

# **THOMPSON – THE WEAPON OF THE CONTESTATION**

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## Abstract

This research is designed as a case study of a Croatian nationalistic rock singer Thompson, a controversial public figure whose career is strongly related to the contemporary political contestations. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the relations between the ideology proclaimed by the Croatian state, Thompson's discourse, and the way in which his audience consumes and interprets this cultural product. This thesis emphasizes particularly on the symbols of extreme nationalism and fascism that could be traced throughout Thompson's work. As the findings indicate, Thompson's discourse is highly congruent with the nationalistic ideology of the Croatian state disseminated during the 1990s. His audience, on the other hand, showed disparate results and various interpretations of his songs and performance.

### Key Words:

Popular culture, nationalism, Thompson, Croatia, rock music, fascism, contested symbols, the audience

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I dedicate this thesis to those people who believed in me. You know who you are.

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## Introduction

In this thesis, I analyze the popular culture phenomenon of Marko Perkovic, a.k.a. Thompson, the most prominent nationalistic rock singer in Croatia.<sup>1</sup> Thompson is one of the most controversial actors on the Croatian music scene and a prominent public figure. Combining musical elements of hard-rock and folk music with lyrical topics that were mostly described as a combination of patriotism, nationalism and even fascism, he has gained large popularity (Briefly 2007, Schapiro 2007, Segal 2007, Wood 2007). Moreover, the same authors note that his concerts often engender various controversies and protests. He is often accused of flirting with fascism and as a result his concerts are banned in certain countries (Schapiro 2007). Thompson himself claims that with his songs he “expresses love towards his homeland, God, Family, human and friend” (Kovacevic 2009:25).

Thompson’s fame arose after the political changes in the 2000 and he became a national star who filled stadiums and big sport halls. The editors of the book *Thompson in the eyes of Croatian intellectuals* claim that, since 2000, Thompson and other patriots have been defamed (Kovacevic, Pecaric 2009). They argue, that the government elected in the 2000 relinquished the legacy of late president Tudjman and, as they believe, started a “war” against real Croatian patriots. Journalist Tihomir Dujmovic, in the same book, writes how Croatian society became polarized regarding the phenomenon of Thompson.

Srdjan Dvornik from Croatian Helsinki Committee, when interviewed by David Segal, stated that Thompson “is considered not just entertainer but a political phenomenon” (2007). Unlike the editors of the book about Thompson, who argue that Thompson became famous because he sings about the values that are deeply rooted in the Croatian nation and

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> Thompson is a nickname that Marko Perkovic got during the war in Croatia when he was a part of the Croatian armed forces and used the American submachine gun “Thompson” (Segal 2007; Wood 2007).

relinquished after 2000, Dvornik believes that Thompson's popularity is related to the uncritical interpretation of contemporary Croatian history. "Nobody ever admitted that Croatia, as part of a defensive war, committed acts of ethnic cleansing. So, the myth of the Croats as collective victims is still alive. But now it's just left to people like Thompson to express that myth publicly" (Segal 2007).

Although disparate, both interpretations of Thompson's popularity admit the importance of the dominant political ideology. Thus, a key question arises: what kind of political landscape engendered Thompson's popularity? In this thesis I analyze to what extent Thompson's discourse is congruent with official Croatian discourse from the 1990s. Furthermore, I also focus on the audience and the way they negotiate meanings of Thompson's cultural products.

In the first chapter, I provide the reader with an overview of the relevant theoretical literature and clarify my theoretical position. First, I situate Thompson in the debate about the influence of the globalization of the national culture. My theoretical framework is built predominately relying on the concepts brought up by Ien Ang (1996). Following Ang, I show how the phenomenon of Thompson could be understood only if analyzed from the both top down and the bottom up. In other words, I argue that the phenomenon of Thompson is partly created by the structure and partly by the agency and thus both sides should be included in the research.

As Thompson's lyrics are related to the topic of the Homeland war, I discuss the official Croatian politics deals with this topic. Thompson himself emphasized the importance of popular music in maintaining the national identity (Kovacevic 2009). Hence, I give a theoretical overview of a discussion about the national identity and the role of culture in it. Furthermore, drawing primarily on work of Ortner (1973) and Caglar (1990), I discuss the importance of what Ortner calls "key symbols" in dissemination and internalization of a

certain culture. In addition, while refereeing to Kaufman (2001) and Suvar (2004), I analyze the contested symbols in contemporary Croatia. Finally, I discuss the amplification of nationalism in the unstable political periods and the role of popular music in maintaining and disseminating nationalistic ideas.

The second chapter describes the methodology used in this project, drawing on my main theoretical framework influenced by the work of Ien Ang (1996) and Roy Shuker (2001). Through my methodology I try to grapple with this phenomenon on three levels. Thus, I analyze the official ideology of the contemporary Croatian state and its relations to the official historical narrative. Furthermore, I research the possible homology between that ideology and the discourse used by Thompson. Finally, through analysis of the interviews conducted with Thompson's audience, I investigate how his discourse and performances are read and lived by the consumers.

In the third chapter I discuss these three layers of phenomenon separately but keeping in mind that they are intertwined. Thus, in the course of the analysis I try to establish a dialog between these layers and discuss their interconnection.

Finally, in the coda I summarize the results of the analysis and give the interpretation of the key puzzle while referring to my theoretical framework. Also, I raise some questions about the necessity of framing this phenomenon in a broader framework addressing nationalism and popular culture in the global context.



# 1. Literature review

## 1.1. *National culture in a globalized world*

National identity should not be perceived as a stabile nonflexible category (Edensor 2002). Rather, he believes, it should be analyzed as a process where the most important task is to establish the demarcation line between our group and the “others”; “Attempts to draw boundaries may mobilize reified notions of history and roots, cultural traditions, and often exploit popular symbolic images, rituals, sites and objects” (Edensor 2002:25). Nowadays, he notes, such attempts should take into account the processes of globalization where national identities are transformed and unevenly disseminated across the globe. He notes that “[o]ld notions about identities being embedded in place or self-evidently belonging to particular (national) cultures and societies seem to be repudiated by vast, expanding cultural networks” (2002:27). Thus, while analyzing the Croatian popular culture phenomenon we should not downplay the wider global picture. According to Holton, the globalization is not an omnipotent grinding wheel that uniforms all cultural products. Instead, cultural products in globalized world could become homogenized, hybridized and polarized (Holton 2000:141). Holton explains the:

three basic positions: the homogenization thesis, in which globalization leads to cultural convergence; the polarization thesis, which posits cultural wars between Western globalization and its opponents; and, finally, the hybridization, or syncretism, thesis, in which globalization encourages a blending of the diverse set of cultural repertoires made available through cross-border exchange (P. 141).

In this project I will use the hybridization concept that recognizes cultural products as amalgams, or constructs from various and often non-related parts (Holton 1988, 2000). Thus, nationalistic rock bands can use various elements of different origin and pack them into one congruent form with the nationalistic ribbon. Such musicians could describe their work as exclusive or authentic, and therefore support the polarization concept but they often, even unconsciously, borrow different elements from another cultural environment. Holton argues

that hybridization or “creolization” of culture is most visible in domain of music. Moreover, while referring on Gilroy’s research, he explained the role of music in creation and nurture of one’s identity. Hence, in Gilroy’s research “[b]lack music is not to be read as the authentic product of some fixed and essential Black identity but is instead a dynamic cultural resource for a group whose fate and future has been profoundly affected by globalization” (Holton 1988:181). Holton believes that the hybridization concept “avoids the pitfalls of homogenization and polarization theory by drawing attention to the significance of interculturalism for cultural identity, as well as the syncretic historic-making of cultural forms, which social actors may subsequently come to regard as indigenous rather than partly borrowed or blended” (Holton 1988:184). Nevertheless, Ien Ang reminds us that, although cultural products are hybrids, “the parameters and infrastructure which determine the conditions of existence for local cultures” are becoming unified (1996:153).

The concept of hybrid culture, as defined by Holton (1988), is compatible with the constructionist ideas in the field of nationalism. Here I will predominantly rely on Hobsbawm’s concept of “invented traditions” which explains how strongly embedded national narratives are often a contemporary creation and partly, or sometimes fully, fictitious. “Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (Hobsbawm 1992:1).

Ang showed in her book *Living room wars* (1996) that cultural studies provide us with two distinct approaches to culture. The older pessimistic perspective emphasizes the production of meaning that is congruent with the ideology supported by the ruling class. Thus, for the further explanation she draws on Stuart Hall who stated that: “[s]ince the communications media are assumed to play a pivotal role in the continuous struggle over

hegemony, cultural studies became preoccupied with the question of how the media helped to produce consensus and manufacture consent” (Hall 1982 in Ang 1996:138). To explain the importance of popular culture in imposing a certain ideology, one can refer to the concept of ideological hegemony developed by Antonio Gramsci, who used it “to explain how a ruling class maintains its dominance through achieving a popular consensus mediated through the various institutions of society, including schools, mass media, the law, religion and popular culture” (Shuker 1994:27). For Gramsci “hegemony means the ideological subordination of the working class by the bourgeoisie, which enables it to rule by consent” (Anderson 1976:26). Moreover, ideological hegemony can be used as a mask for a certain notorious political system. “An important aspect of hegemony is that it mystifies and conceals existing power relations and social arrangements” (Shuker 1994:27). Eagleton argues that we should make a distinction between hegemony and ideology due to the fact that “ideologies may be forcibly imposed” and believes that “hegemony is also a broader category than ideology: it *includes* ideology, but is not reducible to it” (1994:195-196). Ideology, according to Eagleton, emerged in bourgeois society where one could not find anymore the one overarching and omnipotent set of ideas that could provide complete and total explanation. Nevertheless, I believe, like Ang (1996), that the audience has an important role in cultural consumption. Moreover, through this research I also investigate the role of consumers and their way of understanding Thompson’s songs. Hence, I will discard the concept of ideological hegemony because it does not allow me to analyze how the audience forges meanings about Thompson.

The other, more empowering perspective recognizes the role of the consumer and his power to create meanings (Ang 1996). Thus, Fiske argues that “[c]ulture is a living, active process: it can be developed only from within, it cannot be imposed from without or above” (2004:23). Moreover, he believes that ideological hegemony is not possible and institutions

are not able to impose such paramount cultural concept, because “[p]opular culture is made by the people, not produced by the cultural industry” (2004:24). Thus, he asserts that cultural industry can only produce certain cultural material that people can discard, modify, subvert or accept. Furthermore, culture as a process where people negotiate meanings of cultural commodities has large impact in creation of one’s identity (Fiske 1997). Nevertheless, Ang shows that cultures are becoming different but the mechanism of cultural industry are being unified across the globe.

In this research, I will follow Ang (1996), who tried to find the middle ground that would recognize the importance of imposed ideology while not downplaying the role of the consumer. Therefore, I will not uncritically embrace the Gramscian idea of “ideological hegemony”, that was reified in Shuker's (1994) book, or follow completely Fiske, who believed in the individual's power to negotiate meanings without constraints (Ang 1996). My approach will acknowledge all the benefits and downsides of both perspectives, and I find such a theoretical amalgam most fruitful for my project. In an attempt to interpret the symbiosis of nationalism and culture in the case of nationalistic rock, I will use the concept of integrative nationalism posted by Sekulic (2001), who argued that in Croatia such nationalism was predominant in the 1990s. Integrative nationalism, as defined by Sekulic, is hostile to any kind of pluralism and tends to subordinate all activity to one nationalistic idea:

Integral nationalism is an ideology that subordinates all activities in certain society, from individual yearnings up to any group activities, to nation, its politics and goals defined on national level. Such nationalism is usually hostile towards the principles of liberalism and pluralism because it perceives nation as organic community that is artificially divided by the principles of political and cultural pluralism (Sekulic 2001:1 ).

Sekulic explains that in Croatia integral nationalism is a product of a perceived external threat. Thus, he explains, when the war conflicts ended the integral nationalism became weak. I argue that the feeling of threat, as an important element that engenders such type of nationalism, did not disappear. Drawing on work of Ann Swidler (1986), later in the text, I

explain how the situation in contemporary Croatia could still be perceived as uncertain or threatening and thus produce such nationalism.

## **1.2. Skeletons from the past – how the past has been reinterpreted**

*In the dear heroic land, beautiful and distant,  
In the year of the Lord six hundred and some,  
A power descended on that land,  
Blue blood led the people.<sup>2</sup>  
Thompson –Arrival of Croats (2006)*

Thompson's artistic work is highly related to the topic of the past and the Homeland war.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to explore the connection of cultural products and the post-war experience. Moreover, I am interested in how historical events are framed in Thompson's discourse. Leed (1979:XI) argues that the end of an armed strife is not the end of experiencing the war due to the fact that recent conflict should be framed and institutionalized: "[t]he cessation of hostilities did not mean the end of the war experience but rather the beginning of the process in which that experience was framed, institutionalized, given ideological content, and relived in political action as well as fiction".

Rivera believes that "management of the past is [...] not only a matter of national cohesion but also an *international* and *economic* affair" (2008:614). Moreover, she argues that the Homeland war was almost completely wiped out from the international presentation of Croatia and, as she believes, government does not commemorate war related events. According to her study of Croatian tourism, the Homeland war is only commemorated on the lower level supported by some NGO-s or grassroots movements. Moreover, Rivera noticed the change in cultural presentation of Croatia. In former Yugoslavia, as she believes, Croatia was promoted as a country with rich heterogeneous culture built up from various distinctive

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<sup>2</sup> Translation is taken from Thompson's official web site ([www.thompson.hr](http://www.thompson.hr))

<sup>3</sup> Homeland war is the commonly used term for the Croatian war for Independence 1991-1995 (Ramet 2006).

elements. Nevertheless, after Croatia gained its independence, most of its tourist brochures highlighted the strong cultural ties with the West and the “descriptions of Croatian culture switched from strong local traditions (72 percent), complemented by Western and Eastern influences (23 percent), to customs identical to those in Europe (53 percent) or common internationality (21 percent)” (Rivera 2008:621). Rivera also refers to the *Croatian Cultural Heritage* brochure from 2004 in which she quotes the following: “Croatian culture forms an integral part of West European culture” and “The Republic of Croatia is a young, parliamentary state with a European culture and history” (2008:621). She argues that this uniformed and homogeneous narrative, that highlights the ties between Croatia and the West, precludes the display of all differences and throws all “negative” heritages into the historical oblivion. Such act of covering the “dark spots” of history Rivera also found in former Yugoslavia. While referring to Judt (2005) and Ramet (2005), she points out that the former regime concealed some disparate historical narratives to maintain the clean facade of homogeneity. Hence, “this suppression may have set a pattern that influenced the selection of Croatia’s current strategy of covering” (2008:627). In the case where official discourse failed to successfully frame contemporary historical events, such framing could be done in the field of popular culture.

### **1.3. Etiology of cultural identity**

The issue of national identity has a paramount position in discussions on nationalistic rock. Thus, we have to explain the role of national identity in the modern political landscape. According to Kymlicka, liberal culturalism is a prevailing political concept in contemporary political science (2001). He explains that liberal culturalism has two main subtypes: liberal nationalism and liberal multiculturalism. Although liberal culturalism is not able to provide an

answer to many emerging questions, Kymlicka still believes that it has no real alternative. Nevertheless, this concept is seriously criticized. Courtney Jung argues that for liberals culture is a sort of fetish and she thinks that this concept can be and is reified when a certain group can benefit from it (2008). Liberals, as she shows, are convinced that all individuals have the “universal human need for cultural group recognition” and they differ in the attempt to either “privatize” or “protect” the culture “from democratic political contestation” (2008:38). She states that “[b]oth impulses, to privatize or protect, follow from the initial assumption that ethnic group membership is a source of universal attachment and a person's fundamental sense of herself” (2008:41). Moreover, she points out that, such liberal concept that rests on the idea that cultural identity is essential and that every group should strive for its recognition relies on the normative idea of inherent value of culture. Unlike Kymlicka, Jung argues that people are not essentially embedded in the certain culture and she sees culture as one of the “mediators” of human identity. Moreover, Jung argues that culture as one of the “markers” could become a distinguishable marker of a certain group if the conditions and “structural location” are beneficial. The “cultural markers” that will be used for building an identity and recognition claims are not random and they are determined by the structural situation in a particular society and, for example, “[t]he South African anti-apartheid movement [...] built a Black identity to anchor political opposition, not coincidentally, but because race was the condition of apartheid exclusion” (Jung 2000; Marx,1992 in Jung 2008:71). Nevertheless, she notes that, this 'awaken' identity is not monolithic and it is influenced by further changes in political factors. Jung argued that Black identity became more fluid a decade after the apartheid when political structure changed (2000). Stuart Hall goes even further and argues that “‘black’ is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature” (1996:443).

He downplayed the essentialist categories and structural constraints and suggested that a “new ethnicity” can be created as a tool for positioning of certain group that has no essential connections. The group needs to position itself, or in Jung's terms to be recognized, to achieve emancipation (Hall 1996). Nevertheless, Hall does not explain how the identity is forged and what are the conditions under which identity can be successfully build.

The concept of identity and the need for the recognition were highly criticized by Nancy Fraser (2000). She argued that such conception is not able to overcome two main problems: “problem of displacement” and “the problem of reification” (2000:108). The former one, as she notes, emerged because struggle for identity often precludes the structural injustice and therefore moves away from the problem of redistribution. Fraser points out that simplistic idea how the recognition of the identity of certain group will be followed by the improvement in the redistribution is quite naive and resembles the concept of vulgar Marxism turned upside down: “[b]ut the idea of a purely 'cultural' society with no economic relations [...] is far removed from current reality, in which marketization has pervaded all societies to some degree, at least partially decoupling economic mechanisms of distribution from cultural patterns of value and prestige” (2000:111).

The second problem of reificated identity emerged from the need of the groups that seek the recognition “to elaborate and display an authentic, self-affirming and self-generated collective identity” (2000:112).

The overall effect is to impose a single, drastically simplified group-identity which denies the complexity of people's lives, the multiplicity of their identifications and the cross-pulls of their various affiliations. Ironically, then, the identity model serves as a vehicle for misrecognition: in reifying group identity, it ends by obscuring the politics of cultural identification, the struggles *within* the group of authority – and the power – to represent it (Fraser 2000:112).

As a solution, Fraser proposes the status model where “what requires recognition is not group-specific identity but the status of individual group member as full partners in social



interaction” (2000:113). This approach, she explains, has a pretension to change structural subordination by changing the status of the group and their place in the power structure.

Like Jung, Hall, and Fraser, I also believe that identity is a social construct. I would argue that national identity is, in Hobsbawm’s terms, often built with the bricks of “invented tradition” (1992). Such identity is usually simplistic, Manichean and monochrome construction that tries to highlight the common features while downplaying the differences. If we want to understand the identity as a mobile construct we need to, as Jung (2008) suggests, divide it in two categories. The first one is 'personality' and it is a stable concept that is understood as “‘given' and prior to politics” and “[a] second dimension of human identity arises through participation in society.” (2008:54). This dimension is “described as a process” (2008:54). In Jung's understanding the later dimension of identity is not completely fluid and it tends to be solid and congruent. To avoid the trap of exaggerating the role of structure or the agency in creating one’s identity, Jung proposed swimming between Scylla and Charybdis. She believes that the identity is not just imposed by the hegemonic state but, on the other hand she does not argue for the omnipotent agency. Jung points out that the distinctive markers of the group, such as race, class, gender or other should be reified by some leader or political activist. Moreover, she argues that a person can be “without a political identity at all” (2008:69). Hence, national identity can be built from various materials and it is not fixed but with the time it tends to be more solid and firm (2008). Therefore, as Jung showed, in a global context, these identities are built through the same processes and the same techniques, only with the different materials.

#### ***1.4. The power of the symbolic***

To grapple with a complex culture phenomenon we need to focus on “key symbols” that could be found in every culture (Ortner 1973). Such symbols, that have paramount

position, are sometimes called “core symbols” (Schneider 1968 in Ortner 1973) or “dominant symbols” (Turner 1967 in Ortner 1973). Ortner distinguishes two major types of “key symbols”: “summarizing symbols” and “elaborating symbols”. “Summarizing symbols...are those symbols which are seen as summing up, expressing, representing for the participants in an emotionally powerful and relatively undifferentiated way, what the system means to them” (1973:1339). As examples of summarizing symbols Ortner mentions some secular symbols like national flag, or religious ones like the cross. The other major type of “key symbols” are “elaborating symbols” and they “work in the opposite direction, providing vehicles for sorting out complex and undifferentiated feelings and ideas, making them comprehensible to oneself, communicable to others, and translatable into orderly action” (1973:1340). Furthermore, “elaborating symbols” are consisted from “root metaphors”, that “provide categories for the ordering of conceptual experience”, and “key scenarios” that “provide strategies for organizing action experience” (1973:1342). Ortner points out that those symbols can be detected in every society and that they are not related to particular sphere of life or to particular objects; “[a]nything by definition can be a symbol, i.e., a vehicle for cultural meaning, and it seems from a survey of the literature that almost anything can be a key” (1973:1339). In most of the cases, Ortner explains, key symbols are detected and interpreted after the researcher analyzes the symbols that are in the focus of the public. Such symbols, she notes, should be important for the large part of the population and they should have certain emotional connection with it. Furthermore, Ortner argues that these symbols should be present in various frameworks and connected to a certain wider explanation. Finally, she highlight that the key symbols are usually related to specific social regulations and constraints. Nevertheless, she indicates that we have to keep in mind that such formal distinction and categorization is primarily used for analytical purposes and in real life we can find many overlapping types of symbols.

According to Edensor, the power of symbols is in their polisemy which enables appropriation of the same symbols from various distinctive groups (2002). Furthermore, he draws on Guibernau who said that “‘symbols not only stand for or represent something else, they also allow those who employ them to supply part of their meaning’; they do not impose upon people ‘the constraints of uniform meaning’” (1996:81 in Edensor 2002:5-6). Thus, Edensor’s insights are congruent with the work of Ian Ang (1996) who argued for an approach that will grasp culture from above and below, the influence of cultural industries and the power of the audience to negotiate meanings of cultural products. Edensor refers to Gibernau and her work where she discusses various meanings that were attributed to the Catalan flag from various groups. Thus, while analyzing symbols used by popular culture actors we have to keep in mind the context, the imposed message and the negotiated meanings. Nevertheless, we should not lose from sight, as Edensor implies, that this is a global phenomenon and although there are many local differences the pattern is very similar.

In this research I am particularly interested in those symbols that engender greater controversies. An interesting example of contested symbols could be found in the Stuart Kaufman’s book *Modern hatreds* (2001). While explaining the roots of the violent war in the Croatia Kaufman, besides other factors, mentions the usage of powerful symbols that amplified awaken interethnic tensions between Croats and Serbs and created greater polarization: “[i]nto this polarized context stepped the HDZ<sup>4</sup>, which boldly revived the *sahovnica*, the red-and-white checkerboard flag, which was a symbol of a past Croatian statehood so important in Croatian nationalist mythology – and the symbol to the Serbs of Ustasha<sup>5</sup> genocide.” (2001:183). Moreover, he shows that in the same manner HDZ

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<sup>4</sup> HDZ is abbreviation of Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union) – the ruling party in Croatia in 1990s (Ramet 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Ustashe were the military formation of Independent State of Croatia; the Nazi puppet state in the World War II (Tanner 1997; Ramet 2006).

manipulated with religious symbols that were deeply embedded in Croatian population despite almost half a century communistic experience. One of the promotion slogans of HDZ in the 1990 was “God in heaven and Tadjman<sup>6</sup> in the homeland” (2001:183). Nevertheless, the late Croatian leftist academic Stipe Suvar argues that most of the Croatian national symbols were commonly displayed in the former Yugoslavia (2004). Consequently, their predominant meaning was different before the war. Suvar points out, how during the 45 years of Yugoslavia Croatian anthem was aired each evening on Radio Zagreb at the end of the program (2004:70). Moreover, Croatian flags were used in every major ceremony (2004:70). Suvar noted that: “[i]n the middle of the coat of arms of People’s Republic of Croatia and later Socialistic Republic of Croatia there was *sahovnica*. And that did not disturb the Serbs. They were disturbed when *sahovnica* was, with harsh threats placed on the flag, what reminded them to the crimes that were done by Ustase under this flag“(2004:70).

Thus, *sahovnica*, as one of the Croatian symbols, is not inherently contested but the contestation is a result of the context. Caglar (1990) shows, in the case of Turkey, how society in times of crisis can be split into two antagonized camps. She explains that the rupture in the Turkish society was created regarding the concept of nation and the narratives and symbols it implies. One of the groups in Caglar’s article, the Turkish nationalists, appropriated certain symbols and nationalistic genesis and packed it into a specific discourse. In their attempt to anchor their narrative into the history they used Hobsbawm's (1992) concept of „invented tradition“; “By demonstrating the essence of the nation in history, the nation acquires an image of antiquity, and this image helps project the nation as an ever-present entity“ (1990:90). Not only that the nation has become an essential element of social reality but the whole discourse emphasizes the “golden age“ of nation and, especially in the time of crisis, nationalistic proponents invoke the *glory days*: “...this golden age of the Turkish race and

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<sup>6</sup> Franjo Tadjman was the first Croatian president and the president of HDZ (for further

spirit provides not only the valid models and means of action for the ever-present ideal of the Turks, but also the means of sorting out individuals into categories of ‘Turk’ and ‘non-Turk’“ (1990:92). In this case, she noted that, those designated as the Turks are the people who internalized specific narrative and assign specific meanings to the “key symbols“. Those designated as non-Turk's do not have any characteristics except that they are opposed to the Turks. Thus, Caglar concluded that “leftists exist within Turkist ideology only as a negative“(1990:95).

When society becomes torn apart into the two, or more, hostile communities, their differences are amplified and each symbol can become a sign of belonging to certain group, for instance, „[a] particular musical instrument, drink, costume, sport from the Turkish past, or particular hairstyle and moustache associated with Turkists become symbols of Turkishness“ (1990:96). Thus, in such ideologically contested societies each element in everyday life can present a symbol of affiliation to a one group. Hence, it is necessary to analyze what kind of “everyday” elements Thompson uses and what symbolic meanings it produces.

We should be aware that the dissemination of specific symbols will not result in their univocal acceptance. Kaufman, in a bit simplistic manner, concludes that the symbols are mediators between elites and masses and through the analysis of specific “key symbols” or myths, one can understand how elites manipulate masses in times of crisis (2001). Moreover, he argues that, such successful symbols and myths should be grounded in a historical experience and thus: “[i]n mass-led conflicts such as these – clashes of self-proclaimed victims – the widespread acceptance of historical myths justifying hostility and the reality of long-standing popular hostility essentially is the explanation for ethnic war. The rest is details” (Kaufman 2001:205). Moreover, Kaufman completely downplays the role of the

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information see Ramet 2006).

people or *masses* and believes that “the story of ethnic mobilization is essentially the story of nationalistic leaders appealing to nationalist symbols” (2001:210).

However, Edensor criticizes such top down approach to the problem of nationalism because it overlooks “the unspectacular, contemporary production of national identity through popular culture and in everyday life” (2002:12). Henri Lefebvre believes that everyday life has a key role in understanding the social situation (1991). Therefore, he compares everyday life with the theater and points out that scientist should “shift from 'significant' facts to the sum total of everyday events” (1991:135). He suggests that “history, psychology and the science of mankind must become a study of everyday life” (1991b:137). Although I believe that we can find a vast homology between the everyday life and social structure I agree with De Certeau (1984) who does not want to reduce the everyday life to a mere mirror of a system or state. He argues that everyday life is not just the orchestration of activities organized according to some master plan. To understand dialectic relation between practice in everyday life and the structure, De Certeau, introduces the dichotomy between strategy and tactics. Therefore, De Certeau argues that the consumers of cultural products in everyday life have the possibility to use their tactics as a weapon. As the system or state did not completely colonize the individual, s/he has a power to use tactics and by the mechanism of bricolage actively consume the goods (1984). Nevertheless, he is aware of the power asymmetry and therefore he calls tactics the “art of the weak” (1984:37). He argues that the tactics are “a maneuver 'within the enemy's field of vision'...and within enemy territory” (1984:37).

### **1.5. The moral crusaders**

Caglar argues that, in the case of Turkey, when the nation is in crisis nationalism becomes stronger (1990). She quotes Atsiz who stated that “sometimes nations go through

crises; at those times moralists from within the nation come forward and set morality in order” (Atsiz 1940a:1 in Caglar 1990:91). Hence, for nationalists the nationalistic ideology is understood as *doxa* or the only possible way in which things could be ordered (Bourdieu 1984). When such, nationalistic, fixed structure is endangered, nationalists try to restore the order through the process of national and moral purification. In such times of crisis, where the symbolic order is disturbed, agency is more constrained by the structure (Swidler 1986).

In the “periods of social transformation”, like in Croatia since 1990, “ideologies-explicit, articulated, highly organized meaning systems [...] establish new strategies of action. When people are learning new ways of organizing individual and collective action, practicing unfamiliar habits until they become familiar, then doctrine, symbol, and ritual directly shape action” (Swidler 1986:278). After order is established, in the “settled” period, “culture provides materials from which individuals and groups construct strategies of action” (1986:280). Nevertheless, like De Certeau, Swidler acknowledges the power that settled culture have against individual is even stronger than the ideology (1986:281). Therefore, she also acknowledges the asymmetry of power and the structural limitations for the individual action. By following the work of Ann Swidler (1986) I can partially explain why some of Thompson’s fans uncritically embrace his discourse. The feeling that “our” world is endangered motivates certain people to run into the sanctuary provided by nationalistic leaders. The fear of “unsettled” periods (Swidler 1986) where all symbols are new and contested chases some people into the arms of the strong ideology. I believe that Croatia is still in “transition”, and such “unsettled” period enhances the appearance of moral crusaders.

Edensor emphasizes on the importance of popular culture in reinforcing and strengthening national identities (2002). As an example, he mentions Croatian sport flagships, national football team and retired tennis player Goran Ivanisevic, whose success was, and still

is in the case of national football team, very important for the self-perception of Croats. National identity is, as Edensor believes, a result of a dialectic relation between popular forms of national identity and the official national discourse.

One of the popular culture forms that can have immense impact on the national identity is music. Robert Hudson showed how, in the case of Serbia, folk music can nurture the nationalistic narrative and *vice versa* (2003). While referring to the Ivan Colovic's book *Bordel Ratnika: Folklor, Politika i Rat* [Bordel of a warrior: Folklore, Politics and War], he pointed out "that Serbian politics is saturated with folklore and that from the late 1980s, every political leader, every political programme and every political battle in Serbia had made reference to folkloristic text that resort to the usual traditional clichés" (2003:157). Moreover, Hudson argues that in Serbia traditional songs are one of the very important parts of national identification; "[o]ne of the key elements in the creation of Serbian national identity and the project of a greater Serbia is the interdependent triad of *pesme, crkva i narod*: songs, church and people" (2003:158). According to Hudson, music had immense importance in the creation and nurturing of nationalistic narrative. He argues that, in the case of Serbia, and especially among rural and illiterate population, nationalistic myths and narration could only be transmitted via oral narration. Such narration, he notes, was often written in verses and accompanied with the music of *gusle*<sup>7</sup>. According to Colovic (2002), similar musical tradition can be found in certain Croatian regions. *Gusle* and decasyllabic lines, he argues, survived through more than a century and were used to disseminate nationalistic narrative in the 1990s:

And what brought them [plots of the political myth] together, during the 1990s, in one corpus of revived myths, their ethnically centered ideational or rather phantasmagoric framework, is also on the whole familiar. It represents a new version, a renewal of the political imaginary with the ethnic collective as the first principle and only horizon, which has come to the fore on several occasions in the political history of Serbia (Colovic 2002:12).

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<sup>7</sup> Gusle are „one-stringed, bowed instrument“ (Hudson 2003:158).



Hence, popular folk music in Croatia has a long tradition of transmitting oral historical narrations (Colovic 2002). Such songs, in the case of Serbia, were “inspiring [...] nationalism since the nineteenth century (Hudson 2003:158). In contemporary Croatia, where modern historical events are not completely framed (Rivera 2008) Thompson could be seen as an ancient *guslar* who is retelling heroic poems.

## 2.0. Methodology

Roy Shuker argues “that the nature of meaning in cultural products and practices must be located within the dynamic interrelationship of the production context, the texts and their creators, and the audience“(2001:241). Consequently, my methodology is tackling this phenomenon on three levels: the level of state and its ideology, the level of artist and the level of audience. Each of these levels is analyzed separately but the results are brought together with an aim to answer the key puzzle. Different levels of analysis require different methodological approach. Nevertheless, such distinctive levels of analysis are only constructed for analytical reasons.

Firstly, on the macro level, or the level of the state ideology, I am using secondary sources to describe official ideology promoted by Croatian political elites. After a short historical introduction, my chronological overview of the official ideology starts with Croatian independence in the 1991 and ends with the most recent events of 2009. In this description I present the historical and political context and the most contested ideological concepts. My main resources are books by Sabrina P. Ramet (2006), Norman Naimark (2001), Marcus Tanner (1997) and Ivo Goldstein (1999). Moreover, I emphasize the contemporary interpretation of the Croatian role in the World War II and the related symbols. The contested interpretations of the Croatian role in the World War II are still provoking controversy and have immense implication for the contemporary political and cultural life (see e.g. Kaufman 2001, Nainmark 2001, Tanner 1997). In addition to mentioned pieces, I am using article from Dejan Djokic (2003) and interview with first Croatian president Franjo Tudjman published in Croatian daily newspaper *Vjesnik*.

The second layer of my analysis deals with “the text” and the singer (Shuker 2001:241) Marko Perkovic, a.k.a. Thompson. My attempt is to present what “key symbols” (Ortner 1973) Thompson uses and in which context. According to Fairclough, textual analysis does not include only textual material like lyrics but also visual material, like video clips (2003). As Shuker demonstrated, the analysis of a *text* itself is not sufficient to explain the popularity of certain song or author: “[...] we must go beyond simple aesthetics to explain why particular songs ‘work’ in terms of creating audience. Accordingly, while attention is given to the musical qualities of each example, they are also situated in genre, the personal history of performer(s) and their place in rock, and the audience reception of the song” (2001:155-156). Thus, I conducted a discourse analysis of Thompson’s concert in Maksimir stadium on 17 June 2007. This concert is the latest live performance that Thompson officially published on DVD and I find it as the most representative piece. In addition, in an interview with Mate Kovacevic, Thompson described this concert as “magnificent” (Kovacevic 2009:29). Moreover, through the analysis of this concert I am able to explore his messages to the audience between songs, his stage appearance and the controversies that this concert enhanced. In addition, I analyze the recently published book “*Thompson in the eyes of Croatian intellectuals*” edited by Kovacevic and Pecaric (2009) where the emphasis is on previously mentioned interview and a texts written by intellectuals that support his work.

Norman Fairclough conceptualizes “discourses as way of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the ‘mental world’ of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world” (2003:124). In other words, she notes that, discourse is a broad concept that encompasses our vantage points to the key elements of the past, present and future. Fairclough points out that discourses “represent some particular part of the world, and representing it from a particular perspective” (2003:129). Hence, I analyze what specific elements Thompson uses in his lyrics, speeches on the concert

and stage appearance and what is his vantage point towards these elements. Similarly, I study the discourse promoted in previously mentioned book about Thompson.

The third level of analysis is audience. Ang argues that every research in the field of cultural studies should not downplay the role of audience (1996). In her research *Watching Dallas*, from 1985, she tried to show how audience has a certain degree of freedom to create their own meaning of the cultural products; “In showing how *Dallas* fans were silenced and thus disempowered by a dominant official discourse which categorically rejects such programmes as ‘bad mass culture’, I wanted to disarticulate the often taken-for-granted conflation between the logic of the commercial and the pleasure of the popular” (1996:135). Hence, she emphasized the importance of the reception analysis or “the study of audience interpretations and uses of media texts and technologies” (1996:136), in the sphere of culture.

I conducted 17 semi-structured interviews with Thompson’s fans. The goal of these interviews was to record how the audience interprets this cultural phenomenon and their relation to specific contemporary controversies. Warren explains that “[t]he purpose of most qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations” (2002:83). Hence, I emphasize the interviewee’s interpretations of certain important questions regarding Thompson. My definition of a Thompson fan was broad due to the fact that I wanted to encompass different types of interviewees and record various interpretations. Thus, I defined a Thompson fan as a person who enjoys in his music regardless of his or her concert participation or CD/DVD collection. I believe that by restricting my sample only to the people who attend Thompson’s concerts and/or own his full discography I would end up with a very limited sample and omit the large and important differences in the way various fans attribute meanings to Thompson’s songs. Using a snowball method of sampling firstly I conducted the interviews with the people that I know and who confirmed to me that they listen to Thompson. Some of them, in a form of the gatekeepers, connected me with their friends who were willing to participate in

this research. All interviews were conducted separately and recorded after the interviewee's signed a consent form. The interviews consisted of two main sections: a socio-demographic section and a set of open questions. I started with the nineteen open questions that were predominantly related to their interpretation of various issues regarding Thompson or their opinion on certain themes or controversies. The interview finished with the seven survey-type questions regarding interviewee's socio-demographic characteristics. All interviews lasted from ten to thirty five minutes.

At the final stage of the analysis I try to show the patterns and similarities that occurred and all three levels and provide the explanation in presented theoretical framework. However, I am not downplaying all inconsistencies that occurred in the analysis. As I showed in the literature review, referring to Edensor, the strength of the symbols lies in the variety of meanings that could be attributed to them (2002). Hence, these "deviations" in the interpretations of key symbols, on a various levels of analysis, are expected and encompassed by my theoretical framework. Moreover, while interpreting the results of the analysis, I am keeping in mind the asymmetry of power between different levels of my research. Such asymmetry was previously elaborated in the reviews of the work of De Certeau (1984) and Swidler (1986).

### 3. Analysis

#### 3.1. *Official nationalistic discourse*

The preamble of a Croatian Constitution, voted on 22. December 1990, starts with the sentence “[e]xpressing the millenarian national identity and state continuance of Croatian people, acknowledged through the entire historical events in various state forms and through maintaining and developing of nationally constructive thought of historical right of Croatian people to full state sovereignty [...]” (Croatian constitution 1990). Thus, the justification for Croatian independence is anchored in history, and the whole historical narrative is presented as a long struggle for the independence. In Hobsbawm’s terminology, the new government “invented tradition” in order to gain legitimization (1992). Hence, this level of analysis should start with a brief historical introduction because some of these historical persons and events are still playing an important role in nationalistic narrative.

The official history of Croatia usually begins with the migration of Croats to the Balkan region in the sixth (Goldstein 1999) or seventh (Tanner 1997) century. Goldstein explains that first settlers arrived to the areas related to contemporary Croatia in the late sixth century while the Adriatic coast was populated in the following hundred years. He points out that Croats were massively Christianized in the ninth century and during this century Croatian economy, especially trade, flourished. At this point, Goldstein argues, Croatia was integrated into “West European civilization on an equal footing” (1999:17). Furthermore, he describes how during the tenth century, under a reign of king Tomislav, Croatia was successfully defended from Hungarian and Bulgarian invasion and Croats embraced “Latin language and script” (1999:18). Goldstein states that Croatia weakened after the death of king Tomislav and

was torn apart by various military collisions. He notes that order was restored by king Držislav and his successors, Petar Kresimir IV and Dimitrije Zvonimir, strengthened Croatia during the eleventh century. “Under Kresimir the Pannonian and Dalmatian parts of Croatia united into a single state” (1999:19). Moreover at that time “Croats defined the ethnic, political, territorial and cultural fundamentals that have remained essential right up to the present” (1999:20). Tanner notes that the death of the king Zvonimir marked the end of the independent Croatian kingdom after his potential successor Petar Svačić was killed in a battle with Hungarians in 1097 (1997).

Since 1102, Goldstein explains, Croatia became the part of a Hungarian crown and remained in such cohabitation until early sixteen century when the area of contemporary Croatia was torn apart and divided by Habsburgs, Venetians and Ottomans. Croatian territory was downsized by the Ottoman penetration to the west and he illustrates the severity of the situation by commenting that Croatia was “remains of the remains of the formerly glorious kingdom” (1999:36). Moreover, he points out that western powers were aware of the grim situation in Croatia, and thus “in 1517 Pope Leo X called Croatia, as well as some other European countries, ‘the ramparts of Christendom’ (*antemurale christianitatis*)” (1999:34).

According to Tanner (1997) this event took place in 1519. The same author argues that “Croatia is border land. It lies on the geographical border between Central Europe and the Balkans, and between the Mediterranean world and continental Europe. It lies also on a cultural and religious border, between Eastern, Byzantine Christendom and the Latin West” (1997:X). By the late sixteen century, as Tanner notes, Croatian border towards Ottomans was turned into military frontier and populated by Orthodox immigrants. He pointed out that Croatian position became worse after the last powerful Croatian nobles, Zrinski and Frankopan, were executed in 1671 under accusation that they were planning a rebellion against Habsburgs. “The result was that the landowning class in Croatia became more or less

foreign, and far less interested in acting as spokesmen for the historic rights and privileges of the kingdom. Without its great lords, Croatia was rendered more easily subjugated by the Austrians and, later on, by the Hungarians” (Tanner 1997:51).

Nevertheless, only a few years later, he argues, the Ottoman Empire started to collapse and soon most of the territory of the contemporary Croatia was free from Ottoman rule. Goldstein argues that the start of the collapse of Ottoman Empire did not result in Croatian sovereignty (1999). As Tanner shows, Croatia was “subjugated by the Austrians and, later on, by the Hungarians” (1997:51). Moreover, he explains that the coastal part was under control of Venice. Nevertheless, Goldstein argues that Croatia developed during the eighteen century in economic, scientific and cultural sense. The same author explains how Venetian republic faded away from the world map in 1797 and the coastal part of contemporary Croatia was taken by Austria. Furthermore, he argues that, at this time, under the influence of French, whose army controlled some parts of Croatia in the early nineteenth century, Croats developed national consciousness. He points out that their key goals were territorial integration of Croatia and standardization of language. Such ideas were inseparable because “language unification would provide a foundation for resisting the Hungarian nobility” (1999:60). This movement, he notes, did not have only nationalistic contours; in many ways it was a pan-South Slavic movement. Goldstein argues that such pan-South Slavic movement, or Illyrian movement, was not well accepted by the Hungarian king who strived for stronger Hungarization.

Tanner points out that at the same time, in 1818, Serbian language was standardized by Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic and Milos Obrenovic. He notes that a famous Croatian linguist, of a Slovak and German origins, Ljudevit Gaj was inspired by the Serbian language unification. At that time in Croatia, Tanner shows, “there was no agreement at all about what language Croats ought to speak and write in” (1997:74). He explains that every region of



Croatia spoke a different dialect but Gaj choose *štokavski* as a model of standardization for two main reasons. The first reason was that this dialect was used in the Dubrovnik republic which was considered as “the bastion of Slav culture, identity and freedom against the invading Turks and Italians” (1997:75). The second reason was, he believes, the fact that this dialect “was close to Karadzic’s Serbian, and Gaj was convinced that Hungary could be kept at bay only by the co-ordinated action of all the southern Slavs in the Austrian empire” (1997:75). Tanner illustrates Gaj’s fear of strong Hungarization through his nationalistic poem “No, Croatia has not perished” composed in 1831:

Still Croatia has not fallen  
Our people have not died  
Long she slept, but she’s not vanquished  
Her sleep dreary death defied.

Still Croatia has not fallen  
We are in her still alive.  
Long she slept, but she’s not vanquished  
We shall wake her and revive

Ljudevit Gaj in Tanner (1997:75).

Tanner notes that Gaj’s Illyric idea of language unification had its opponents and was not accepted in all strata of society. Nevertheless, he argues that Gaj skillfully balanced between the interests of Hungarian emperor and already partially contested communities of Croats and Serbs. Gaj’s Illyrian conception, he explains, started to fade in the fifth decade of nineteenth century. He points out that a new pro-Hungarian party, Magyarones (or later Unionist) who argued for a stronger connection of Croatia and Hungary, claimed that the Illyrian movement had a revolutionary agenda and that it completely changed the direction of relationship between Illyric movement and the Hungarian emperor. After that, Tanner argues, the relation between the Hungarian emperor and Gaj became cold and he and his movement lost their power and significance. Gaj’s pan-South Slavic ideas were also, as Tanner believes, highly criticized in Croatia and “many Croats came to believe that he had bargained too much

of Croatia's individual identity away in the attempt to form a common front with the Serbs, only to find that the Serbs were interested not in Illyria, but in Greater Serbia" (1997:80).

Goldstein argues that Gaj's ideas did not evaporate and during the revolutionary period of 1848, Gaj's ideological follower, Colonel Josip Jelacic became Croatian count or *ban*. He points out that Jelacic abrogated serfdom and advocated the unity of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia. Nevertheless, Jelacic did not argue for complete independence but, as Goldstein explains, he stated that he "wished to remain loyal to the Habsburg dynasty and to continue living within the framework of Hungary, but that they desire[d] autonomy" (1999:68). As Tanner explains, due to Jelacic's contra revolutionary role in the Hungary and Austria he became controversial historical figure in the former Yugoslavia one century later. He points out that Jelacic's monument, which was erected on Zagreb's main square in the 1866, was removed from there after World War II due to ideological reasons. Nevertheless, after the collapse of Yugoslavia, his monument was returned to the main square (Ramet 2006).

Goldstein highlights the development of two important political concepts during the Jelacic regime. "One was Yugoslavism – a Yugoslav orientation - and the other was exclusive Croatian nationalism" (Goldstein 1999:75). The former had its roots in the idea of Illyrism and the later "condemned Illyrism as a tragic error, rejected a Yugoslav framework for Croatia, and attempted to proclaim all South Slavs Croats" (Goldstein 1999:75). In the late eighteenth sixties, Goldstein notes, Croatia came to an agreement with Hungary about the higher level of autonomy inside Hungary. Such agreement was partially advantageous but still, "it made Croatia completely dependent in financial matters to Hungary, and subordinated the Croatian *ban* to the Hungarian prime minister" (1999:83). Nevertheless, one of the results of this agreement, Tanner notes, is the formation of the Croatian military units *Domobrani* (Home Guard) (1997). At the same time, Goldstein argues, Croats finished language

standardization that was inspired by a similar process in Serbia. “This made the Croatian and Serbian standard languages very similar, and in the twentieth century this solution was a source of controversy” (Goldstein 1999:79).

According to Tanner, two very important figures of Croatia history in the second part of the nineteenth century were Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer and Ante Starcevic, one of the founders of the Party of Rights. The former was, he argues, for most of his life following the Illyrian idea and the later leaned towards nationalistic conceptions. Furthermore, he explains that Starcevic was arguing for breaking up all ties with Austria and Hungary. “The Croats, he said, must no longer put any faith in Vienna or the Emperor but only in ‘Bog i Hrvati’(God and the Croatians)” (Tanner 1997:104). Moreover, Tanner points out, that Starcevic was extremely hostile towards Serbs and in his writings he was sometimes mocking them and “asserted that the word Serb was based either on the Latin *servus*, meaning slave, or the Slavic verb *svrbiti* meaning to scratch. His favorite insult was to label an opponent *Srboslav* – a ‘Serbo-slav’ – one who believes in a greater Serbian state” (1997:105). Nevertheless, Tanner points out that the hostility and amplified nationalistic feelings between Serbs and Croats started before Starcevic’s writings and that “Starcevic’s polemics about Serbs may have sharpened the division, but the division was already there” (1997:103-104). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, he notes, Strossmayer’s and Starcevic’s political ideology became balanced and contiguous. Such modulation of Starcevic’s ideology was not widely accepted among his party members and after his death, he mentions, Party of Rights was divided in two fractions. One fraction, he notes, embraced the new Starcevic ideology and soon perished from the political scene, and other, followers of old and more radical Starcevic’s ideology, formed the Party of Pure Rights.

Tanner explains how key differences in earlier political conceptions of Strossmayer and Starcevic reemerged after World War I and during World War II. He mentions that the

Party of Pure Rights, popularly called the Frankists according to their leader Josip Frank, boosted the animosity towards Serbs. Consequently, he shows, since 1918, when the kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians was constituted, “the Frankists were persecuted as enemies of the state” (Tanner 1997:106). Their conceptions were later, asserted by Ante Pavelic and his fascist movement and moreover, “Pavelic claimed Starcevic was the spiritual father of the Ustashe-run Independent State of Croatia (NDH). His enemies among Tito’s Communist Partisans, on the other hand, appropriated Strossmayer for their cause” (Tanner 1997:106). Nevertheless, Tanner concludes that the ideas of Starcevic and Strossmayer were very often distorted even by their “successors” or admirers. For instance, “Starcevic believed in a united southern Slav state as much as Strossmayer. His quarrel was really only over the name and the centre of such a state, which he insisted ought to be Croatia and not Serbia” (Tanner 1997:106-107). Thus, he claims that Tito and Pavelic completely altered and falsified the concepts of Strossmayer and Starcevic.

Stjepan Radic, the leader of Croatian People’s Peasant Party was, according to Tanner, key figure in Croatian nationalistic movement in two decades before his assassination in 1928. Radic was a new type of pragmatic nationalists and “what mattered to the new generation of nationalists was bettering the economic position of the Croatian peasantry, which they looked on as the uncorrupted life-force of the nation. Start co-operative banks. Open libraries. That was the way they wished to conduct politics” (Tanner 1997:107). In other words, as Tanner indicates, at that time Croatian nationalistic movement broke the walls of elitism and became mass movement.

After Radic was assassinated in Belgrade, Tanner explains, King Alexander abolished the parliament and embraced the whole power. As a reaction, Ante Pavelic, “set up the Ustashe Croatian Liberation Movement in Zagreb (an *ustasha* is the one who takes part in an *ustanak* – an uprising)” (Tanner 1997:125). Moreover, Ustashe wanted “to liberate Croatia

from alien rule and establish a completely free and independent state over the whole of its national and historic territory.’ The declaration went on to say that the Ustashe would ‘fight to ensure that in the Croatian state only the Croatian nation would rule...’” (Tanner 1997:125). Tanner stated that Ustashe used the German attack on the Yugoslavia in the April 1941 to proclaim Independent State of Croatia (NDH). This state was, he shows, just a puppet state of Germany and Italy. Although there is no agreement upon the number of the victims of NDH, Tanner draws, among others, on Ivo Banac who claims that there were “about 120 000 victims in all the NDH-run camps” (Tanner 1997:152). He said that NDH was dismantled in 1945, after Tito and partisans gained control over the area of former Yugoslavia.

The end of World War II brought up one great controversy that plays important role in the Croatian nationalistic mythology. Tanner explains that at the time when partisans entered Croatian capital Zagreb many Ustashas and Domobrans fled towards the Austria border to surrender to the Allies near Bleiburg in Austria. The Allies returned them to Tito’s partisans and, according to Tanner, partisans killed between 30,000 and 200,000 of them. Goldstein argues that among Ustashas and Domobrans there were also civilians and “they were joined by about 40,000 German soldiers, a small number of Slovenian collaborators and civilians, and Serbian Chetniks and civilians (not more than 5,000-10,000 of each)” (1999:155). After they were returned to the partisans some were immediately killed, while “the others were taken on death marches, called the ‘Way of the Cross’, to various parts of Yugoslavia, and the guards were ordered to kill those who could not keep up or became exhausted. Some lucky survivors walked up to 1,000 km to the final goal” (Goldstein 1999:155).

Tito established the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945, and Goldstein shows that borders of Croatia, inside Yugoslavia, remained the same although they were questioned during the Homeland war. Goldstein (1999) and Ramet (2006) noticed two important streams in Yugoslavia: the one that strived for greater decentralization and the one

for the further centralization of the state. Moreover, Ramet highlights the constitutional changes in the 1963 and 1974 as the one step towards decentralization.

In Naimark's (2001) interpretation, the bloody Yugoslav dissolution in the 1990s was induced by the former republic leaders, but he believes that the nationalistic (mis)conceptions used by those leaders are older. Nevertheless, he does not speak of "ancient hatred" but rather positions the creation of strong national identities in the period of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, he argues that "the Balkan Wars and World War I exacerbated the underlying contradictions between the Serbian national idea and the hopes of the other peoples of the Balkans for a 'single harmony'" (2001:144). Thus, as he believes, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, as an outcome of the World War I was bound to fail because "two largest and most influential of its component nations-the Serbs and Croats-looked at the new country through different historical and political lenses" (2001:145). Naimark draws on Gale Stokes, who believed that Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, that later changed its name into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was unattainable due to the inherent asymmetry of power that favored Serbs. This asymmetry of power and absence of the equilibrium, Naimark argues, had fatal repercussions during the World War II when "the failure of this experiment became evident in the explosion of nationalist resentments" (2001:145). Moreover, he points out that "Croat Ustasha genocidal massacres of Serbs, Serb Chetnik collaboration with Nazis, Bosnian Muslim units in the SS, and Kosovar Albanian attacks on former Serb colonists all reflect the failures of the Yugoslav state to satisfy the needs of its component nationalities between the world wars" (2001:145).

After World War II, he explains, Tito used a "Soviet Model" which was supposed to guarantee the peaceful coexistence of all nations in Yugoslavia. He believes that Tito was quite successful because he had mighty trinity in his hands: "party, police and army" (2001:146). Naimark draws on Ivo Banac who believes that the coexistence in Yugoslavia

was built “by the skillful use of fear” (2001:146). On the other hand, he refers to the work of Ivo Andric, Miroslav Krleža and Ivan Mestrovic who had different interpretations of Tito’s regime.

According to Naimark, after Tito’s death in 1980, the dispute over his legacy intensified and he detects two main interpretations of his regime. On the one side, some use, in Naimark words the “freezer model” which basically supports the idea that Tito’s regime managed to freeze all these latent national conflicts in Yugoslavia. On the other side, he notices, what he calls the “incubator model” which blames Tito for establishing and maintaining the unjust system that ended up in the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1990s. Naimark points out that Tito’s legacy could be, to certain extent, blamed for the violence that later on emerged. He explains that Yugoslavia, after Tito’s death, became too heterogeneous and with such disparity of interest could not function under the rotating presidency. “Two largest nations of Yugoslavia, the Serbs and Croats, increasingly attempted to manipulate the federal system in order to forward their own narrow national interests” (2001:147). Moreover, he argues that some internal problems, like economic crisis, and external, the fall of communism, boosted these diversities.

### ***3.2. Croatian ideology in 1990s***

Sabrina P. Ramet points out six main reasons for Yugoslavia’s dissolution (2006). Along with the two points raised by Naimark, about economic crisis and the fall of communism, Ramet notes that the ruling party started to collapse, nationalism spread, the Kosovo question was galvanized and “the continuing constitutional debate contributed to a sense that change was not only necessary but inevitable” (2006:363). At that time, as she believes, nationalism became the main political discourse. “Everywhere one turned, there were intolerant actions, strangely impassioned rhetoric, discrimination, wanton violence, ethnic reprisals” (2006:367). Croatian nationalism, she explains, emerged a few times in

former Yugoslavia but at the end of the 1980s was amplified and turned into “hate propaganda” (2006:381). Hence, the war for Croatian secession was the heyday of the “hate propaganda” when the interethnic relations deteriorated and she argues that “some three years of officially sponsored hate propaganda in Serbia (and 10 years of unofficial hate propaganda, if one dates the Serbian backlash to the April 1981 riots) and eight months of officially sponsored, but somewhat milder, hate propaganda in Croatia were having their effect” (2006:381). Moreover, she shows that the growing nationalism of Croatia and Serbia found endless inspiration in the controversies of World War II. These controversies sharpened by reintroduction pieces of Chetnik and Ustasha ideology in Serbia and Croatia; “Milosevic even erected a monument to Chetnik leader Draza Mihailovic (in 1992), while Tudjman regime renamed streets in honor of Mile Budak (the minister of religious affairs and education in the NDH but said to have been accomplished writer in his own right)” (2006:389).

Djokic (2003), on contrary, points out that monument of Draza Mihajlovic was not erected by Milosevic but Serbian writer and politician Vuk Draskovic. Moreover, he believes that idea of unifying all Serbs in Yugoslavia was never brought to life. Serbs were, like Croats, divided among various historical lines and Djokic believes that Milosevic did not liked the idea of “national reconciliation” but “on the contrary, he has never expressed any sympathy for Mihailovic’ or the monarchy – The Cetniks were, in his opinion, ‘the greatest treachery in the history of the Serbian people’” (2003:136). Furthermore, Djokic explains how fascism was reified and merged with antifascism in Croatia in 1990s through the Tudjman’s idea that all Croats from both sides in World War II should reconcile:

Tudjman’s argument was that a vast majority of Croats, regardless of whether they fought for the Partisans or for the NDH, were neither indoctrinated Communists nor Fascists, but they really fought for Croatia and Croatia. Therefore, the continued division of ‘Partisans’ and ‘Ustasa’ Croat was meaningless, because they were, above all, members of one, Croatian nation and subjects of one, Croatian, leader. As the war was finished long time ago, there was no longer any reason why two sides should not reconcile (Djokic 2003:136).



This idea, he explains, already rose during the “Croatian spring” in the 1970s and it was formulated by Ustasha emigration. Furthermore, he shows that Tudjman wanted to materialize such concept through the “Museum of pan-Croat reconciliation” that was supposed to be located “at site of the Jasenovac concentration camp, where tens of thousands of Serbs, and also Jews, Roma and anti-Ustasha Croats had died in World War II” (2003:137). Such museum was never built and according to Djokic, Tudjman found inspiration for the project in Franco’s “gigantic mausoleum Valle de los Caidos” (2003:137). In his interview for *Vjesnik* Tudjman stated that pan-Croat reconciliation has roots in Croatian political tradition of nineteenth and twentieth century (1999). He stated: “the politics of reconciliation, the politics of creation HDZ as universal peoples party that accepted all positive elements from Starcevic’s ideology, Radic’s republicanism to Croatian leftism if it was for the independent Croatia, enabled our national and international success” (1999). He claims that the reconciliation of all Croats was essential for creating an independent state. Thus he highlighted: “[i]t is not only about the reconciliation of quarreled Croats and Croats were quarreled like rarely other nation during the World War II, it is about creating the basis for discovery of that Croatianism”(1999).

Suvar argues that Croatian flirting with fascism in 1990s went even further, and although Croatian constitution emphasized antifascist tradition, he wrote that until 1998 more than 3000 antifascist monuments were demolished (2004). Furthermore, he notes that antifascism was suppressed from the public discourse and media focused on the crimes committed by partisans while downplaying Ustashe crimes. “The story about Bleiburg and the Way of the Cross, where the number of victims, among which there were innocent people, is exaggerating even until one fifth of all Croats that lived in 1945, but the truth about Jasenovac and about 38 death camps that existed on the territory of so-called NDH, where were,

according to Pavelic racial laws, killed hundreds of thousand people, wants to be suppressed and concealed” (2004:214).

As mentioned in the first chapter, Croatia in the 1990s embraced integral nationalism and Sekulic (2001) explains that such nationalism does not allow any ideological plurality or non-nationalistic activity. Suvar (2004) shows how such nationalism, that had an echo of the contested past, manifested its brutality to any kind of opposition or the “other”. People who did not assimilate completely to this ideology and had unpopular nationality or political views, he argues, were risking their lives and property. “Then the unannounced war started, and already in the first months of escalation in many Croatian cities and villages, from Osijek to Karlovac to Metkovic and Dubrovnik, houses, bars, cars in the ownership or possession of citizens of Serbian, and sometimes Montenegrin and some other nationality (and those Croats who were found ineligible or took amiss) were blown up on a large scale” (2004:340). Thus, he indicates that estimated number of blown up houses ranges from 5,000 to 10,000. Similarly like in the Serb controlled areas, Suvar argues, in the Croat controlled territory bestiality and the nationalistic frenzy did not stop with vandalism and terrorist acts. He points out that many Serbs and non loyal citizens were fired from their jobs and some of them even killed. The new Croatian regime, he notes, emphasized the importance of Catholicism and although the situation was far better than during World War II, when around 300,000 people were Catholicized, Suvar believes that some atheists or citizens of other religions were embracing Catholicism due to an ideological pressure of integral nationalism that wants to flatten out all the differences in society. Moreover, Suvar explains that the necessity for the differentiation from the “other”, in this case the Serbs, was visible in the sphere of language: when, for example, Croatian government in 1990s started language purification that would enable clear demarcation line between Serbs and Croats regarding their language.

Speaking of Croatian historical figures that mostly influenced Tudjman and his politics, Suvar highlights Vladko Macek and raises the rhetorical question: “Didn’t Franjo Tudjman and HDZ in 1990s finished what Macek and HSS started in 1940s” (2004:202). Furthermore, he believes that Tudjman borrowed a lot from Ante Starcevic, Stjepan Radic and something from Ante Pavelic.

. Sabrina P. Ramet (2006) argues that contemporary Croatian history could be divided into three stages: the early Tudjman era, the late Tudjman era and post-Tudjman era. She argues that the new coalition government and new president Mesic, in the post-Tudjman era started to face the „dark spots” of the recent past and the problem of corruption.

One of the novelties of the coalition government elected in 2000 was its less tolerant approach to the war crimes committed on a Croatian side in a recent war for the independence (Ramet 2006). Ramet also explains that this new politics was highly criticized by, at that time still unreformed HDZ, and other right wing parties and Catholic Church. Nevertheless, she mentions that HDZ reformed, and after they won the election in the 2003, they continued the cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) (Ramet 2006). She argues that the new Croatian president Mesic started to emphasize the importance of antifascism. Thus, after many cities named their streets according to the NDH minister Mile Budak, who was also a writer, „on 3 September 2004, President Mesic entered the fray, declaring that, in his view, honoring Budak on the pretext that he was 'a good writer' was comparable to honoring Adolf Hitler on the pretext that he was 'a good painter'“ (Ramet 2006:586).

### 3.3. Thompson

The second layer of the analysis deals with the ideological background in Thompson's work. To describe Thompson's view on Croatian history, and particularly on the contested parts, I predominantly rely on the book *Thompson in the eyes of Croatian intellectuals*, (2009), which is an attempt to respond to various controversies regarding Thompson from the far right angle. The book is edited by academic Josip Pecaric and Mate Kovacevic, journalist in the far right newspapers. Along with their short columns, responses and articles, this book contains various pieces written by far right intellectuals and clerical leaders and, also an interview with Thompson himself. In addition to the analysis of this book I discuss Thompson's concert in Maksimir stadium which could be seen as one of the peaks of his career. I hypothesize that the discourse presented in the book about Thompson is just a more detailed elaboration or buttress of the ideology he presents on his concerts. My goal is to grasp all of these elements and analyze them in the wider historical context. Moreover, throughout this analysis I will often return to the previous chapter and investigate Thompson's relation to specific sequences of the historical narrative and congruency of Thompson's ideology with the proclaimed ideology of the Croatian state.

Even after a short glimpse on the foreword of the book one could notice highly defensive and romanticized depiction of Thompson. The editors call him the "troubadour of contemporary Croatianism" due to their belief Thompson has certain sociological skills that enabled him to conduct a social vivisection and understand all current problems in Croatian society (2009:10). Moreover, they say that, due to his musical talent he is able to frame these burning issues into popular tunes. Thus, Thompson as a "troubadour" has certain similarities to Colovic's (2002) or Hudson's (2003) *guslar*. Both have the same goal to disseminate a specific narrative by packing it into very simplistic tunes that would be understandable to the majority of the population. Moreover, the editors in the foreword emphasize Thompson's

political importance and they note that his “patriotic songs [...] brought bigger turmoil on national political scene than all attempts of Slovenia and Italy, supported by the pressure from the European Union, to grab a part of Croatian sea” (2009:10). Moreover, the editors point out that Thompson is the point of the contestation and polarization in Croatian society. Similar polarized situation in society was already described by Caglar in the case of Turkey (1990). In that article, she explained how in polarized societies every element appropriated from one group could become the part of the demarcation line from the “other”. Consequently, every element appropriated by Thompson could be elevated to the level, of what Orther (1973) calls, “key symbols”.

Furthermore, the editors highlight 2000 as politically significant year. They argue that since 2000 Thompson and other “patriots”, like general Ante Gotovina, are systematically defamed. I should note that Thompson’s career was, and still is, proportional with the level of “defamation” or media attention and only after 2000 did he gain wide popularity.

As mentioned before, 2000 is significant in the Croatian political landscape because in January the coalition of non nationalistic parties, led by Social Democratic party and Croatian Social Liberals, won the parliamentary elections (Ramet 2006). Moreover, Ramet explains that, this government started to cooperate with the ICTY which caused harsh reaction from the far right. In the case of the indictment for the general Mirko Norac, in 2001, far right organized mass protests (Garmaz 2001). On these protests, Garmaz (2001) noted, a lot of Ustasha insignia could be seen and extreme hostility towards the current government was expressed.

The 2003 song «Sude mi» (They judge me<sup>8</sup>), which Thompson recorded with Miroslav Skoro, portrays their attitude towards indictments for domestic war criminals, especially the

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<sup>8</sup>My translation.

one who were extradited to ICTY in Hague<sup>9</sup>.

A knight from my clan is writing a book  
Shackled in a far land...  
They judge me  
Because I love mine  
I love the most  
Because I was defending my precious  
They judge me  
The foes, my darlin', but they don't know  
That the truth  
Is a deep water

Thompson does not only use his songs to send a specific political message. During the big concert on Zagreb's central square<sup>10</sup>, on War veteran's day (30 May 2008), Thompson said: "We pray to Lord this evening and tomorrow for our General Mirko Norac. Who was going, and still is, through a hard time (sic). Let's pray for him dear friends". The crowd responded with chanting: "Mirko, Mirko, Mirko..."<sup>11</sup>.

One of the controversies related to Thompson is that he, among some other Croatian singers, performed notorious Ustasha slaughter songs: "Evo zore evo dana" (The dawn is coming the day is coming) and "Jasenovac i Gradiska Stara" (Jasenovac and Gradiska Stara). Although he has never published these songs on his records they are available on the Internet<sup>12</sup>.

Jasenovac and Gradiska Stara, that is the house of Maks's butchers  
Through Imotski the trucks are hurrying, and driving the blacks of Jure Francetic  
In Capljina, there is slaughterhouse; many Serbs were swept by Neretva<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This song was published on Miroslav Skoro's album "Milo moje" (*My precious*) in 2003.

<sup>10</sup> "[...]according to Croatian Ministry of Interior Thompson gathered between 55.000 and 60.000 people, mostly teenagers. According to the other estimations there were more than 100.000 people" (Rados and Tomas).

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv1Y61xbtPA&feature=related>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.index.hr/images2/Thompson-JasenovaciGradiskaStara.mp3>

<sup>13</sup> Jasenovac and Gradiska stara were concentration camps of the Independent State of Croatia. Maks and Jure Francetic were notorious criminals of Ustasha regime. Blacks of Jure Francetic is a metaphor for members of Crna Legija –Elite Ustasha troops. Neretva is the river that flows through the Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. For more detailed information

Drawing on Kaufman's (2001), Djokic's (2003), Suvar's (2004) and Ramet's (2006) insights, I believe that such songs were tolerated and performed during the 1990s because the official politics had benevolent attitude towards Croatian fascist past. In 2004 Thompson even admitted that he performed Jasenovac i Gradiska Stara two years before, when journalist from web portal *Index.hr* published a tape from that concert. On his official web site Thompson published a statement where he admits that he performed mentioned songs<sup>14</sup>.

He explains that these:

songs I sang together with the hundreds of thousands of Croats during the Homeland war when the Chetnik aggression endangered the mere existence of Croatian state and people, when thousands of Croatian young man were dying defending our values and their dear life from the Chetnik knife. We sung these songs as a grudge against our enemy, expressing our insurgency and determination to confront these beasts and finally defeat them and among them they provoked fear.

As mentioned in the previous chapter while referring to Djokic (2003), Tudjman's historical revisionism rooted in the idea of the "Pan-Croat reconciliation" resulted in benevolent attitude towards fascism. Moreover, in many examples brought by Suvar (2004) one could see how this new ideological amalgam of antifascism and fascism had severe consequences on people's lives, property and, in the case of communist monuments, collective memory. Thus, I believe that in such social climate, that had also the gloomy tones of war, fascistic songs were not perceived as deviant. Nevertheless, with Tudjman's death and a new coalition government after the election in the 2000, Croatian political discourse changed its orientation. In spite of these changes and the fact that war ended few years ago Thompson still performed these songs. In the same statement he said:

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about these events, persons and context please look at (Tanner 1997; Goldstein 1999; Ramet 2006).

<sup>14</sup> This statement was later published on other web portals and is available on:

<http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak.aspx?id=179581> ;

[http://www.superbosna.com/vijesti/muzika\\_i\\_film/thompson:\\_pjevaro\\_sam\\_jasenovac,\\_pa\\_%B9ta%/](http://www.superbosna.com/vijesti/muzika_i_film/thompson:_pjevaro_sam_jasenovac,_pa_%B9ta%/)

After January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2000, when Croatia stumbled and government was taken by communists, there was an unseen vilification, insulting, humiliation and persecution of Croatian veterans, generals, intellectuals, prominent public figures and everything that is holy to Croatian people. Across Croatia we could hear chants “Po sumama i gorama” (*Through the forests and mountains*), Croatian army was accused as aggressors, arrest warrants were issued, prizes were offered for their betrayal...Then again, we wanted with these and similar songs to send the vampire-like communists a message that we are not afraid of them and that we shall resist them and protect our values at any price

Thompson’s statement was written in January 2004, when “vampire-like communists” were in the opposition and reformed Tudjman party HDZ created a new coalition. Thus in the conclusion of his epistle, that contains inevitable reference to God, he was overwhelmed by the optimism. He concluded: “[t]hank God, now again we have Croatian government and we have no more the need to express our dissatisfaction in such or similar way but we spend all our energy by contributing to the common good and betterment of our people and state”.

The book *Thompson in the eyes of Croatian intellectuals* contains an interview with Thompson with the title “M.P. Thompson: They will not stop me”. In this interview, which was conducted by Mate Kovacevic, Thompson explains his ideology and reflects on the controversies that he engenders. He repeats again that his songs are about “love of God, humans and Croatian war veterans” and state that he is defamed: “only because [I] sing about the values that do not correspondent to specific politics” (Kovacevic 2009:18-19). Moreover, when asked about his controversial scenography where he, during the song *Arrival of Croats*, stabs the sword into the stage he answers: “[t]he sword is a symbol of power. With the help of God and our strength we secured freedom and peace. The sword that is turned upside down symbolizes that this historical period is behind us, but he [the sword] is still here as a symbol that protects these acquired values” (2009:19).

Thompson says that he found the inspiration for his songs in the “long folk tradition, family education, our glorious but often tragic and bloody history. I have to specially highlight the Christian values that were, despite rough environment, imposed by Catholic



Church.” (2009:20). Moreover, through most of the answers Thompson emphasizes his holy trinity of values: faith, love and homeland. Most of his answers are tackling or flirting with these elements. In the same interview, Thompson state that he is against the dichotomy between urban and rural and he, in his songs, tries to overcome it and take the best from the both worlds. Thompson argues that the song has very important role in maintaining national identity. He believes that suppressed Croatian national identity was maintained through “song [...] Catholic Church and folk tradition” (2009:24). Furthermore Thompson says that his concerts are banned because certain group of people cannot accept his values and ideology. “This is the clash of two world views, mine, which rests on the traditional values, Christian doctrine, love towards Homeland, and theirs, which is embodied in communistic system and Yugoslav state, or, it is manifested through aggressive antinationalism and through the hate towards God and humans.” (2009:26).

Thompson shows extreme anti-Yugoslav emotions that even go so far as to downplay the anti fascist movement in Yugoslavia. “They are imposing the false thesis that a Croatian state was built up on anti-fascism, and we know that those anti-fascist were creating exactly that Yugoslavia” (2009:27). Moreover, he states: “Croatian state was created according to the historical right of Croatian people to have their own state, on the millenarian aspiration and fights of many generations, and again it was established, with the help of God, on the blood and toil of this generation” (2009:27). Thompson not only supports nationalistic historical narrative that simplifies all historical events and observes and interprets them through the contemporary nationalistic lenses; he also embraces Tudjman’s concept of Pan-Croatian reconciliation. When asked in the interview to position himself in the debate about the Croatian role in the World War II he state that Croats should be unified and he does not want to engender any division among them: “[i]t is a fact that sons and grandsons, whose fathers

and grandfathers were on the ideologically different sides, fought together and shed the blood for the new established Croatian state” (2009:30-31).

To provide more detailed insight into Thompson’s discourse I will now analyze his concert at Maksimir stadium in Zagreb. The concert was held on 17 June, 2007 and later released on DVD. This is the most recent live performance on DVD and Thompson himself has stated that this concert was “marvelous” (Kovacevic 2009:29). The biggest Zagreb stadium accommodated a six hundred square meter stage for the band and two great illuminating swords (Matanovic 2007). In their report after the concert, journalists of the Croatian daily newspapers *Jutarnji List* noted that there were between 35,000 and 50,000 in the audience (Pavic and Dosen 2007). In the same article, the authors explain how they saw only a few Ustasha insignias but many of the fans wore T-shirts with the face of general Ante Gotovina and some of them T-shirts with insignias of the Croatian paramilitary organization – Croatian Defense Forces (HOS)<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, the authors pointed out that most of the audience wore black clothes and before and after the concert the crowd chanted notorious Ustasha song “Evo zore, evo dana” (The dawn is coming, the day is coming) (Pavic and Dosen 2007). This concert did not pass without the reactions and Jewish community in Zagreb posted a protest letter to the media due to a fact that some prominent Croatian politicians attended it (Jutarnji List 2007). Moreover, on the DVD, before the song “Dan dolazi” (*The day is coming*) and before the bis, one could hear the crowd chanting this notorious song.

Due to a limited scope of this thesis I am not able to provide meticulous analysis of all twenty six songs that were performed in Maksimir, yet I will give an overview of the discourse presented there. David Segal of the *Washington Post*, who observed Thompson’s concert on Manhattan in 2007, concluded that he is a Balkan version of British heavy-metal

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<sup>15</sup> It is interesting that the logo of HOS contains the infamous battle call „Za dom spremni“ (*For Homeland ready*), (for further information about HOS see Ramet 2006).

band Iron Maiden (2007). As a person that was at three Iron Maiden concerts I also noticed specific similarities. Firstly, Thompson's concert, like the ones from Iron Maiden, started with the monumental classical orchestration intro. Unlike Iron Maiden, that usually use some classical music piece, Thompson played orchestration that contained the melody of his first song "The Beginning". Moreover, the impressive stage partially resembles the stage of a heavy metal bands. Nevertheless, Thompson's whole stage appearance was pervaded by hyper-Croativity, while Iron Maiden does not emphasize the nationalistic discourse at that scale. His band, made up of very prominent Croatian musicians, wore the same clothes like *Western* hard-rock stars; tight leather pants and black shirts. Although, Thompson and his band were dressed like a typical heavy-metal group and used impressive pyrotechnics, it is interesting that their stage appearance is not very dynamic. Unlike Iron Maiden, whose singer Bruce Dickinson jumps on the stage, runs and head bangs, Thompson's stage appearance is very static and does not correspond to the dynamic music and the effects. I believe that such stage appearance corresponds to the taste of the older audience.

His concert was based on the songs from his last, hard-rock folk, album "Bilo jednom u Hrvatskoj" (It was once in Croatia) and thus, some older, pop-folk compositions took on a new form in hard-rock arrangements. Musically his songs are very much influenced by standard heavy-metal clichés with the only difference being that his musicians avoid long and complex instrumental solos. The songs performed at the Maksimir stadium had various themes but I noticed similarity in the lyrics and Thompson's proclaimed ideology. All songs are branded with the conservative values that Thompson identifies with: Homeland, God and love. His song "The beginning" starts with the Biblical excerpt: "[i]n principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat verbum". Many of his songs contain invocations and references to God. Moreover, through these songs I noticed Manichean, monochrome and simplistic discourse that is close to the conservative values.

During the first song “The beginning” Thompson was accompanied on stage by the group of people dressed in the old military uniforms of “Otocky Granicari”. He sang “Zaustavi se vjetre” (Stop the wind) with the famous *klapa* Intrade, while at the end of “Geni kameni” (Genes of stone) folk ensemble from Turopolje came on the stage and danced on the melody from the Croatian opera “Ero s onoga svijeta” (Ero from the other world).

As stated before, the theme of his songs is predominantly connected to the conservative set of values. During this concert he did not sing notorious Ustasha slaughter songs but he performed his first hit, battle song, “Cavoglave Battalion”. It is interesting that on the DVD his battle call *Za dom spremni*<sup>16</sup>, which he shouts in the beginning of this song, was cut out although he sings it on every concert. Nevertheless, Thompson again, accompanied by thousands of his fans raised a threat to Chetniks who are “threatening” Croatia. In this song Thompson sings about unity of all Croats<sup>17</sup> in his birthplace Cavoglave and their resistance against Serbian armed forces.

There’s a Croat standing next to another Croat, we are all brothers,  
You will not get into Cavoglave as long as we are still alive!<sup>18</sup>

He also celebrates military actions of Croatian soldiers and chases away the “bandits”.

Thompson discharges, a kalasnikow and zbrojevka, too,  
Toss the bomb, chase the bandits away beyond the spring !

He also raises threat to rebelled Serbs that are for him a Chetnik mob.

You Serbian irregulars, you Chetnik<sup>19</sup> mob,  
Our hand will reach you even in Serbia!  
God’s justice will reach you, everybody knows that by now,

<sup>16</sup> Slavko Kvaternik used the battle call “Za dom spremni” (For homeland ready) while proclaiming the Independent state of Croatia, a Nazi puppet state 1941-1945 (Tanner 1997:142).

<sup>17</sup>We can see the resemblance of this idea of unity with Tudjman’s idea of reconciliation of all Croats.

<sup>18</sup> Whole translation is taken from Thompson’s official web site ([www.thompson.hr](http://www.thompson.hr)).

<sup>19</sup>Chetniks are the members of notorious Serbian nationalistic movement (army) in the World War II. The same name was appropriated by some Serbian nationalists in the 1990s (Ramet 2006).

You will be judged by the fighters from Cavoglave!

His discourse can be easily depicted through his song *Geni kameni* (*Genes of stone*). In this song he describes a real and ideal Croat as a fair, honest, non-compromising and religious man. Thus, in the chorus he sings:

Genes, genes of stone  
The fire burns inside me  
Genes, genes of stone  
That's how we are born  
Take it or leave it

In this song, Thompson is not just singing about a non-compromising man who never changes but also asserts important political message that antifascist victory in the World War II was a bad thing.

1945 was bad  
It spread us across the world

Moreover, in the song *Lijepa li si* (*How beautiful you are*), that describes the beauties of Croatia he sings about Herceg-Bosna, the part of Bosnia and Herzegovina that is predominantly populated by Croats and it was partially annexed by Croatia during the recent war.

Oh Zagoro, how beautiful you are  
Slavonijo, golden you are  
Herceg-Bosno, proudly heart

Thus, the song that could be read as a patriotic one has strong nationalistic elements and implies the support for the expansive tendencies of Croatian official politics in the 1990s. Furthermore, while announcing this song at Maksimir stadium, Thompson said: “[l]et us see your hands people. Let us hear how to love Croatian regions”. Similarly, before “Moj Ivane” (My Ivan) Thompson said: “[a]nd now we will sing here one Kupres [song]. Not to forget our Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because I see that some renounce them easily”.

Furthermore, his song *Kletva kralja Zvonimira* (*The curse of king Zvonimir*) is only partially referring to the Croatian king from the eleventh century. King Zvonimir has important place in the Croatian nationalistic narrative because, according to Tanner (1997), soon after his death medieval Croatia “lost its sovereignty” for the next nine hundred years. Tanner explains that king Zvonimir died “most probably of natural causes” (1997:13). Nevertheless, he noted, that some argued that he was killed by his own people. Thompson’s song is referring to the more contemporary events and king Zvonimir can be a metaphor for a late president Tadjman and Zvonimir’s soldiers for a Croatian generals. Thus, he sings:

Traitors, do not have peace  
 You killed the king Zvonimir  
 You betrayed our great men  
 And the mother’s sons.  
 Yesterday I watched the image of people  
 They threw the flowers on the heroes  
 And already tomorrow they judged the victorious’  
 They sold them for Judas shekels

Before performing this song Thompson referred to the Nazi controversy that follows him: “[w]e are telling them from this place that we are not fascists and Nazis but Croatian patriots. We are telling them that there are values that we are living for. [...] There are dreams that we will never deny. Because this is the country built, our Croatia was built on the blood and toil of this generation, the victorious generation”. The crowd responded with an old chant: “[i]n the battlefield, in the battlefield, for our people”.

His song “Neka ni’ko ne dira u moj mali dio svemira” (Let no one touch my little part of universe) is his respond to the critiques and fascist controversies. Here he sings:

Patriotism start calling fascism  
 To defend their communism  
 Shallow  
 Demagogy

In the song “Duh Ratnika” (*The spirit of the warrior*) Thompson sings about the late Croatian soldier whose spirit is searching for the Croatia that he fought for. In this song

Thompson also airs an explicit political message. Through the lyrics he “replies” to the warrior:

Hey warrior, that Croatia is gone  
As soon as it flourished it fell into troubles  
Forces of darkness arose on her  
Stroked at the crown and throne

In the chorus of the same song he sings:

I would give everything to see her [Croatia]  
Proud and beautiful like in the dreams  
I would give everything to see her  
And again I would stand ready, and give my life

After Thompson sang the song “Ratnici svjetla” (The warriors of light) dedicated to the fallen Croatian soldiers that are, as he sings, forgotten, the crowd start chanting: “Vukovar, Vukovar, Vukovar<sup>20</sup>” and the chauvinistic notorious chant, which sometimes could be heard on Croatian football matches: “[k]ill, kill, kill the Serb, the Serb, the Serb”. After the song “Lijepa li si” (*How beautiful you are*) the crowd chanted: “[z]ovi, samo zovi, svi ce sokolovi za te zivot dati” (Call, just call, and all the falcons will give a life for you). Before the song “E moj narode” (O my people) the crowd chanted: “[w]e the Croats, we the Croats”, what is usual for the football fans. Thus, I believe that it would be very interesting to examine more thoroughly the connection between the audience on Thompson’s concert and on the football mach of the national team. Unfortunately, due to the scope of this thesis, this puzzle will remain unsolved. Nevertheless, in the next subchapter I investigate the discourse of the audience through the analysis of the interviews.

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<sup>20</sup> Vukovar is the town in the Croatian region of Eastern Slavonija. During the Homelad War, Goldstein explains, that town was heavily damaged and later occupied by Serbs (1999). During the siege and after the occupation, he notes, around 5 000 Croatian soldiers and civilians were killed or still missing.

### **3.4. The audience**

The third layer of this analysis is audience. Drawing on Ang (1996) and Shuker (2001), I believe that the level of audience is very important in interpreting the cultural phenomenon of Thompson. Like Ang, I don't believe that the dissemination of Thompson's artwork will result in the univocal interpretation. Moreover, as Jung (2008) noticed, identities are partially flexible categories and thus, I am not expecting complete congruency between Thompson's ideology and interviewee's personal identity.

I conducted my fieldwork in the second part of April 2009. As mentioned in the methodology section, I used a snowball sampling method and firstly interviewed my acquaintances. My interviewee's then recommended friends as a possible sample for this research. The socio-demographic characteristics of my sample show certain regularities but, due to the method of sampling, I am not able to draw any general conclusion about the population that listens to Thompson. In my sample, men are predominant - I had twelve male and five female respondents. Most of my interviewee's (thirteen of them) are between twenty and thirty years old. Two respondents are between forty and fifty, one between thirty and forty and one above fifty. Due to the age of the interviewee's, there is no respondent younger than twenty; I expected that most of the interviewee's will have certain critical distance towards this popular culture phenomenon.

All of my interviews were conducted in the continental part of Croatia and almost all respondents came from Croatian smaller towns that have between ten thousands and seventy thousands inhabitants. One respondent lives in the town with less than ten thousands inhabitants and one in the Zagreb, the capital that has a bit less than eight hundred thousand inhabitants. A larger number of respondents, ten of them, have finished high school and some of them are currently enrolled at BA studies. Six interviewees completed their BA degree and one has an MA degree. When asked about their financial status, fourteen of them estimated



that they belong to the middle class; one said that s/he feels very poor while two of them feel as a member of the upper-middle class. The greatest congruency in answers emerged on the question regarding the religious affiliation. Sixteen out of seventeen respondents declared themselves as Roman Catholic while only one respondent stated that s/he is Atheist/Agnostic<sup>21</sup>. The same person declared her/himself as Serb. Finally, fourteen respondents are not a member of any political party, while two are members of far right Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) and one is a member of Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ).

When the interviewees were asked to describe when they started to listen to Thompson, most of them said at the time of Homeland war and Thompson's first hit, the notorious battle song, "Cavoglave Battalion". This song evokes various feelings among his audience. Thus, interviewee number eight<sup>22</sup> pointed out that: "[t]he first song was Cavoglave. Definitely. [...]Let's say it like that. Half-serious, half-foolish song. [...] just the song that was at that time even some hit. You couldn't avoid it even if you wanted that."(M,30-40,WV) Interviewee number five had a similar attitude towards this song: "I didn't experience this so emotional, through the Cavoglave. Like some patriotic song or I don't know what. Simply, that was just likeable and nothing more" (M,40-50,WV). Some respondents, although were very young when Thompson published "Cavoglave Battalion", experienced his songs more emotionally. For example, interviewee number thirteen stated that: "His first song was Cavoglave. We sang that when we were children [...] simply that one feeling of patriotism, affiliation it induced" (F, 20-30).

Some interviewee's said that they were aware that "Cavoglave Battalion" could offend or provoke non-Croats, and especially Serbs. Hence, the interviewee number sixteen stated that: "I know that we had [...] in our street a few of these where left over here [he implies

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<sup>21</sup> In the part of the interviews related to the religious affiliation the categories of atheist and agnostic were merged into one.

<sup>22</sup> For the detailed list of interviewees and the explanation of the abbreviations please see appendix.

Serbian citizens of Croatia] so we enjoyed singing Cavoglave Battalion to provoke them a little” (M, 20-30). On the other hand, respondent number two, who was raised in the multi ethnic environment, pointed out that:

As far as I remember I had mixed feelings, because the song is [...] a very memorable one and then you know it automatically. Also, there was war situation so it is also a battle song. However, on the other hand, as I am personally coming from the area where I have very good friends among Muslims and Serbs and I know that one uncle Milos is not the same as those Chetniks that were ravaging. And it was very hard to completely accept this song. And I know that I always felt pricks of conscience when I heard it and when I sang it and all, because it didn't correspondent to what I was taught all my life (F, 20-30).

Moreover, she stated that Cavoglave Battalion “is a horrible song” and she does not listen to all Thompson's songs, yet just the ones that have folk elements, and in specific occasions.

Although, “Cavoglave Battalion” was the first Thompson's song that most on the respondents ever heard some noted that they extensively started listening him at late 1990s or at the beginning of the new millennium. Moreover, some of them explained that his popularity is mostly induced by the political situation. Interviewee number thirteen pointed out that Thompson is popular “probably because of politics. I think, because of the situation in the society. He became popular just at those years when those left parties were in power [2000-2000]. And somehow people just needed this” (F, 20-30). Similar explanation of Thompson's success was given by respondent number fifteen who stated: “I think that if he was some neutral political element on his concert on the ban Jelacic square there wouldn't be 100,000 people, but 5,000” (M, 20-30). Respondent number sixteen, (M,20-30), encompassed both, previously mentioned answers, and stated that Thompson's popularity is a product of certain moment and Thompson's political statements. Nevertheless, there are some respondents who argue that Thompson's popularity is just a result of his good music while others believe that he has good songs but his popularity is also induced by politics.

Through all interviews I noticed three strategies of dealing with the contested musical material or Thompson's controversial songs. These three strategies are not completely divided and some respondents used a combination of them. One group of interviewees completely ignores or downplays the controversial elements and for them there are no disputable parts in Thompson's career. The controversies that emerged are, according to them, products of media and politics. Thus, respondent number seven noted that he does not believe that Thompson is controversial in any way and argues that "his lyrics are fantastic. He apprehends the political situation and the mood of people" (M, 20-30). Respondent number six noted that: "[w]ell I think [...] he has a lot's of historical lyrics and from these lyrics one can learn a lot. I like his strong patriotism in the songs. Songs are OK [...] Simply, we learn history from his songs" (F, 20-30). The same respondent does not find Thompson controversial in any way.

A second group tries to make a distinction between music, lyrics and the political message. They believe that Thompson's songs could have notorious interpretation but still argue that they attribute completely different meaning to these songs. Thus, respondent number two explained that some of the songs have implicit political message with which she disagrees, but she still likes the song for its music. While referring to the song "Sude mi" (They judge me) she said: "but, song as a song, if we exclude all this that is attributed to it, is [...] good" (F, 20-30).

The third group of respondents made a distinction between Thompson's songs and argue that some of them are controversial yet some not. Consequently, respondent number eight stated: "Thompson has songs that are strictly following Ustasha ideology. He has songs that are clearly neutral. He has songs that are, so, in the middle" (M, 30-40). Similarly, respondent number fifteen concluded that: "where he implicitly supports either some extreme right wing politics, or Ustasha ideology, or anything else, I don't support this in any way. But otherwise, is he sings songs, even these patriotic ones, and similar, this is OK. [...] And I

don't see now, except these few songs, I would say critical ones. I don't see anything bad in these other songs" (M, 20-30).

It is interesting that not even one respondent expressed positive attitude towards the part of audience that displays Ustasha insignia at Thompson's concert. However, their answers might be partially influenced by the need to express socially acceptable opinions and that some of them might have a different attitude towards these issues. Most of the respondents seriously distanced themselves from that part of the audience. The common answer was that such notorious insignia is displayed only by a few people on the concert and mostly young fans. Some respondents stated that such insignia has nothing to do with Thompson but predominantly with the non educated youth. Thus, interviewee number three said:

Normally, I don't approve that but the same is with Thompson. Because he said that he doesn't approve that or encourage it and he never led anyone to accept that. [...] I think that many of them who are doing that are [...] the people who are unread and don't know much about the history. [...] It is somehow contradictory; because he is encouraging faith, unity, love and that; and on the other side on his concert Ustasha cap appears that doesn't support that (F, 20-30).

The contradiction between Christian values and Ustasha ideology is not the only contradiction brought up by the interviewees. The interviewee number five highlighted contradiction that Thompson's "love for his homeland, which is the basis for his career and success, [...] brought more damage than good to that same homeland" (M, 40-50, WV).

The less critical respondents argued that Thompson has nothing to do with the Ustasha insignia that part of the fans wear. Moreover, some of them believe that there are people who intentionally go to the Thompson's concert with such insignia to provoke and damage his reputation. Two respondents stated that they disagree with such insignia on the concert but they don't bother themselves too much if someone is wearing it.

Interviewee's number five and fourteen, both male war veterans explained how they completely condemn such insignias but such controversial symbols were, as they noted,

appropriated in the 1990s by the political elite that later renounced these symbols and ideology. Thus, they argue that Thompson's controversy should be interpreted in the wider political and historical frame. Respondent number five brought up the example of the Croatian prominent politician Vladimir Sheks "who is now peaceful like a pigeon, almost like the nun and in the 1990s his nationalism and that non-tolerance wasn't less than one of Thompson". Interviewee number fourteen said that now Thompson has problems because he sang notorious Ustasha song "Jasenovac and Gradiska Stara" but "he was not the only one that sang it. More people sang it and even our president Mesic sang it [laugh]".

Some found Thompson's participation in a Homeland war very important. Thus, interviewee number fourteen noted that: "[t]hen we all looked at him like a Croatian soldier, volunteer soldier, who sang some songs for Croatia" (M,40-50,WV). The same respondent has an emotional connection with some songs. He said that the songs: "are patriotic and Thompson doesn't offend anyone through them. At least I think that way. At least us who went through whole war it touches more in the heart". While explaining his experience of the song "Arrival of Croats" he noted: "Normally, the beginning of the song is such that your heart starts beating faster and you feel the shivers".

Certain respondents who stated that they emotionally experience Thompson's songs highlighted that these emotions are amplified during his concerts. Thus, interviewee number thirteen pointed out that on Thompson's concert she felt: "that one feeling of unity. Those emotions. It is really something special" (F, 20-30). The respondent number three, (F,20-30), argued that for her the concert experience is very important and it cannot be compared to the listening of Thompson's music while being at home. For her, Thompson's concerts are special events because: "you feel on this concert that you are very connected with all the people around you. Because the strong emotions are awaking and I think that all the people that are around you on that concert, that everyone would help everyone, everyone would give

everything to everyone. Like, some unity appears”. The feeling of unity, that some respondents highlighted, can be interpreted in the frame of eclectic nationalism that, as Ramet (2006) explains, obliterates all differences and unifies the nation around the basic, common ideas.

Nevertheless, some interviewees pointed out how these songs do not evoke any feeling of unity. Respondent number fifteen explained how, for him, Thompson’s music is very important and: “it is not like I am finding, in Thompson’s songs my will to live or anything else. But [...] I found myself in that music. [...] and I can compare his music with Guns n’ Roses, [...] I always liked before and I still like Guns n’ Roses and somehow [...] it is similar music. And I listen to him simply because of music” (M, 20-30). The same respondent stated that he does not have a special outfit for Thompson’s concert. He explained that he even wore a red shirt on the concert and was teased by some people, but for him the music is the only thing that matters.

Consequently with the three ideal types of Thompson’s fans established in the beginning of this section of analysis I believe that some fans truly identify with Thompson’s songs and the whole, or the large part of, discourse. Certain fans, like the previously mentioned respondent, just enjoy the music without any emotional connection to the lyrics. A third group of fans likes Thompson and the lyrics, but only specific songs. They believe that one can make a distinction between Thompson’s songs and just like and identify with some of them. Hence, interviewee number eight pointed out: “[t]he songs [...] that do not express any Ustasha ideology, Za dom spremni (For homeland ready) [...] are OK to me. I can listen to them and I have nothing against these songs. They don’t mean overly anything to me. Well, maybe some spirit of oldness, the breeze of history. As much as it is banal and trivial” (M, 30-40, WV).

Furthermore, when asked about banned Thompson's concert in certain cities and regions in Croatia and abroad, all respondents blamed either politics or the "enemies of Thompson". One group of fans blamed non-patriots, communists, Serbs and other "enemies of Thompson" for these bans. The example of such chauvinistic answer could be found in the interview number one who said: "[w]ell, if I will be honest. I can say, Istria [region of Croatia where his concerts are banned] is predominantly populated by Serbian inhabitants and they don't love anything that has Croatian spirit" (F,>50). The same respondent, and a few others, noted that it is a shame that Thompson's concerts are banned while Ceca, Serbian folk singer and the wife of a late notorious Serbian war criminal, can perform in Croatia. Some interviewees said that these bans are related to the local politics. Thus, the respondent number two pointed out that: "I think that there is lot of politics, calculations. Probably it is related to the many elections that are coming and similar things. Some cities would like to leave the impression of a more urban city. Many people associate Thompson with the backwardness" (F, 20-30).

Thompson's recent stage appearance, for most of the respondents, is spectacular. Some argue that his stage appearance resembles the one of the foreign music stars and interviewee number sixteen, (M,20-30) compared his stage appearance with the one from Iron Maiden. Some respondents were more critical like interviewee number two that said "there is this Za dom Spretni. He is all so militant somehow. Uptight. Like he is basically calling for the next action or some retaliation" (F, 20-30).

Although these interviews's brought up many disparities in attitudes and values among Thompson's audience I detected specific regularities or the similar answers that occurred in most cases. My respondents predominantly do not have strict musical tastes. The majority listen to various kind of music including Thompson. They listen on the radio or in the car but also at parties. In many cases national identity of the audience is not so amplified but they

predominantly lean towards a conservative set of values. Thus, even those interviewees who stated that are not nationalist or even a good patriot mostly agreed about the importance of the family or faith. Some of them, like the interviewee number five, recognized Thompson's poetics as conservative one. He stated that he likes poetics that emphasizes: "land, soil, sun, rock, stone" and concluded that "here I recognize myself and I can identify with that. That is simply nice to me" (M,40-50, WV).



## 4.0. Coda

I believe that official Croatian discourse in the 1990s was highly influenced by Tudjman's idea of "Pan-Croat reconciliation" (Djokic 2003). This merging of World War II fascists and antifascists into one group, Croatian patriots, had far-reaching consequences for all segments of society. The new veil of reconciliation could not cover all the bloody stains from the contested past. This ideological veil was maintained and nurtured through the integrative nationalism. Such nationalism, as Sekulic (2001) defines it, has the power to bleach many bloody stains and flatten many bumps that might occur. Nevertheless, as I do not believe in perfect veil, or the omnipotent structure, blood stains and contested past are always reoccurring. Moreover, after the fascists were, to a certain extent legitimated as patriots in the contemporary Croatia, the contestation was galvanized.

The wicked ideological unity of the antifascists and fascists in contemporary Croatia did not result in obliteration of all demarcation lines. This line, that once divided fascist and antifascist, was drawn between ethnic groups. Thus, Suvar (2004) noted how the new government started the language purification to make greater symbolic void between "them" and the "other" – Serbs. Moreover, in the field of culture and tourist self-presentation, Rivera noticed a strong tendency towards identification with the West and breaking all symbolic ties with the East (2008). The same author argues that recent a Croatian war was not properly institutionalized and thus, I believe, it became a fruitful material for various mythological interpretations.

Post-Tudjman era was marked by the ideological winds of change (Ramet 2006). Ramet argues that all new governments, since then, started condemning war crimes committed by Croats and cooperated with the ICTY. Moreover, she shows, some politicians,

like current (2009) president Mesic, began to emphasize antifascist tradition and strongly denounced Croatian fascist past.

In such a context, the phenomenon of Thompson becomes easily understandable. In this thesis I showed the similarities between Thompson's discourse and the ideology of late president Tudjman. It is obvious that Thompson's ideological cloak was produced in Tudjman's workshop. Thompson's extreme anti-Yugoslav attitude is spiced with the benevolent attitude towards Croatian fascist past. Such fascistic reification can be seen through his singing Ustasha slaughter songs and through the battle call "Za dom spremni" that became an integral part of his song "Cavoglave Battalion". On these ideological foundations Thompson built a "temple" for his homeland and "shrine" for the Catholic Church.

I believe that one could read many, in Ortner's terms (1973), "root metaphors" in Thompson's concert. Such metaphors, as Ortner explains, can be used as an ideological signposts and some apparently neutral strophe could have a strong ideological implications. For example, in the songs Genes of stone, Thompson sings "1945 was bad. It spread us across the world". When such a strophe is placed in the historical context and when the audience knows that in the 1945 fascists were defeated, NDH dismantled and Yugoslavia established, this text becomes a "root metaphor".

Thompson's attitude towards contemporary Croatian ideology, which tries to break off with the fascism and the intolerant, integrative nationalism, could be read through his songs and statements in concert. As noted in the analysis, during his concerts Thompson usually greets Croatian generals accused for the war crimes. Moreover, through his songs he clearly states that he thinks the new government is treacherous and that Croatia nowadays is not the Croatia that he and his comrades were fighting for. Such discourse very often causes nationalistic and sometimes extremely chauvinistic reactions in the audience. It implies that

his “root metaphors” have notorious elements and that they are well understood by his audience.

Through his discourse I noticed a tendency towards hyper-Croativity, or emphasizing the “true” Croatian symbols. Hence, through his songs and stage appearance, Thompson uses symbols that are exclusively related to Croatian nation, such as the national flag, the checkerboard emblem, Croatian soldiers and regions; and the ones related to the Catholic Church, such as the medallion of St. Benedict around his neck. Such “self-representation” of Thompson, as a Croat and Catholic without any relations to other Slavic, and especially Serbian, nation is congruent with the official state discourse in the 1990s (Ramet 2006). Moreover, similar “self-representation” of Croatia, as a country that is completely embedded in the Christian West could be found in the official tourist materials (Rivera 2008).

Unlike the two previously compared layers of analysis, that showed great congruency, the layer of audience is partially disparate, which also confirmed the necessity of reception analysis in this research. Nevertheless, such results were expected and anticipated through the review of Edensor’s book, where he explained how audience can negotiate various meanings of the same symbols (2002). After analyzing interviews I noticed three basic types of audience. Although these groups are partially overlapping and some features, like conservative values, are common to the most of the interviewees I made this distinction for the analytical reasons. One group of the audience uncritically interprets the phenomenon of Thompson and ignores or downplays all controversies. Such audience is, I believe, ideologically very close to the discourse promoted by Thompson. The second group makes a clear distinction in Thompson’s work and condemns the songs that are flirting with fascism or extreme nationalism but embraces the songs that do not have such ideological background. The third group lies in between these two. Interviewees from this group are aware that some

songs could have notorious interpretations but they argue that their interpretation is different or that they emphasize only the music or melody.

To summarize, Thompson's discourse is an echo from the contested past that attracts the audience with an interesting amalgam of global cultural form filled with local disputable ingredients. Such explosive combination enables successful dissemination of the controversial "root metaphors". In that respect, Thompson could be perceived as the weapon of contestation. Nevertheless, I showed that these metaphors could also be ignored or rejected by the audience. However, drawing on the work of De Certeau (1984) and Swidler (1986), I believe in the power asymmetry between the ideology, on the one side, and the audience on the other. Moreover, as I think that Croatia is still, as Swidler puts it, in "unsettled" period, the power of the audience is smaller than the influence of the ideology.

Although the phenomenon of Thompson is deeply embedded in the Croatian context, similar cases can be found across the globe. Moreover, these cases show that old, and almost relinquished, ideas could be easily reified using the more powerful and accessible means of dissemination. Further study, I believe, should focus on the mechanism that engenders such phenomena in various contexts. Hence, a comparative analysis of similar phenomena from different localities would shed a new light on the issue of nationalistic rock and similar popular culture products that have strong nationalistic background.

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# Appendix

The list of questions used in the interviews:

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

1. Gender: female, male, other
2. Age: 10-20, 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, above 50
3. Residence: Less than 10.000 inhabitants, from 10.001 until 70.000 (e.g. Karlovac), from 70.001 until 150.000 (e.g. Pula, Zadar), from 150.001 until 500.000 (e.g. Rijeka, Osijek, Split), more than 500.000 (Zagreb)
4. Education (which school have you finished) : Unfinished elementary school, Finished elementary school, high school, BA, MA, PhD
5. Estimated financial status: Very poor, Lower class, Middle class, Upper-Middle class, High class
6. Religion: atheist/agnostic, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish, Other (name it)
7. Membership in political parties: non-member, member of HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union), member of SDP (Social Democratic Party), member of HSS (Croatian Peasant Party), member of HSP (Croatian Party of Rights), member of other party (name it).

## SET OF OPEN QUESTIONS:

- 1. Could you please describe when you start listening to Thompson and what he means for you?**
- 2. How often do you listen to Thompson?**
- 3. What other kind of music do you like?**
- 4. How do you enjoy his music and when? (e.g. listen on the radio, go to the concerts, etc)**
- 5. What do Thompson's songs mean to you?**
- 6. What do you think about his lyrics?**
- 7. What do you think about his stage appearance?**

- 8.What do you think why is Thompson so popular?**
- 9.Do you find Thompson controversial and why?**
- 10. What do you think about the fascist symbols used by his fans?**
- 11. What do you think why are his concert banned in certain cities and regions?**
- 12.What do you think of Thompson as a person?**
- 13.What are the most important values for you?**
- 14.How would you describe your national identity and is it congruent with Thompson's songs?**
- 15.What are the key elements of your identity?**
- 16.What do you think about the ongoing debate about the Croatian role in the World War II?**
- 17.What is your opinion on the Croatian identity nowadays?**
- 18. What is your opinion on the way how Croatian state deals with the Homeland war?**
- 19.What are the burning issues in Croatia today?**

**List of the interviewees:**

Abbreviations explanation (used in the text): F=female, M=male, e.g. 40-40=age, WV= war veteran.

1. Female, above 50 years old, 10,0001-70,000, BA, middle-class, Roman Catholic, non-member
- 2.Female, 20-30 years old, Zagreb, MA, middle-class, Roman Catholic, non-member
- 3.Female, 20-30 years old, 10,001-70,000, BA, middle-class, Roman Catholic, non-member
- 4.Male, 20-30 years old, 10,001-70,000, high school, upper-middle class, Roman Catholic, non-member
- 5.Male, 40-50 years old, 10,001-70,000, war veteran, BA, middle class, Atheist/Agnostic, non-member
- 6.Female, 20-30 years old, 10,001-70,000, BA, middle-class, Roman Catholic, non-member
- 7.Male, 20-30 years old, 10,001-70,000, high school, very poor, Roman Catholic, non-member
- 8.Male, 30-40 years old, 10,001-70,000, war veteran, high school, middle-class, Roman Catholic, non-member
9. Male, 20-30 years old, 10,001-70,000, high school, middle-class, Roman Catholic, non-member
- 10.Male, 20-30 years old, 10,001-70,000, high school, middle-class, Roman Catholic, non-member
- 11.Male, 20-30 years old, 10,001-70,000, high school, middle-class, Roman Catholic, HDZ
- 12.Male, 20-30 years old, 10,001-70,000, high school, middle-class, Roman Catholic, HSP

- 13.Female, 20-30 years old, Less than 10,000, high school, middle class, Roman Catholic, HSP
- 14.Male, 40-50 years old, 10,001-70,000, war veteran, high school, middle-class, Roman Catholic, non-member
- 15.Male, 20-30 years old, 10,001-70,000, high school, upper-middle class, Roman Catholic, non-member
- 16.Male, 20-30 years old, 10,001-70,000, BA, middle class, Roman Catholic, non-member
- 17.Male, 20-30 years old, 10,001-70,000, BA, middle class, Roman Catholic, non-member