

The concept of turbofolk in Croatia: inclusion/exclusion in the construction of national musical identity¹

Catherine Baker

UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies

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If national identity is constantly redefined through social practice (Edensor 2002:12; Bellamy 2003:29), then Croatia's cultural politics show those processes frequently at work in popular music (Čale Feldman et al. 1993; Pettan 1998; Pavlović 1999; Ceribašić 2000; Senjković 2002; Senjković and Dukić 2005). This holds true not only for the wartime years, when Croatian popular music was conceptualised as excluding any signifiers of 'enemy' Serbian culture, but also for the Yugoslav era (Luković 1989; Rasmussen 2002), and for the contemporary period when cultural products circulate more freely among the ex-Yugoslav states and the youngest music consumers may have little first-hand experience of wartime. This paper deals particularly with 'turbofolk', a term carried over from discourses on Serbian music to describe aspects of both Serbian and Croatian musical production. 'Turbofolk' acts less as a concrete definition of musical directions, and more as a conceptual category which aggregates connotations of banality, foreignness, violence and kitsch in order to provide critical apparatus with a ready-made strategy of distancing.

The anthropologist Anthony Cohen sees boundary-setting practices like these as fundamental in forming and maintaining group identities. Any community, for Cohen, is maintained through continual value-judgements of similarity to/difference from the group, while the similarity/difference boundary is judged according to criteria which require only the symbol, not its content, to be agreed (Cohen 1985:12-14). Community, then, is the product of continual inclusion/exclusion judgements – and also depends on contact with the judged other (Eriksen 2002:12). Since Croatian access to music from Serbia has grown ever easier in the six years since the death of Croatia's nationalist 1990s president Franjo Tuđman, popular music in contemporary Croatia often reflects this process in action. 'Turbofolk' has been used as a symbolic framework throughout this period, but the incursion – or return? – of what turbofolk denotes (showbusiness-folk music using contemporary global standards of production, presentation and promotion) has nonetheless become ever more apparent.

The Context of 'Turbo Folk' in Serbia

As a musical direction, turbofolk emerged in 1990s Serbia, where its banality, its consumerism or its sexualised aesthetic are criticised from academic and cultural standpoints. In musical terms, turbofolk might be seen as a development of the Yugoslav newly-composed folk music genre (NCFM), which had evolved from popular songs composed in the style of traditional music from Šumadija or Bosnia (1950s), into a widely-mediatised 1980s entertainment product which incorporated electric guitars and synthesisers and took visual/promotional models from domestic and international pop production (Rasmussen 2002:121). The early 1990s, however, witnessed 'visible change' in this music and the emergence of a new term, 'turbo folk', for an extension which relied heavily on globally-promoted hip-hop, techno and dance music as its sources

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(Grujić 2006:4).² Its connection with electronic music might have made ‘turbo’ folk an attractive term: moreover, ‘turbo’ in motoring vocabulary connotes ‘challenge, speed, fearlessness and taking part in the latest trends’ (Kronja 2001:10).

However, ‘turbo folk’ in Serbia is generally not a genre label. Instead, its emergence is frequently connected to the conditions of the Slobodan Milošević regime, whether it is seen as imposed by the state-owned media’s official favour (Gordy 1999:133-40) or as enabled by a sudden *lack* of state control over the entertainment market (Đurković 2002:179). The Serbian ‘web of association’ (Gordy 2005:15) between turbofolk and the Milošević regime is widely understood as symbolised by the 1995 marriage of one singer, Ceca Veličković, to the paramilitary commander and smuggler Željko Ražnatović-Arkan (Gordy 1999:138; Iordanova 2001:182). Ceca Ražnatović became and has remained one of the leading figures in 1990s and post-2000 turbofolk (inside and outside Serbia), seemingly assisted by her husband’s transferred notoriety. Indeed, the implicit turbofolk/Milošević syntagm is such that showbusiness-folk professionals sometimes question the term’s use to denote post-Milošević production (*Globus* 2005; Grujić 2006:3-4).

Yet, as Marija Grujić points out, Serbian uses of ‘turbo folk’ surpass ‘pure musicological or technical demarcation’ and carry certain ‘cultural inclusions [...] and exclusions’ (Grujić 2006:3, 5). Critiques of turbofolk as mass-produced and low-quality entertainment often enter a value-system privileging ‘urban’ culture over ‘village’ culture or seeing turbofolk’s so-called ‘oriental’ styles as threatening Serbian music’s purity (Grujić 2006:7): judgements which also appeared in Yugoslav-era critiques of NCFM (Rasmussen 2002:200-1). The meaning of ‘turbo folk’ in Serbia ranges from ambivalent to pejorative, so that it tends to be avoided by performers themselves: hence singer Indira Radić mentioning ‘the [Serbian and Croatian] spread of *pop folk* music (because it definitely isn’t turbo folk!)’ (Perić and Đaković 2006).³

One particular line of criticism refers to turbofolk as an *aesthetic* said to reproduce Milošević-era social values: quick enrichment, conspicuous consumption, masculinity realised through violence, and femininity realised through sexual availability. The overall matrix of stylistic values is described by Ratka Marić as ‘warrior chic’ (Kronja 2001:39) – although its chief protagonists, urban gangsters, were evidently not at war. Kronja notes that turbofolk’s ‘debauchery and banality, lasciviousness and worshipping everything trendy’ are chiefly emphasised in performance and visual presentation (Kronja 2001:30), and finds strong lyrical strands of ‘female masochism’, ‘male masochism’ (romantic fatalism) and a ‘cult of violence’ (Kronja 2001:90-6). Through turbofolk videos as the most visible representation of Milošević-era social phenomena, ‘so-called peasant, criminal and military cultural forms and consumption practices became linked in the popular imaginary’ (Greenberg 2006:135-6). These connotations have persisted into post-Milošević discourses and may account for the term’s rejection by contemporary showbusiness-folk professionals.

² One performer popularly supposed to have ‘invented’ turbofolk is Ivan Gavrilović with his song *200 na sat (200 km/h)*. Some characterise its folk associations as minimal (Gordy 1999:134), although it involves a deliberate accordion/synthesiser juxtaposition around the hook of an internationally-promoted 1994 Dutch techno hit (Đurković 2002:217).

³ *NIN* sub-editors disagreed, and the article’s sub-headline proclaimed ‘Turbo folk in Croatia’ (re. the Croatian singer Severina’s controversial hit *Moja štikla*) (Perić and Đaković 2006). ‘Turbofolk’ should be used with reservations if its own performers avoid the identification; yet, no other term appears to distinguish 1990s/2000s production/personalities from their earlier counterparts. Serbian music marketing would refer to it as ‘folk’ or ‘narodna’. I use ‘showbusiness-folk’ to distinguish between these performers and performers involved with ‘authentic’ folk music – a distinct branch of music-making with its own identification codes.

A feminist perspective on turbofolk frequently emphasises the turbofolk aesthetic's 'gendered valence' (Greenberg 2006:136), particularly 'instrumentalisation' of the female body (Grujić 2006:6): thus Kronja views women in turbofolk as representing 'desired objects and goods' obliged 'to attract and excite men' and thereby to confirm male status or serve as 'a potential status symbol' for males (Kronja 2001:84). The singer Jelena Karleuša is seen as emblematic of this aesthetic (Stanić 2001:106-7). Males, too, are subject to certain stylistic expectations of a 'dangerous, robust' image accessorised with designer clothing, fast cars, mobile telephones, guns, drugs, and women, so that the turbofolk aesthetic presents audiences with extremely limited fields for the expression of gender identity (Kronja 2001:85):⁴

For Serbian audiences and commentators, 'turbo folk' signifies a number of images/associations connected to 1990s social phenomena which have persisted into the present day. Many discussions of turbofolk adhere to a simplistic mass-culture critique, but others take a more insightful approach towards turbofolk's situation within the Serbian media-business structure (Đurković 2002), its relationship to transnational music/fashion trends (Dimitrijević 2002), or its significance as a value-filled conceptual category rather than a terminological description (Grujić 2006). This last approach is the most valuable when addressing turbofolk in Croatia, where the concept as developed in Serbia is re-contextualised and re-deployed – most usually as a strategy of distancing and marking the boundaries of a national musical identity for Croatia.

Inclusion and Exclusion Within the Croatian Musical Space

A Croatian *definition* of turbofolk is difficult to come by, yet the term received increasing media usage as an adjectival description of music performed by Serbian singers, music made in Croatia, or music played in bars/clubs dedicated to NCFM ('narodnjački klubovi'). These contexts are all fields where a particular genre/singer/song's Croatian identity, or their appropriateness for Croatia, may be at stake. The dynamic may be most pronounced when referring to Serbian singers, but the 'Croatian-ness' of Croatian-produced popular music has been frequently contested with regard to 1990s/2000s production, and the mediated treatment of 'narodnjački' clubs often contains overtones of setting the normative cultural borders of an urban space (particularly Zagreb, Split, or Rijeka). All three contexts share certain assumptions about a desirable popular-musical identity for Croatia.

A prevailing myth of Croatian popular music, articulated by various musicians, journalists and musicologists, privileges certain musical directions as allowably 'Croatian', implicitly excluding other unmentioned directions from national cultural space. Four particular styles/genres are admitted as Croatian: central-European schlager, singer-songwriters and pop-rock artists, Dalmatian light music (singer-songwriters with strong regional connotations, and a-cappella 'klapa' singing), and Slavonian tamburica music (Ceribašić 2000:227-8).⁵ A critical juncture for Croatian music is seen as the wartime withdrawal of Serbian cultural products (including NCFM): Croatian musicians are said to have imitated them to create a version which would be acceptable in the nationalised and politicised early 1990s (Gall 2001a; Dragaš 2004). This can be considered a national

⁴ In common with many critiques of turbofolk, the perspective stated here seems to assume the effect of music video and lyrics on its audience, rather than problematising the transmission of its social and gendered values.

⁵ Ceribašić identifies neo-traditional tamburica music, zabavna music and pop-rock. However, Dalmatian-oriented popular music (including a neotraditional strand) should be extracted from a general zabavna category. See Čaleta 1999 (Dalmatian music); Bonifačić 1998 (tamburica). Music from north-western regions (Istria, Međimurje/Zagorje) is also admitted as Croatian, but marginalised in comparison to the Dalmatian/Slavonian directions.

identity narrative, of the kind which makes an abstract narration of national distinctiveness intelligible to the community (see Bellamy 2003:2). Moreover, enshrining these traditions also reifies them as a static construction which judges Croatian popular music by its correspondence to the 1970s musical market.

Thus, the adoption (said to have been pioneered by the producer Tonči Huljić) of rhythms, lexical components and vocal techniques from Serbian/Bosnian NCFM is seen as foreign to existing Croatian musical traditions. Once made foreign, it can be symbolically excluded through neologisms like ‘turbo-narodnjak’ (Gall 2001a), comparisons to Lepa Brena,⁶ or extended ‘Orient’ metaphors (Dragaš 2004). Incorporating aspects of NCFM into Croatian popular music tends to be criticised as ‘imitation’. However, adapting those techniques to existing schlager orchestration produced music noticeably distinct from the paradigmatic Serbian 1990s turbofolk, which displayed more emphasis on (synthesised) accordions and much more pronounced tremolo vocals (‘triler’/‘zavijanje’). Thus Boris Dežulović accused Huljić of producing ‘turbofolk in ijekavian, only without the accordion’ (Dežulović 2002):⁷ the description is intended pejoratively, but nonetheless suggests an incipient re-contextualisation of turbofolk beyond Serbia.

The myth of Croatian popular musical tradition also presupposes a reified understanding of the genres of ‘zabavna’ and ‘narodna’ music (light-entertainment music and folk).⁸ Both genres were/are fields of intensive showbusiness promotion in federal Yugoslavia and contemporary Serbia, but on the showbusiness level the distinction has withered in Croatia. During the 1990s, newly-composed tamburica music (performed by groups such as Zlatni dukati, Ex Panonia, Gazde, Baruni, and soloist Miroslav Škoro) had been enthusiastically promoted as ‘narodna’ on the grounds that tamburica represented an authentic Croatian instrument, suppressed by the Yugoslav authorities but to be cherished in independent Croatia (Šagovac 1996).⁹ Official stimulation of showbusiness-tamburica music declined after the change of government in 2000, although tamburica music is still promoted through specialised festivals; today, ‘authentic’ folk music can be freely described as ‘narodna’, but within different genre norms. Even in the 1990s, the Croatian narodna scene differed greatly from its Serbian counterpart: for instance, female soloists were almost entirely absent from Croatian narodna,¹⁰ but represented many of Serbian folk’s most prominent personalities.

The Croatian zabavna myth maintains that zabavna music remained separate from showbusiness-folk until Serbian products disappeared from the Croatian market in 1991. Yet it is difficult to conceive of zabavna and narodna as entirely separate: their boundaries had already become fluid during the 1970s/1980s in a general ‘folklorisation of Yugoslav popular music as a whole’ (Rasmussen 2002:76, 95). It must be stressed that Croatian musicians too were involved in this latter process – hence certain of Tonči

⁶ The 1980s NCFM singer symbolically associated with the memory of socialist Yugoslavia. See Baker 2006b.

⁷ While standard Serbian uses ekavian word forms, standard Croatian uses ijekavian, leading to a nationalised symbolic-linguistic distinction: see further Baker 2006b.

⁸ The zabavna/narodna distinction still thrives in Serbian music marketing, and narodna music may be sub-divided into mass-mediatised folk, localised and more ‘authentic’ genres, and ‘ethno’ or world music. Stars, too, are marketed as either ‘pop’ or ‘folk’ regardless of how their music might overlap genre boundaries. The selection of genre may depend on how individualised a star’s performance persona is intended to be, with folk marketing offering less space for individuation.

⁹ The prevailing 1990s discourse of tamburica as an expression of Croatian culture operated to support the claim by the ruling nationalist party (HDZ) that Croatian culture and nationality had been repressed by the inimical Yugoslav state until HDZ led the Croatian people to independence. See also Bonifačić 1998 on Zlatni dukati.

¹⁰ Except tamburica vocalist Vera Svoboda.

Huljić's mid-1980s productions for his group Magazin, or several songs written by Rajko Dujmić and Zrinko Tutić on Doris Dragović's last Yugoslav album *Budi se dan* (*Day is breaking*).¹¹ Distinctions between zabavna/narodna or Croatian/Serbian showbusiness were blurred even further in the frequent collaborations of Dujmić, Tutić and Đorđe Novković with Neda Ukraden, a Serb born in Imotski and based in Sarajevo – yet responsibility for folklorising Croatian music has been latterly attributed solely to Huljić. In 1989, Dujmić claimed that his work with Ukraden 'was actually a pioneering attempt to introduce the folk [narodnog] sound into pop music' (Luković 1989:277): his attitude not only indicates that zabavna music was then trans-republican, but suggests that, before Croatian cultural space had been nationalised, a Croatian producer could not only explicitly associate himself with narodna music but also take positive credit for it.¹²

What narratives of national distinctiveness are signified by Croatian music's mythic boundaries? The simplest level is a direct Croatian/Serbian opposition, as in Naila Ceribašić's discussion of the early 1990s (Ceribašić 2000:227). However, the national dichotomy nest within broader symbolic-geographical referents where a nation's Other is constructed as Balkan (and thus non-European) through eastern-themed language/metaphor (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992:10). A European/Balkan opposition was a common reference point in 1990s Croatian nationalist political rhetoric, and even in anti-nationalist discourse (Razsa and Lindstrom 2004:630): the 'Balkanised' referent can attach to other ex-Yugoslav successor states, nationalist politicians, or any politically/culturally undesirable phenomenon, including popular music.

This framework leads to critical metaphors such as those of one critic on a proposed duet between Željko Joksimović (Serbian) and Ivana Banfić (Croatian). Here, 'Croatian showbusiness has anyway "gone Serbian", that is, "turned Turkish", long ago', and Huljić's clients were Croatian showbusiness's most 'visible converts [poturice]' and 'implemented many elements of Serbian turbofolk into Croatian zabavna music', so that 'Croatian zabavna music [...] no longer even exists in authentic form.' (Dragaš 2004) The elision of Serbian and Turkish culture is striking, as is the use of 'poturice' (connoting converts to Islam during the Christian/Ottoman wars) for Huljić and his musicians. Despite such examples, however, 'Balkan' is generally a more common referent than 'Serbian' ('srpski' or 'srbijanski'), except when describing Serbian performers themselves. A general 'eastern' ('istočnjački') or 'oriental' ('orijentalni') referent is also used, usually connected to 'rhythms' or 'melos'.¹³

Such discourses partially reflect those expressed in the Yugoslav era, which made up a 'set of institutionally and psychologically maintained boundaries reinforcing perceptions of culture-core differences between Balkan and (Western) European culture.' (Rasmussen 2002:xix) Certain symbolism appeared in both periods: Rasmussen frequently notes critiques' implicit 'Balkanism', while an urban/rural opposition criticising NCFM music/audiences as 'peasant-like' [seljačko] was already visible in 1980s youth culture (Prica 1991:40). The figure of Lepa Brena could already be used in the 1980s as a symbolic abbreviation for NCFM, e.g. Zdravko Čolić discussing his 1985 album *Ti si mi u krvi* (*You're in my blood*), which had itself infused some NCFM techniques

¹¹ Miša Đurković describes Magazin's music, like that of several Sarajevo groups, as 'always on the borders of folk' (Đurković 2002:213).

¹² After 1991, Dujmić began to compose for Ex Panonia, beginning with patriotic songs (Mikac 1996b) – on the zabavna/narodna boundary, but within the new political/cultural circumstances. By the mid-1990s, Dujmić's public interviews followed the widespread discourse opposing tamburica (the authentic national symbol) to accordions (the symbol of otherness). He continued to remain hostile to the use of 'eastern' elements when, commenting on an Ivana Kindl song with visual and musical references to Turkey, Dujmić judged that Kindl should 'change the country she represents [at Eurovision]' since 'it would be ideal for her to sing it representing Bosnia.' (Strukar 2004)

¹³ See Baker, forthcoming.

into zabavna music: 'If it sounds like Brena to someone, that's not my fault.' (Luković 1989:274) Yet, in the Yugoslav era, the critical apparatus also included accusations of 'using Spanish, Greek, Alpine and other "foreign" meloi' as well as 'musical orientalisms' (Prica 1991:87) – note particularly the 'Spanish' and 'Alpine' directions, which would be difficult to fit into a 'Balkan' frame of reference. In Croatia, these other referents are no longer connected to NCFM,¹⁴ suggesting that the ethno-politicisation of cultural criticism might have focused the critique through a Balkan/eastern lens.

Turbofolk as Symbolic Referent: Serbian and Croatian Musical Production

Whether Serbian performers, domestic performers, or musical venues are being described, 'turbofolk' serves as a practically definition-free marker which sets them beyond Croatian cultural boundaries. Thus the prevailing sound of Croatian music is despairingly described as 'the customary turbofolk melos' (Horvat 2000); Severina's paradigmatic hits are 'orthodox eastern [istočnjački] turbofolk themes' (Gall 2001b); nightclubs with violent reputations are "kafane" where turbo folk blaes out' (Majetić 2002); the 'musical expression' of Marko Perković Thompson, whose nationalist music incorporates folk rhythms and rock stylings, 'verges on Balkan turbofolk' (Gall 2002); both 'imported turbo-folk' and its Croatian equivalents are damaging quality and variety (Horvat 2004); a song by the dance group Karma is the bastard child of 'disco-esque folk dancing [drmeš], dance and turbofolk' (Gall 2004); youths play 'angry turbofolk' at parties even though Serbian music is absent from Croatian radio (Pavičić 2004); Ceca Ražnatović is 'the turbo folk singer and widow of the war criminal Arkan' (Barković 2005); the opening of a 'folkoteka' (folk music club) in Split marks 'turbofolk's entry on to the city asphalt' (Gall 2005) – and all this before the 2005/06 wave of interest in 'turbofolk' music and clubs.

The most obvious use of 'turbofolk' in Croatian media discourse is to describe Serbian showbusiness-folk singers. Their underground popularity has long been remarked upon (Mikac 1996a; Lacko 1997; Bender et al. 1998; Đilas 1999), but received more attention in 2002, during Miroslav Ilić's first post-war tour of Croatia, and in 2004, when Željko Joksimović played the largest-scale concert by a Serbian 'folk' singer.¹⁵ Newspapers every so often report on the availability of folk cassettes/CDs at markets (Jadrijević Tomas 2004) or discotheque concerts by folk performers.¹⁶ Commentaries often refer to the supposed paradox of turbofolk's popularity among Croats despite its associations with Serbian nationalism, and use symbolic abbreviations contrasting intense Croatian patriotism with Serbianness/foreignness: e.g. 'the real proof that the market does not respect nation and ideology' is that a market stall observed by one journalist was selling both items 'with pictures of [NDH leader] Ante Pavelić and CDs by Arkan's widow Ceca' (Jadrijević Tomas 2004), or CDs by various Serbian/Bosnian folk singers 'are sold shoulder to shoulder with Thompson and [Miroslav] Škoro' (Karamatić 2005).¹⁷ In these constructions the most frequent Serbian referent is Ceca Ražnatović, whose marriage to Željko Ražnatović-Arkan combines with turbofolk's general symbolic value

¹⁴ Contemporary Serbian discussions of turbofolk are slightly richer geographically – e.g. Kronja breaks down turbofolk's influences into Greek, Turkish, and Egyptian (Kronja 2001:55) – yet all these remain conceptually 'eastern'. See also Đurković's argument that the concept of Serbian NCFM should be extended beyond the prevailing 'Šumadija' concept into musically marginal regions e.g. Hungarian-Gypsy czardas, Vlach music, or Muslim/Albanian music (Đurković 2002:185-6).

¹⁵ Croatian viewers had unexpectedly awarded him maximum points at the Eurovision Song Contest.

¹⁶ Including Vesna Zmijanac, Dragana Mirković, Indira Radić and Seka Aleksić.

¹⁷ Škoro has performed several songs dedicated to indicted Croatian generals and historical national heroes (Baker 2006a), beginning with the 1992 patriotic tamburica song *Ne dirajte mi ravnicu* (*Hands off my plains*). Since releasing a top-selling patriotic single in 2005, he and Thompson are often mentioned together as symbols of musical nationalism.

to represent an ultimate political/national/cultural Other.¹⁸ Another point of comparison is Lepa Brena, usually as a benchmark against which to criticise Croatian zabavna music (particularly female singers such as Severina) for banality or NCFM elements. The figure of Jelena Karleuša, in contrast, is widely used in Serbian discourse as a symbolic abbreviation for turbofolk's hyper-consumerism and sexuality (Stanić 2001:106-7), but rarely figures in Croatian symbolic value-judgements: what elevates Ceca above Karleuša is not domestic prominence, but extra-musical connotations.

Ceca also receives coverage as an individual, especially for concerts outside Serbia or supposed mafia connections (see Greenberg 2006:142). However, a tacit expectation holds that she (unlike other Serbian stars) should not be treated as simply another showbusiness personality. While on one hand acknowledged as 'the turbo-folk queen Ceca' (Njegić 2004), the usual description of her as 'Arkan's wife', 'Arkan's widow' or 'widow of the war criminal Arkan' (Dežulović 2002; Jadrijević Tomas 2004; Barković 2005; Šimundić-Bendić 2005; Đorđić 2005; Peršić 2005; Dragaš 2006; etc.) signals that her public persona as constructed in Croatia exceeds the field of entertainment. Petar Vlahov's transgression of this frame by interviewing Ceca for a private TV channel in January 2005 met with so many protests that it was never broadcast, despite heavy advertising (including Ceca describing Arkan as 'the greatest Serb war commander') (Šimundić-Bendić 2005).¹⁹ Coverage of Ceca's first Slovenian concert (May 2005) also turned on her notoriety, emphasising the security measures surrounding the venue in case of violent demonstrations (Peršić 2005). If certain female performers (e.g. Doris Dragović, Severina) are occasionally elevated by the Croatian media into embodiments of the Croatian people (cf. the nickname 'Seve nazionale'), Ceca is constructed as their ultimate antipode. The instant association between Ceca and the turbofolk concept may even allow the meanings attached to Ceca to be transferred to any other performer or phenomenon tagged with the adjective 'turbofolk', including Croatian musical products.

Since turbofolk is less a musical definition than a conceptual category (Grujić 2006:5), it is difficult to assess the similarity between Serbian turbofolk and contemporary Croatian popular music. The situation is complicated by the new production standards of more recent Serbian turbofolk, where the specifically Serbian accordion sound has sometimes been downplayed (e.g. by Ceca Ražnatović, Jelena Karleuša, Seka Aleksić, Viki Miljković, and others) and their orchestration has approached that of dance-pop music or Greek/Turkish production.²⁰ When the Croatian singer Doris Dragović (another Huljić client) was accused of imitating Ražnatović's song *Drugarice* (*Girlfriend*) on the title track of her 2000 album *Lice* (*Faces*) (Marušić 2000), the dance-orchestrated *Drugarice* might almost have seemed closer to Croatian production at the time than to mid-1990s Serbian turbofolk.

Other points of textual comparison include Biblical kitsch,²¹ female masochism, or playful allusions to post-transition social archetypes.²² The work of the Croatian dance group Karma, who frequently remix Yugoslav and Croatian folk/semi-folk hits,²³ also suggests that these repertoires are, at the very least, musically mutually intelligible.

¹⁸ Thompson and Ceca may even be invoked together as imagined extreme poles of Croatian and Serbian belonging.

¹⁹ Protests included a statement from Dinamo Zagreb fans who claimed that Vlahov had insulted the memory of Dinamo supporters who had died in the Homeland War by exchanging football strips with Ceca (*Index*, 28 January 2005).

²⁰ Other performers, e.g. Šaban Šaulić, still retain much more Serbian (i.e. Šumadija) orchestration.

²¹ Ceca Ražnatović's *Isuse* (*Jesus*), and Doris Dragović's *Marija Magdalena* or Magazin's *Nazareth* (*Nazareth*).

²² Lina's *Bumbar* (*Bumblebee*) in Serbia (Kronja 2001:86-7); Severina's *Mala je dala* (*She gave in*) in Croatia.

²³ E.g. *Zora je* (Neda Ukraden), *Hajdemo u planine* (Bijelo dugme), *Rano* and *Lastavica* (Minea).

Unusually for a Croatian group, Karma have also produced a song in ekavica (*Zauvek*, a duet with the Serbian singer Slađana) which foregrounds synthesised accordion flourishes more than is usual in Croatia, but this song did not appear on their Croatian albums. Striking lyrical similarities may occasionally be found between individual Serbian and Croatian songs, but far more common are broader thematic overlaps regarding, e.g., sadness, destiny, pain, romantic deceit and unrequited love, not to mention the male drinking songs which focus on the ‘kafana’ in Serbian NCFM but often unfold in the ‘konoba’ of their Croatian equivalents.²⁴ It is safe enough to say that Serbian turbofolk and 1990s Croatian semi-NCFM production seem to draw on similar lexical and thematic repertoires. However, here too one should note continuity with Yugoslav-era NCFM, which emphasised ‘romantic motifs’ often ultimately connected to family life (Čolović 1985:185-6) and dramatised a ‘limited lexical stock’ of already recognisable elements and situations (Rasmussen 2002:187) – although sometimes the ‘clichéd syntagms and rhymes’ of NCFM, combined with their repetitive rhythms, may largely be intended to make the songs as memorable and as suitable for dancing as possible (Dragičević-Šešić 1994:205-6).²⁵

Turbofolk on the Boundaries of Urban Space: City Identities and Moral Panics

1980s NCFM remained conceptually associated with village life, even though its listeners were by then strongly represented in cities, particularly in suburban/peripheral districts (Dragičević-Šešić 1994:35). The association was often used pejoratively, as when young punks and ‘šminkeri’ (followers of designer fashion) would dub NCFM listeners and lifestyles ‘seljačko’ or ‘peasant-like’ (Prica 1991:40). Indeed, NCFM suggested a certain mentality to urban and metropolitan critics: the so-called ‘small-town spirit [duh palanke]’ which celebrated collectivity (Rasmussen 2002:199-200), and where villagers experienced themselves not as individuals but as members of a community and generational group (Dragičević-Šešić 1994:72), among whom NCFM functioned as a ‘symbolic communication’ of social roles (Čolović 1985:187).²⁶ Over and above the sudden symbolic weight of NCFM’s Serbian connections when the Croatian cultural space became nationalised, showbusiness-folk music also retained these earlier connotations, which endangered its suitability within the urban environment.²⁷

Hence, the music itself may be presented as assaulting urban space, as in the frequent image of turbofolk music (or simply Ceca songs) ‘blaring out’ of cars and bars (Dežulović 2002; Vodopija 2004; Gall 2005; Gajdukov 2005; Jajčinović 2006; Bekavac-Šušar 2006). However, music venues themselves are also the subject of exclusionary strategies which resist the music’s presence within a geographic space which threatens the urban/rural boundary. Small-scale ‘narodnjački’ clubs have been established in Zagreb suburbs for over a decade, but their increasing visibility and more central locations are taken to indicate the spread of NCFM and turbofolk in general (Fazlić et al. 2006). In Zagreb’s case, the internal Othering of the suburbs with the Sava river as conceptual ‘dividing line’ itself produces a Balkan/European framework contrasting the ‘old “European” centre and the Balkanised socialist-era suburbs (Razsa and Lindstrom 2004:637). The spread of turbofolk clubs into the established ‘centre’ may thus be seen as particularly threatening,

²⁴ Male Croatian singers with such a repertoire (e.g. Siniša Vuco, Mate Mišo Kovač, Dražen Zečić, or Thompson) often come from Dalmatia or its hinterland. These four have all been accused of lyrically or melodically approaching NCFM (Glavan 1998; Glavan 1999; Boras 1999; Baker 2005).

²⁵ Such a comment might certainly apply to lyrics such as Magazin’s 1996 *Suze biserne* (chorus ‘Ne zovi me, ne, ne, ne, mene ne, ne zovi me’).

²⁶ Sometimes literally, when messages to family/others were sent with NCFM songs on radio request-shows.

²⁷ See also Gordy 1999:140-5 (‘rockers’ resistance to NCFM in 1990s Belgrade).

especially if one views 'city identity' as signifying 'not so much a territory or a place as a promise or potential for cosmopolitanism' (Volčič 2005:656).

The development is sometimes metaphorised as a 'flood' (Karamatić 2005), or even an 'invasion', where the music 'takes over checkpoints' in city districts (Tomičić and Vukoja 2002), or carries out a 'creeping occupation' (Gall 2005), while turbofolk clubs are 'conquering Croatia from the top to the bottom of the social and generational pyramid' (Dragaš 2006). Does this symbolism implicitly ethnicise the discourse on folk music and venues? Perhaps; but it had already been possible in the 1980s to talk of an 'invasion [najezda] of newly-composed hordes' into zabavna music (Luković 1989:150), so the conceptual framework cannot simply have emerged with the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

The media presentation of folk clubs approaches them as phenomena requiring journalistic exploration and interpretation, already positioning the imagined reader within a space excluding turbofolk from full belonging. He/she is invited to marvel at the spectacle of 'turbo-folk ecstasy' (Ambruš-Kiš 2006) in familiar urban surroundings, or to pseudo-sociologically follow its production and 'social mentality' (Marušić 2006a). The described clientele fall into stereotypical groups, particularly the young/underage (Tomičić and Vukoja 2002), or implicitly/explicitly criminalised 'shaven-headed and muscular' men (Ambruš-Kiš 2006) displaying fast cars. Their purpose is enjoyment through hedonistic entertainment, sexualised behaviour, and stereotyped activities associated with the 'kafana' environment – dancing on tables and breaking glasses (Tomičić and Vukoja 2002; Puljić-Šego and Mazzocco 2005; Ambruš-Kiš 2006). On occasion, city identity is essentialised into a particular musical/geographical marker as an opposite pole to turbofolk. Rijeka's rock history is adduced as a reason for bitterness at its apparent transformation into 'a folk centre' (Brajčić 2002); in Split, 'narodnjački' music spread from 'jerry-built "nightclubs" in outlying developments' to '[FC] Hajduk's prestigious pitch' when Thompson performed there (Gall 2002); Imotski residents are shocked that 'Dalmatian and klapa songs can no longer be heard on the streets [kalama] and staircases [skalinama] of Imotski' because teenagers are 'going mad with turbo folk', and the journalist uses regional lexis to support her definition of Imotski's desired musical identity (Bekavac-Šuvar 2006).

A final aspect in media depictions of 'narodnjački' clubs, their criminal associations, has been constantly latent, such as *Vjesnik*'s headline 'Are "kafane" where they blare out turbo folk a danger to life?' (Majetić 2002). However, this connotation was foregrounded in January 2006 after violent incidents at four Zagreb nightclubs. While the first was briefly reported on newspapers' crime sections, the second was given more prominence since it had occurred so soon afterwards, and the third, at perhaps Zagreb's best-known 'narodnjački' club Ludnica, accounted for several days' prominent headlines. This emerging frame portrayed folk clubs as inherently associated with the underworld, often with catalogues of previous incidents (Kukec et al. 2006), and several comment articles drew a connection between newly-composed music and a predisposition towards violence (Jajčinović 2006; Ivkošić 2006; Fazlić et al. 2006).

The adjective 'narodnjački' was in more common use than 'turbofolk' to describe the music, although, according to authors such as Ivana Kronja, a 'cult of violence' and criminality as the summit of masculinity represents an integral part of the turbofolk aesthetic as understood in Serbia (Kronja 2001:95-6). After the January incidents, many more less serious incidents could be reported through a pre-existing frame of 'narodnjaci', which even became a component of newspaper sub-headlines as if to explain a fight's starting there (e.g. Borovac 2006). In this crime reporting, the 'narodnjački' club became constructed as a site where social disorder, youth unruliness, organised crime and gangster violence were to be played out. Indeed, Benjamin Perasović

has characterised these discursive formulae as a classic sociological ‘moral panic’, in this case ‘related to newly composed folk music and the link of [the] mafia milieu’ to ‘narodnjački’ music/venues (Perasović 2006:5).²⁸

Can the ‘moral panic’ concept be applied to the Croatian media construction of ‘narodnjački klubovi’ in 2006? The classic idea of ‘moral panic’ describes how official actors and the media categorise threatening incidents (e.g. juvenile violence) as indicators of a wider social malaise which requires intervention (Cohen 2002:xxvii). A variety of discursive strategies are used to construct moral panics. An ‘inventory’ of the phenomenon frames it as deviating from assumed social values, expects it to recur, and establishes a symbolic repertoire for describing the object of panic (Cohen 2002:30). In the ‘symbolisation’ strategy, an object connected to the threatening event comes to stand for the threat itself (Cohen 2002:27-8) – and once reports on nightclub fights could be headlined ‘An incident with narodnjaci again’ (Filipi 2006), showbusiness-folk music would certainly appear to have been assigned this symbolic role. (Stanley) Cohen’s moral panic strategy may be seen as a means of maintaining (Anthony) Cohen’s symbolic construction of community – excluding the object of panic from the community, and reinforcing value-judgements of similarity between those who consider themselves community members.

References to past and future violence do seem to represent an attempt to actualise ‘narodnjački klubovi’ as an interpretative category, with the first January incidents as a ‘sensitisation’ phase (Cohen 2002:59) for future coverage. The so-called ‘golden youth [zlatna mladež]’ (Fazlić 2006) – the young adult children of the newly-enriched elite who are among the clubs’ proverbial clientele – are subject to the ‘composite stigma’ of association with the object of panic (Cohen 2002:40). Some ‘control agents’ – e.g. city councillors or police – have also responded to the framework in legitimising their reactions (see Cohen 2002:66-8), as when off-duty policemen were banned from ‘narodnjački’ clubs (Ciglencečki and Fuka 2006), or when Zagreb municipal councils limited folk clubs’ opening hours (Postnikov and Mazzocco 2006). Some elements of moral panic were therefore represented in the coverage. However, the criminalisation of showbusiness-folk largely remained within crime pages (‘crna kronika’), rather than spreading into showbusiness treatments of turbofolk as one might expect from an all-encompassing moral panic. At the same time as ‘crna kronika’ articulated its parallel discourses of criminality, the ubiquity of turbofolk was problematised elsewhere in terms foregrounding its inclusion or exclusion from Croatian identity.

The ‘Štikla Case’: Towards Croatian Turbofolk?

The unprecedented prominence of ‘turbofolk’ in Croatian musical discourses during 2006 derived from Severina’s controversial song *Moja štikla (My stiletto)*. Debates over whether this song was appropriate to represent Croatia (and therefore national musical culture) in the Eurovision Song Contest, or to be included within Croatian musical space, were often conducted with reference to the ‘turbofolk’ concept, introduced as an opposite pole to ‘ethno’ music, ‘authenticity’ or ‘autochthonous’ cultural elements. Despite these discursive attempts to codify a Croatian musical identity using turbofolk as the boundary-marking Other, the progress of the ‘Štikla case’ nonetheless demonstrated the fluidity of the imagined border between Croatian popular music and the most modern showbusiness-folk production, and even indicated possibilities for turbofolk (contemporary Serbian showbusiness-folk music) to be treated with greater openness and awareness.²⁹

²⁸ Perasović also discusses media responses to Thompson’s audience as having occasionally approached ‘moral panic’ (Perasović 2006:5).

²⁹ On *Štikla*, see Baker 2006b.

The stated intention behind *Štikla* (composed by Boris Novković and Franjo Valentić) was to incorporate various ‘ethno-elements’ of traditional song and dance, such as *ganga* and *rera* (Lika, Dalmatinska zagora), *lindo* (Dubrovnik), and *šijavica* (Dalmatia), building on the representational strategy of essentialised folklore already deployed at Eurovision by Željko Joksimović for Serbia–Montenegro in 2004 (Mikić 2006:2-4) and Novković himself for Croatia in 2005.³⁰ However, the songwriting team’s preferred meanings were overshadowed by widely-publicised readings of *Štikla* as ‘turbofolk’ or expressing ‘Serbian folklore’. Indeed, Novković and Severina began to detail *Štikla*’s Croatian components only after the first wave of tabloid articles questioning its Croatian-ness, suggesting that the emphasis on ‘ethno-elements’ actually attempted to defend it against exclusion from a normative Croatian cultural identity.

Štikla’s potential ascription to Serbian musical culture involved its arrangement by Goran Bregović, the founder of *Bijelo dugme*.³¹ While a Serbian tabloid seized on stylistic similarities between *Štikla* and *Dugme*’s song *Hajdemo u planine* to claim it for Serbian musical space (*Kurir*, 22 February 2006), a Croatian tabloid used *Kurir*’s printing of *Štikla*’s lyrics in *ekavica* to imply that the song had been written in Serbian (*ekavica* being unused in Croatian popular music), and described Severina as a ‘turbofolk nightclub-singer [cajka]’ for doing so (Babić 2006).³² A follow-up made *Štikla* seem even more dubiously Croatian by inviting hostile comments from a right-wing politician and a veterans’ activist (Boban and Marković 2006). Both countries’ tabloid presses shared an understanding of Croatian/Serbian cultural identity as a zero-sum identification, disallowing multiple or ambiguous belonging.

Yet the songwriters’ counter-claims, emphasising *Štikla*’s ‘authenticity’ and ‘Croatian folklore’ elements (Matić 2006b), themselves allowed the song to be excluded from Croatian belonging on a second criterion: whether commercialised folklore, or folklore from the regions drawn on by *Štikla*, ought to be included within the boundaries of Croatian musical identity. ‘Turbofolk’ expanded to imply misuse of Croatian folklore, the opposite of authenticity, given added dismissive force by its established connotations of banality and otherness. In return, Severina claimed authenticity by listing *Štikla*’s elements as including ‘the *lijerica* and *dvojnice* played by Stjepan Večković’ (Goreta 2006a),³³ a member of *Lado* (associated with ‘authentic folk music’ and respect for tradition). Večković’s presence signalled to a domestic audience that *Štikla* should be understood in an ‘ethno’ framework, and Severina supported this with descriptions of her song as containing ‘Croatian folklore’ or ‘something autochthonous’ (Marušić 2006b).

However, ‘ethno’ practitioners with an interest in maintaining the boundaries of national musical tradition excluded *Štikla* as ‘ethno’ because it lacked ‘traditional elements of any Balkan ethno-culture’ (Mojmir Novaković of the bands *Legen* and *Kries*), or simply because Severina was ‘not an authentic ethno-musician’ (singer-songwriter Lidija Bajuk; both in Perić et al. 2006). Although some folklorists record for commercial labels, ‘authentic folk music’ is understood as belonging to a separate field from showbusiness. By classifying *Štikla* as turbofolk, as did Croatia’s three leading ‘ethno’ professionals, ‘ethno-musicians’ rejected it from their own profession’s codes of authenticity. This in

³⁰ In 2005, the rock band *Let 3* satirised similar folkloric elements from throughout ex-Yugoslavia on their album *Bombardiranje Srbije i Čačka* (*The bombing of Serbia and Čačak*). They later appeared in *Štikla*’s video as backing vocalists.

³¹ See Ditcher 2002 and Gourgouris 2002. Bregović’s multi-ethnic/anational biography (Sarajevo child of a mixed marriage who strongly identified as Yugoslav), was conflated throughout the *Štikla* case into simplified ‘Serbian-ness’.

³² In fact, *Štikla* used *ikavica* – a Dalmatian/Herzegovinan dialectal form, which is widely used in popular music from those regions.

³³ The *lijerica* is a stringed instrument similar to the *gusle*; the *dvojnice* is a form of flute.

turn enabled a discursive construction where turbofolk was valueless and unsuitable for foreign voters' standards, whereas 'ethno' was appropriate (even advantageous?) for that context. Those denying that *Štikla* was turbofolk, meanwhile, did so with a more restricted definition implying only showbusiness-folk music from Serbia, as did Aleksandar Kostadinov (the HTV official with ultimate responsibility for *Štikla*'s selection), who stated that 'turbo-folk is Serbian newly-composed music performed by, let's say, Lepa Brena or Jelena Karleuša.' (Rožman 2006). Kostadinov also maintained the zero-sum Croatian/Serbian axis by arguing that 'in the ensemble there are men from [the authentic folk group] Lado, and I don't know who associates Lado with turbo-folk' or their 'costumes from the Neretva region' with Serbia (Rožman 2006).

Štikla's visual presentation reinforced the regional connections implicit in the songwriters' choice of 'ethno-elements', but this itself left *Štikla* open to internal Othering through the ambiguous position of Herzegovina in Croatian identity— a framework which led one *Feral tribune* journalist to ironically declare in 1997 that 'Herzegovinans are our new Serbs' (Razsa and Lindstrom 2004:637). This distancing process also applies to popular music from the region, especially when its performers express strong patriotic sentiments (Baker 2005:27-8).³⁴ Severina and Novković had excluded the song from 'turbofolk', but were happy to accept another problematic association. Whether these regions themselves belonged within the Croatian cultural space was also questionable, judging by the anti-Herzegovinan insults from some users of the HTV and *Jutarnji list* websites, or even by Kostadinov's admission that the sounds from 'Zagora, Herzegovina etc.' would make 'some people from western Croatia, maybe especially from Zagorje' uncomfortable (*Index*, 7 March 2006).

Yet, within this matrix of claimed and rejected identifications, the *Štikla* case brought the visibility and awareness of turbofolk to an unprecedented peak in Croatian cultural life. A wide-ranging survey by the daily newspaper *Jutarnji list*, relatively speaking – the most serious treatment of turbofolk in the Croatian press to date, was published a week after *Štikla* had been selected for Eurovision (Lazarin 2006). With a headline figure that 43% of teenagers regularly listened to narodnjaci, the survey's detailed results challenged commonplace wisdom in finding that respondents' favoured performers were, not the heavily-mediated and symbolically notorious Ceca Ražnatović, but the then less-publicised Serbian singers Seka Aleksić and Mile Kitić (Lazarin 2006). Almost immediately, Aleksić and Kitić themselves became symbolic figures, who indicated the open place showbusiness-folk music had taken in the space of a few months (Dragaš 2006; Pavičić 2006a): a product not (always) of Croatian origin, but nonetheless an option present within Croatian cultural space, regardless of whether it was prescriptively believed not to belong there.

Concluding Remarks

Two weeks after *Štikla*'s selection for Eurovision, HTV announced a new weekly music series dedicated to 'starogradska [tamburica] and authentic folk song', entitled *Svirci moji* (*My musicians*) and intended, according to its presenter, 'to show the difference between the ever-more-present narodnjaci and real authentic folk [izvorna narodna] music, because we see that many people have confused certain ideas' (Matijević 2006). Every week, *Svirci moji* would feature 'one klapa [and] one tamburica group' (two established traditions in the Croatian 'zabavna' myth), miscellaneous other performers, and 'one speaking guest [...] to instruct viewers in particular musical ideas' (Matijević 2006). The clear didactic mission was shared by a *Vječernji list* reporter, who praised it as a sign that

³⁴ Bulić has also rejected claims that his music might be turbofolk with the defence of 'Croatian folk [narodna] music with ethno-elements', and declared it as 'a barrier against the east' (Jadrijević Tomas 2004).

HTV intended to 'roll up its sleeves and head into another resolute battle against the invasion of primitive musical notes' –adding that it became obvious 'everything has gone to hell' when a kindergarten-age girl had innocently told a talk-show host that her favourite singer was Seka Aleksić (Matijević 2006).

This intervention into the Croatian cultural space by the national broadcaster demonstrates that showbusiness-folk music was far from being accepted inside those boundaries, but also that its presence there could no longer be denied. Indeed, HTV was then under pressure by Croatian musicians to introduce a 50:50 quota for domestic music, and the musicians' statement blamed HTV's minoritarian emphasis on 'urban' music programming for the youth audience's turning 'to the music of our eastern neighbours' (Šimundić-Bendić 2006). One organiser, Matko Jelavić, stated that HTV's neglect of Croatian music 'had finally resulted in the sudden spread of turbo-folk in our territories' (Matić 2006a), but not all signatories were so critical. Želimir Dundić-Dundo from Trio gušt even argued that 'American hip-hoppers and Serbian narodnjaci' ought to be equally included in the foreign quota, so that audiences could calmly evaluate 'music from the east' rather than being attracted to exoticised 'forbidden fruit' (Šimundić-Bendić 2006).

Other media sources compensate for Croatian terrestrial television's lack of showbusiness-folk. 1990s pirate and semi-legitimate distribution channels have been supplemented by the Internet and satellite television (especially TV Pink), one of which, Balkanika Music Television (launched 2006) has broadcast popular music from all the Balkan states ranging from Turkey to Croatia 'and Slovenia' (*Večernji list*, 14 January 2006). Since 2004, the entrepreneur Alen Borbaš – also involved in Balkanika – has held a folk awards ceremony in Osijek which attracts many of newer Serbian showbusiness-folk performers, alongside relatively unmediated Croatian ones such as Vesna Pezo. This is hardly on the level of TV Pink's annual *Dani estrade* show, but nonetheless makes showbusiness-folk in contemporary Croatia more visible.³⁵ The emerging youth folk subculture, meanwhile, relies largely on online media for information, particularly on blogs hosting MP3s of Serbian/Bosnian hits and on the public Internet video sites (e.g. YouTube) on which diaspora members place music videos re-recorded from television.

Moreover, the influence of showbusiness-folk on Croatian zabavna music appeared to be more directly experienced in 2006: for instance, the Croatian singer Zorica Andrijašević-Donna engaged two Serbian showbusiness-folk songwriters, Zoran Lesendrić-Kiki and Marina Tucaković, for her 2006 album, recorded some months before *Štikla*. Demonstrating continued ambivalence to such developments, one interviewer asked Andrijašević whether 'she was afraid to record such an album in Croatia' because its 'sounds of the Balkan and eastern melos' would make most people 'link it with turbofolk' (Kaštelan 2006) – but at least refrained from mentioning that Tucaković is the main lyricist for Ceca Ražnatović and many other showbusiness-folk singers. In July 2006, Severina announced that Tucaković and Bregović would write several songs on her forthcoming album (Goreta 2006).

It remains to be seen whether these events represent a qualitative change or simply the temporary adoption of a somewhat exoticised trend. The concept of 'turbofolk' still, in most cases, marks a particular song or performer as excluded from the Croatian cultural space, whether for symbolic-geographical otherness (eastern, Balkan, and/or Serbian), discordance with Croatian musical traditions, or simple banality. No wonder, then, that the syntagm 'Croatian turbofolk' is used so rarely: indeed, when one journalist

³⁵ In 2006, Borbaš unsuccessfully attempted to hire Osijek's municipal stadium. He has since accused mayor Anto Đapić (national leader of the far-right HSP) of interference; Đapić responded that 'as long as I am mayor, there will be no nightclub-singers [cajki] or turbofolk parades in a single municipal hall' (Bašara and Rački-Kritšić 2006).

spoke of it in 2003 as the potential result of subjecting ‘ganga, rera, [and] our lovely kolo dances and customs’ to showbusiness-folk practices, it was intended as a monstrous oxymoron (Ljubičić 2003). Yet, three years later, the *Štikla* case – prompted by the showbusiness essentialisation of those very elements – brought another to write in its defence that it would be paradoxical for Croats to be ashamed of a region where many of its inhabitants had grown up with *Štikla*’s musical components – and to conclude that the addition of an ‘urban symbol’ (i.e. the high-heeled shoe) meant that ‘we also finally have a definition of Croatian turbofolk’ (Mikac 2006).

On the eve of Severina’s Eurovision performance, Jurica Pavičić hailed *Štikla* as ‘a collective catalyst enabling the vast majority of Croats to let out their own cultural traumas’ resulting from the 1990s’ pressure to ‘suppress’ any possible belonging to the Balkans (Pavičić 2006b). These ‘cultural traumas’ were not concocted in the 1990s, but belonged to existing frames of reference (Rasmussen 2002:183-5); however, their 1990s politicisation and expression through state cultural policy undoubtedly intensified the distinction’s significance. It took the *Štikla* case to highlight precisely the ambiguities of identification that the song’s creators had publicly attempted to avoid, and to raise seriously the possibility that the semi-mythic Croatian musical tradition might not be a static canon but a dynamic field, even perhaps with room to contain elements otherwise identified as ‘Serbian’.

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Abbreviations: 24S *24 sata*, JL *Jutarnji list*, NL *Novi list*, SD *Slobodna Dalmacija*, VL *Vječernji list*.

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