁰ Batinović, “Hrvatska na Euroviziji.” TV Zagreb, as part of Yugoslav Television (JRT) had also won the Yugoslav pre-selection many times. Its songs’ 1980s Eurovision success included victory in 1989, making Yugoslavia the host in 1990 (when the Yugoslav media’s political polarization led to conflicts between JRT and TV Zagreb). See Vuletić, “The Socialist Star.”

³¹ Vukelić, “Jumbo jetom.”

³² Ruslana’s folkloric musical elements include “powerful and permeating ethnic drums”, repeated cries of “Hey”, foot-stamping, whip-cracking, and the trembitas, a horn-like “ancient mystical Hutsul music instrument” supposedly produced by “craftsmen” from a lightning-felled tree: “Bio”, <http://www.ruslana.com.ua> [cited 10 November 2005].

³³ Mikić, “Recycling National Identities.” Mikić considers the introductory melody was harmonically adapted for European listeners, and that *Lane*’s gentle presentation aimed to convey an alternative Serbian masculinity to the 1990s’ prevailing internationally-constructed image. C.f. the “new democratic

masculinity” surrounding assassinated Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić: Greenberg, ““Goodbye Serbian Kennedy’.”

³⁴ Čolović, “Balkan.”

³⁵ Mikac, “Joksimović.”

³⁶ Brajčić, “Na Dori.” Novković’s rivals in the Croatian pre-selection included two competing essentializations of an aspect of Croatian heritage: Luka Nižetić from Split, accompanied by a “klapa” vocal group (Dalmatian/Mediterranean), and Tonči Huljić’s Magazin, understood (as usual) as standing for an “eastern melos” and religious kitsch (with a song about Nazareth). Huljić had previously used religious kitsch for Doris Dragović’s *Marija Magdalena*, fourth-placed at Eurovision 1999, which one critic likened to that year’s Turkish folk-pop entry: Horvat, “Regionalni pristup.” On Dalmatian showbusiness’s essentialized Mediterranean, see Joško Čaleta, “Ethnomusicological Approach.”

³⁷ Ducats are a frequent symbol in Slavonian tamburica music: c.f. the most successful commercial tamburica group, Zlatni dukati (Golden ducats). See Bonifačić, “Tamburica Tradition.”

³⁸ Žanić, *Flag on the Mountain*, 356–8 (wolves); Pavičić, “Spoj kiča i katolicizma.” HOS (Croatian Defence Force): a 1991-93 paramilitary organization under the far-right Croatian Party of Right (HSP). An elite National Guard brigade from 1991, later incorporated into the regular Croatian Army, was also called “Vukovi.”

³⁹ Mikić, “Recycling National Identities.”

⁴⁰ Joško Čelan, “Proradit će adrenalin i u finalu!”; Boić Petrač, “Eurosong je moja priča.” 2005’s Moldovan representatives – ethno-rock group Zdob si Zdob – appeared just as aware that essentialized heritage offset by knowing inauthenticity offered an eye-catching promotional method.

⁴¹ “Novković Severini na Doru uvalio plagijat,” *24 sata*, January 29, 2006; Mikac, “Bregović.”

⁴² A short-lived report (originating from a spoof on HTV’s online forum) had claimed – satirizing the Bregović reports and Severina’s symbolic associations – that Severina’s entry would be called *Balkan* (a song by Serbian showbusiness-folk singer Seka Aleksić): Basara, “Kostadinov.”

⁴³ In 2004, Darko Duvnjak-Darus (with dual Croatian citizenship) participated as composer of Karma’s song *Malo pomalo* (“Thompson light,” *Svet*, March 19, 2004), but is a minor showbusiness figure compared to Bregović.

⁴⁴ Ditchchev, “Eros,” 246–7; Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, 130. C.f. Bregović’s use of Gypsy music on pieces such as *Kalašnjikov* or *Ederlezi*.

⁴⁵ Stokes, “Music,” 48–9.

⁴⁶ Pavelić, “Majstori.”

⁴⁷ Gourgouris, “Hypnosis,” 336–7. Today, certain Croatian critics even draw a direct line from Dugme’s rock with folkloric motifs (e.g. Macedonian 7/8 rhythm) into rock, towards music by the Croatian nationalist singer Marko Perković Thompson: Gall, “Neću u Čavoglave”; Pavelić, “Majstori.” Despite rock stylings, Thompson is often understood in Croatia as performing “folk”: see Senjković and Dukić, “Virtual Homeland?” See also Rasmussen, *Newly-Composed Folk Music*, 108, on Bregović and Lepa Brena contributing to NCFM/showbusiness fusion.

⁴⁸ The reunion was referenced in another example of “retromanija”, Tijana Dapčević’s song *Sve je isto samo Njega nema* (*It’s all the same, only He’s not here*) – intricately satirizing ex-Yugoslav peoples’ relationships to Tito and the socialist past: Mikić, “Recycling National Identities.”

⁴⁹ “[N]ot because we declared ourselves Yugoslavs, but because our music had elements from everywhere, it was inspired by those territories. You can find traces from Dalmatia to Vojvodina, also Zagorje, Medimurje, Macedonia... And so it was close to everyone. It wasn’t declarative, but the music remained, and nothing else even could remain from that Yugoslavia”: Ilić and Mikac, “G Bregović.”

⁵⁰ Bregović is well-known for “restaging” motifs from previous work, and has adapted, e.g., Dugme’s songs *Đurđevdan* and *Ružica si bila* (themselves folk-song adaptations) for world-music compositions and film soundtracks: Gourgouris, “Hypnosis,” 342.

⁵¹ “Štikla ko opanak”, *Kurir*, February 22, 2006. “Srpski” connotes ethnic Serbness; the narrower “srbijanski” connotes the geographical entity of Serbia.

⁵² Babić, “Seve.” The distinction concerns the Slavic vowel “ě”, which becomes “ije”/“je” in Croatian and “e” in Serbian – hence “ijekavica”/“ekavica” for the respective variants: Dragojević, “Competing Institutions,” 69.

⁵³ On the early 1990s’ politicization of the differences between Croatian and Serbian, and their use to differentiate and exclude Croatian Serbs from full membership of the nation, see Bellamy, *Croatian National Identity*, 137–46.

⁵⁴ E.g. the Belgrade band Zana’s *Dodirni mi kolena* (*Touch my knees*) became *Dodirni mi koljena* when covered by Severina in 1999. Serbian popular music is nearly always in ekavica, though Neda Ukraden’s post-2000 albums have used ijekavica, perhaps because she recorded them with Croatians (including

Franjo Valentić, *Vukovi's* co-composer) – provoking some adverse comment in Serbia: “Rat između Srba i Hrvata biće konačno završen kada Neda Ukraden i Tompson snime duet,” *Svet*, March 14, 2003.

Ekavica may also be used for rare collaborations between Croatian and Serbian performers which are intended for Serbian/Bosnian markets and not released in Croatia, e.g. a 2002 duet between Slađana and Croatian dance group Karma (*Zauvek* not *Zauvijek*).

⁵⁵ Boban and Marković, “Seve.”

⁵⁶ Matić, “Seve s rerom.”

⁵⁷ Two Croatians (Andrej Babić and Vesna Pizarović) composed for Bosnia-Herzegovina (2004, 2005); Babić twice entered the Slovenian pre-selection (2005, 2006); Tonči Huljić re-arranged Serbia-Montenegro's entry (2005); Željko Joksimović composed for Bosnia-Herzegovina (2006).

⁵⁸ Matić, “Seve s rerom.” Lindo: a dance from Dubrovnik; ganga and rera: characteristic singing styles from Lika/Herzegovina; šijavica: a Dalmatian counting rhyme. Intentionally or not, this interview's headline made a couplet in standard folkloric-epic decasyllabic metre (“Seve s rerom spremna za Atenu, Andrea neće zamijeniti Jelenu”), also referencing the month's second most prominent showbusiness story on whether Magazin would introduce a new vocalist (Andrea Šušnjara instead of Jelena Rozga).

⁵⁹ Goreta, “Severina: Spojila sam Split.”

⁶⁰ Radović, “Crnci.”

⁶¹ Perić *et al.*, “Moja štikla.”

⁶² Stjepan Večković, “Glazba,” <http://scena.hgu.hr/stjepan-veckovic/glazba.html> (accessed 25 September 2006). Večković here calls his music “Croatian ethno music. Its source [*izvorište*] is Croatian folkloric tradition which, across the centuries, has retained a unique, recognisable identity. A Croatian identity.” One of his showbusiness clients, Neda Ukraden, is attached to the Serbian market by the Croatian media.

⁶³ The chant “zumba-zumba-zumba-zumba, sijeno-slama-sir-salama” is performed by Severina's male backing vocalists. As one of the song's most nonsensical lines, it had been widely reproduced, sometimes (in Serbia) transposed into ekavica – making it “the unambiguous line (seno, slama)” which “proved” to one interviewer that it was in ekavica (Matić, “Seve s rerom”). A “seno-slama-slama-seno” refrain had appeared on a newly-composed folk song (*Šu-šu*, dedicated to Šumadija) by the 1960s Serbian singer Olivera Katarina – whose public image, with the nickname “Oli nationale,” in some ways prefigured Severina's: see Luković, *Bolja prošlost*, 190.

⁶⁴ Perić *et al.*, “Moja štikla.” Bajuk and Knebl draw mainly on music from Međimurje/Podravina (northern Croatia). Novaković, founder of the groups Legen and Kries, fused Dalmatian unaccompanied singing with electronic ambient sampling.

⁶⁵ Marušić, “Štikla’.”

⁶⁶ Rožman, “Kostadinov.” Kostadinov also argued that Novaković had used similar melodies with Legen – including the “zumba” motif.

⁶⁷ Rožman, “Kostadinov.” Karleuša was a more recent Serbian pop-folk singer.

⁶⁸ Oremović, “Izgaranje naroda.”

⁶⁹ See Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 86.

⁷⁰ Butković, “Severina”; Perić *et al.*, “Moja štikla”; Oremović, “Izgaranje naroda”; Mikac, “Severina podijelila.” See also Čolović, *Divlja književnost*, 153, 158, on “joke erotic songs” and satirical references to urban symbols (including one song *Cipelice na štiklice – High-heeled shoes*) as existing tropes in NCFM.

⁷¹ Ivkošić, “Štikla’.”

⁷² Another compares Thompson to the Serbian showbusiness-folk singer Ceca Ražnatović.

⁷³ E.g. Fazlić *et al.*, “Krvave noći.” Gangster violence has always been an implicit element in the turbofolk aesthetic: Kronja, *Smrtonosni sjaj*, 39–40.

⁷⁴ Brajčić, “Slavuj iz Mrčajevaca”; Dervoz, “Srpski folk u Lijepoj našoj”; Branimira Lazarin, “43% tinedžjera sluša narodnjake.”

⁷⁵ Marušić, “Dora.”

⁷⁶ Mikac, “Severina.”

⁷⁷ Ljubičić, “Milo mame svoje?!”

⁷⁸ “If the majority of Croatian inhabitants are really ashamed of this country, where a large percentage of its inhabitants grew up with Sinj rera, Herzegovinan ganga and Čavoglave šijavica, Drniš ojkavica and even ethno-elements of Slavonian dancing songs [*poskočice*] [...] then many more Vlatka Pokoses would have to leave Croatia”: Mikac, “Severina.” Singer/presenter Pokos had frequently criticized *Štikla* as turbofolk: Mustapić, “Vlatka Pokos.”

⁷⁹ Ilić, “Štiklom u sridu.”; Perić and Đaković, “Severina u šiljkanima.”

⁸⁰ The Belgrade audience objected to Montenegrin jurors' not voting for the highest-placed Serbian song. There had been similar allegations against Montenegro in *Evropesma* 2005, won by a Montenegrin song,

and the same Montenegrin group scored highest in 2006. Both Montenegrin songs had had potentially patriotic lyrics, and it was feared their performance might even influence voters in the Montenegrin independence referendum, held the day after Eurovision). RTS proposed a re-run, but RTCG considered the result final; Serbia-Montenegro eventually withdrew from Eurovision with a compromise allowing it to vote. See Mikić, "Recycling National Identities."

⁸¹ "Ana Ben Hur i Majini gej sismisi," *Svet*, March 16, 2006. Severina's last performance there – a TV Pink awards-show – had been the date of Zoran Đinđić's assassination: Mikac, "Severini ovacije."

⁸² Dinić and Mihailović, "Samo Severina."

⁸³ Varešanović's zabavna music, always (like Magazin) "on the borders of folk" (Đurković, *Diktatura*, 212–3), vocally derives from Bosnian sevdah. He is widely popular throughout ex-Yugoslavia, including full activity in Croatia.

⁸⁴ See Kronja, "Politics as Porn," 206.

⁸⁵ Judah, "A Warlike Song"; Pavičić, "Povijesna Štikla."

⁸⁶ 12 (maximum) from Bosnia-Herzegovina; 10 from Slovenia, Macedonia, and Serbia-Montenegro; 6 from Switzerland; 4 from Monaco; 2 from Turkey and Germany. One showbusiness manager characterized only the Monegasque/Turkish points as "natural", i.e. not from ex-Yugoslavia or countries with strong ex-Yugoslav diasporas: Goret, "Severina: Napravili smo dobar posao."

⁸⁷ Rožman, "Kostadinov." The backing vocals, performed on stage by Lado members, were recorded by an amateur group and two wedding singers from Čavoglave: Goret, "Severina: Tekst 'Štikle'."

Čavoglave is itself well-known in Croatian showbusiness as Thompson's birthplace (his first hit single during the Homeland War was dedicated to his platoon-mates' defence of it); surprisingly, this connection was not noted in the *Štikla* commentaries.

⁸⁸ Baker, "Politics of Performance," 282; see also Jansen, *Antinacionalizam*.

⁸⁹ Pettan, "Croats."

⁹⁰ Marušić, "Severina štiklom."

⁹¹ Senjković and Dukić, "Virtual Homeland," 54.

⁹² "Kostadinov: Nismo namjestili pobjedu Severini", *Index*, 7 March 2006, <http://www.index.hr/clanak.aspx?id=310085> (accessed 7 March 2006).

⁹³ Grubišić, "Štiklom po tradiciji"; Krce, "Ganga na Olimpu."

⁹⁴ Jadrijević Tomas, "Napolju je poledica." Unlike Severina, Bulić added that his music was "a barrier against the east" i.e. Serbian folk.

⁹⁵ See Senjković and Dukić, "Virtual Homeland," 50; see also Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, 75.

⁹⁶ Mikac, "Zašto."

⁹⁷ Senjković and Dukić, "Virtual Homeland," 59.

⁹⁸ Mikac, "Severina." Patriotic-showbusiness performers (e.g. Thompson or Niko Bete) have strongly supported the indicted, and several Miroslav Škoro songs use betrayed-hero images to represent both contemporary officers and famous Croatian historical figures.

⁹⁹ *24 sata* (which had most prolonged the ekavica "scandal") still attempted to manufacture another controversy around Bregović being by association "an Ante Gotovina supporter" ("Goran Bregović je pobornik Ante Gotovine?", *24 sata*, March 8, 2006), but this failed to resonate.

¹⁰⁰ Goret, "Severina odustala."

¹⁰¹ Ukraden came from a Serb family, was born in Imotski and grew up in Sarajevo. During the 1980s, many songs written for her by Croatian composers (including Boris Novković's father Đorđe) prefigured the late-1990s Croatian semi-folk turn. With the outbreak of war, Ukraden controversially moved to Belgrade. During the 1990s she recorded with Serbian composers, but – while still based in Serbia – since 2000 she has recorded her albums with Croatian composers: Franjo Valentić and Branimir Mihaljević. A major 1980s star, Ukraden is now on the periphery of folk in Serbia, and performs in Croatia only at small nightclub venues like many other Serbian folk performers. She has had no Croatian or Serbian compilations of her 1980s hits, only Slovenian-produced editions. Criticized to this day for emphasizing a particular ethnic background to suit political circumstances, Ukraden was perhaps too ambiguous too early to find a place in the ethnicized showbusiness of the post-Yugoslav successor states.

¹⁰² Cottle, "Mediatized Rituals," 411.

¹⁰³ Vukšić, "Doživio sam."

¹⁰⁴ Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 68–75.

¹⁰⁵ See Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 94–5; Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, 12; Peterson, *Creating Country Music*.

¹⁰⁶ Đurković, *Diktatura*, 185–90.

¹⁰⁷ See Razsa and Lindstrom, "Balkan is Beautiful."

¹⁰⁸ Goreta, “Slučaj poliklinike Salus.” The collaboration was not even elevated into the interview’s headline, despite Tucaković’s long-standing collaboration with Ceca Ražnatović.

¹⁰⁹ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 68.

¹¹⁰ Ang, *Living Room Wars*, 144–5.