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**Performing Martyrdom: Theatre and Community in the  
Eastern Adriatic Saints' Plays**

**by  
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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of  
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Zagreb, July 2021



## **Declaration**

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theatre Studies. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

## **Abstract**

The thesis examines the genre of saints' plays in the east Adriatic, by looking at its emergence, historical performances in the late medieval and early modern Dalmatia, and contemporary staging in modern Croatia (first as part of the Yugoslav federal republic, and then as an independent country). Focusing on the performances of martyrdom, I argue that this genre tackles an array of socio-political dimensions, including community, class, gender and national identity. The thesis connects different historical contexts, from the middle ages to the contemporary period, tapping into a historical and geographical area of medieval theatre that has so far remained understudied. The first chapter of the thesis critically engages with Croatian theatre historiography, and explains the genesis of the genre through the theory of adaptation. The historical performance of the genre is examined in the second chapter by looking at the two modes through which theatrical performances became socially embedded in the communities of the late medieval and early modern Hvar: representation and transmission. Finally, the third chapter situates the performances in three episodes of recent Croatian history when the restaging of the saints' plays was most frequent, with each of them reflecting a distinct wave of Croatian nationalism. Modern performances are analysed with respect to staging and spatial dimension of the performances, new identity divisions, and affects. All these aspects of co-construction and disintegration help to answer the central question: how the community is being performed through martyrdom.

## INTRODUCTION

### **Three Vignettes from Contemporary Croatia**

i.

April 2016. The surrounding area of Zagreb Cathedral and the city's main square is packed with people. A few-hundred-meter-long queue is formed of people who are waiting patiently: there is an elderly woman, probably in her 80s, with her head covered in a scarf, and leaning on a younger man, very likely her grandson. Next to them, there is a fashionably dressed young couple. They are all surrounded by numerous television reporters and cameras. Suddenly an excitement starts spreading through the mass, as a grey van approaches the cathedral. The van's doors are opened, and a group of men approaches the van to take out a transparent coffin with an embalmed body of an elderly man.

ii.

November 2017. The courtroom of the International Criminal Court in The Hague. The judge is delivering a verdict, one of the last verdicts in the history of this court, and a tall man with grey hair and a large beard is in focus. The moment the judge finishes reading the verdict, the man begins to shout. He brings a little vial to his lips, and quickly drinks its content. The camera switches to the judge who continues to read out the next verdict, despite the noise coming from the courtroom. In a matter of seconds, we hear one of the lawyers informing the judge that the content in the vial was poison. The court curtain is lowered immediately. The man is taken rapidly to hospital, but he dies in less than two hours. This incident, unseen by the judge, is transmitted live for millions of viewers around the world.

iii.

May 2019. Aboard the papal plane somewhere between Bulgaria and North Macedonia, Pope Francis is holding a press conference during his pastoral visit to these countries. A journalist is posing a question concerning the process of canonization of a Croatian cardinal from the communist era. The Pope responds with a question: 'Are you Croatian? I feel odour of Croatia'. The Pope then indicates that the canonization is unlikely, confirming the media speculation that Pope Francis opposes the aims of the Croatian clergy. The news reaches the Croatian media in the afternoon. In the evening, the leading Croatian cardinals and bishops express their discontent and open rebellion against the decision of the Pope. They accuse the Pope

of the mistreatment of the Croatian people, marking a deep gap between the Croatian clergy and the Vatican.

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What holds these three stories together? And who are the people and characters around whom the stories revolve?

The ‘miraculously’ well preserved body from the first vignette belongs to Leopold Mandić, the Catholic saint who lived and worked in the first half of the twentieth century. Mandić was an apostle of confession, of Croatian origin, who spent most of his life in service in Padua. After his death, his confessional was transformed into a place of worship of the faithful and today his relics are kept inside. However, as a part of the celebration of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, an important period for prayer in the Catholic calendar, the relics of Saint Leopold Mandić are sent for worship to the Catholic community in Croatia. The people in the crowd are Croatian believers who came to welcome the relics. During three days of the public exposure, the body is visited by around 200,000 pilgrims, with live coverage on the public Croatian television.

The man with the grey hair and beard from the second vignette is Slobodan Praljak, an ex-general of the Bosnian Croat army, and theatre director by profession. The verdict which the judge is reading confirms his guilt for war crimes during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first part of the 1990s. Before he drinks the poison, he shouts: ‘Judges, Praljak is not a criminal! I reject your verdict!’ Immediately after his death, he is proclaimed a national martyr by the highest political officials, media, and the general public in Croatia. His supporters emphasise that his act represents his final and most important staging, with which he defeated Croatian enemies impersonated in The Hague tribunal.

Finally, the cardinal whose unlikely canonization upset the Croatian Clergy is Alojzije Stepinac, a communist-era cardinal who was prosecuted by the Yugoslav authorities in the 1950s due to his role in World War II. A controversial figure, Stepinac was the leader of the Catholic Church in the Independent State of Croatia, a fascist puppet state of Germany and Italy. While for some Stepinac was collaborating with fascist forces and was responsible for failing to oppose the deportation of Jews,

Serbs, and Roma people, for others he is a national hero of anti-communist resistance and a martyr.

The choice of stories at first seems random. Firstly, there is a priest who spent his quiet mendicant life confessing people in Padua. Secondly, there is a general who committed suicide, after being indicted for war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thirdly, there is a Croatian bishop from World War II with a notable political role in the aftermath of the War. Yet, now explained, the pieces of the puzzle begin to fit together. They are held together by actuality and by the symbolic value of sainthood and martyrdom imagery; they are held together by the mobilization-power of sainthood and martyrdom discourse in daily politics; they are held together by the fact that all of them took place under direct media coverage; and finally, they have been held together by performativity and the theatricality of those events.

In this thesis I examine all these elements through an analysis of the medieval genre depicting the martyrdom of early Christian saints: saints' plays. Given that the topics of martyrdom and sainthood are central to the genre, as well as the fact that this genre has been for centuries well embedded in Croatian culture, saints' plays are an appropriate choice through which to study these topics. In doing so I follow the understanding of theatre as a 'simulacrum of the cultural and historical process', as proposed by Marvin Carlson.<sup>1</sup> In this understanding, theatre provides society 'with the most tangible records of its attempts to understand its own operations'.<sup>2</sup> Theatre is thus regarded not as isolated from reality but as its reflection.

My research contributes to scholarship in several important ways. Firstly, it examines the topic of martyrdom through the theatrical medium and the influence of martyrdom on historical and contemporary society. My analysis of saints' plays is grounded in historical research and informed by contemporary social and political conditions of the performances, while the analysis traces the implications of theatrical performances on broader social structures. Secondly, the thesis represents a theoretical contribution as it helps develop theatrical theory of reception. It contributes to research into spectatorship by working on a cognitive-affective approach to performance analysis. Thirdly, I contribute to the research on transnational history and area studies,

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<sup>1</sup> Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: the Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Carlson, *The Haunted Stage*, p. 2.

as the thesis represents the most complete account in English of the religious early modern theatre from the east Adriatic.

### **Martyrdom and Performance: Spectacle, Conflict, and Narrative**

Martyrdom and sainthood occupy an important place in contemporary social and political imagery in Croatia. Above I have listed three vignettes which reflect the sacralisation of the public sphere, though I could have listed many others: Croatian soldiers who died in the War for Independence from the early 1990s are proclaimed in public discourse by the people of Croatia and by the state officials not only as heroes, but martyrs;<sup>3</sup> the statues to the war victims are not mere monuments, but shrines – the sites of mass atrocities from the twentieth-century wars are turned into place of pilgrimage.<sup>4</sup> The Croatian political landscape seems to be overwhelmed with profane use of sacral elements, while organised religiosity plays an important role in political mobilization.

The saturation of the ‘secular public sphere’ with religious elements is well known outside Croatian borders,<sup>5</sup> in the part of Europe which is sometimes labelled ‘New Europe’. Katherine Verdery in her book *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies* analyses records of numerous exhumations and reburials of famous and infamous corpses in Eastern Europe, and their symbolical impact on political life in their respective nations.<sup>6</sup> The examples which Verdery included in her research range from the case of Imre Nagy, Hungary’s communist prime minister at the time of the 1956

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<sup>3</sup> See for instance ‘Jean Michel Nicolier – simbol hrabrosti i mučeništva Vukovara’ [Jean Michel Nicolier – the Symbol of Bravery in Martyrdom of Vukovar] <<https://braniteljski.hr/jean-michel-nicolier-simbol-hrabrosti-i-mucenistva-vukovara/>> [accessed 27 October 2019].

<sup>4</sup> See for instance ‘Vijenci i spomenik za žrtve Domovinskog rata u Voćinu’ [Wreaths and memorial for victims of the war in Voćin] <https://www.pszupanija.hr/arhiva-novosti/60-ured-upana/novosti/504-vojn-sp-1942504456.html> [accessed 27 October 2019]. One such example is the memorial park of Croatian martyrs. <https://chm-udbina.com.hr/index.php/spomen-park> [accessed 27 October 2019]- ‘Biskup Bogović predvodio jubilarno spomen-slavlje kod Husine jame’ [Bishop Bogović Led Memoria Mass near Huso’s Cave] <<https://ika.hkm.hr/novosti/biskup-bogovic-predvodio-jubilarno-spomen-slavlje-kod-husine-jame/>> [accessed 23 October 2019].

<sup>5</sup> Milija Gluhovic and Jisha Menon, *Performing the Secular Religion, Representation, and Politics* (London: Palgrave, 2017), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

revolution, who was hanged for his attempt to reform the state, and whose reburial in 1989 included martyr imagery; to mass excavation and reburial of anonymous World War II victims on the territory of Yugoslavia successor states.

Verdery notes that dead bodies in this region are unusually effective in politics.<sup>7</sup> Due to histories being lodged in those symbols, their reassessment provides ‘resources for creating meaning and legitimacy in moments of political contention.’<sup>8</sup> The empathic identification of those who have suffered for the faith, for the nation, for the cause, in the post-socialist context allows new states to reconnect with the pre-Communist past, to rewrite parts of their history, and to create a notion of a new identity. Verdery argues,

[d]ead people come with a curriculum vitae or résumé – several possible résumés, depending on which aspect of their life is being considered. They lend themselves to analogy with *other people’s* résumés. That is, they encourage identification with their life story, from several possible vantage points.<sup>9</sup>

She demonstrates that, rather than heroes, those were the martyrs with whom the people could identify.

Karin Hyldal Christensen analyses sainthood and martyrdom in Eastern Europe by explaining artistic representation of martyrdom in her book, *The Making of the New Martyrs of Russia: Soviet Repression in Orthodox Memory*. A starting point of Christensen’s research is the fact that, in period from the fall of Soviet Union until the early 2000s, the number of canonized martyrs in Russia has grown from 300 to 2,000. She analyses three processes crucial to the creation of this phenomenon: canonization, iconization and veneration and how those processes were displayed in visual and textual representations including icons, hagiographies, and hymns. Christensen’s study reveals two important aspects related to the process of canonization and veneration of martyrs. Firstly, she highlights the creative processes as the essential part of the establishment of new martyrs. She does so by demonstrating how various depictions of new saints affect the creation of narrative about the Soviet past, or more precisely how it leads to its erasure.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, she exemplifies how, despite the fact that the narrative of martyrdom is fixed, the role of victim and

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<sup>7</sup> Verdery, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Verdery, p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> Verdery, pp. 28-29.

<sup>10</sup> See Karin Hyldal Christensen, *Making of the New Martyrs of Russia: Soviet Re-repression in Orthodox Memory* (London: Routledge, 2017).

perpetuator changes according to different memory regimes related to the different political context.

The omnipresence of religious symbols in profane contexts of Eastern Europe can be striking due to the post-socialist wave of re-traditionalisation and the central role of organised religion in this region. However, in the last two decades, researchers worldwide have rediscovered the topic of martyrdom, sometimes due to tragic circumstances.<sup>11</sup> The 9/11 terroristic attacks certainly marks a watershed in this sense, as, since then, it has become increasingly important ‘to distinguish between “true” and “false” manifestations of martyrdom’.<sup>12</sup> Academics of various backgrounds have written numerous pages about martyrdom, including contributions from political and international relations studies, as well as from history, religious studies, anthropology, psychology, and sociology. In most part, those studies have sought to explain the motivation for martyrdom,<sup>13</sup> as well as to answer the question of how martyrdom promotes the interests and values of communities in the name of which it was done.<sup>14</sup> In many cases, researchers included this comparative approach, with the examples ranging from the early Christian martyrs to Islamic martyrs, Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka to Japanese kamikaze of World War II, as well as the Afghan female martyrs.<sup>15</sup>

Paul Middleton, the author of several books on martyrdom from a religious studies perspective, argues that martyrdom has always been a contested term and

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<sup>11</sup> Cora Dietl, ‘“Martyrs’ Plays in the Context of Inter-Confessional Debates in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century’, *ROMARD: Research on Medieval and Renaissance Drama*, 51 (2012), 9-16 (9).

<sup>12</sup> Paul Middleton, ‘What is Martyrdom?’, *Mortality*, 19 (2014), 117-33 (117).

<sup>13</sup> See for instance *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, ed. by Diego Gambetta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Christopher Y. Olivola and Eldar Shafir, ‘The Martyrdom Effect: When Pain and Effort Increase Prosocial Contributions’, *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 26 (2013), 91–105.

<sup>14</sup> Some works which contribute to this stream of research of martyrdom are: Michaela DeSoucey and others ‘Memory and Sacrifice: an Embodied Theory of Martyrdom’, *Cultural Sociology*, 2 (2008), 99–121, Philippe Buc, *Holy War, Martyrdom, and Terror: Christianity, Violence, and the West* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> For a comparative approach see Mario Ferrero, ‘Martyrdom Contracts’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50 (2006), 855–77 and Paul Middleton, *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011). For various specific examples see Michael P. Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity. The Self on Trial* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), Julie Billaud, *Kabul Carnival Gender Politics in Postwar Afghanistan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).



difficult to define.<sup>16</sup> The word martyr comes from the Greek word *martus*, to witness. Martyrs were those who witnessed the deeds of Christ and who could confirm them on trial. With time, the word gained the additional meaning of dying for faith.<sup>17</sup> As argued by Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn ‘it was easy to conflate the concept of a witness with the concept of one who had died, or risked death, because of his or her faith’.<sup>18</sup> Even though primarily associated with the suffering which resulted with death, already in the second century martyrdom came to be associated ‘not merely with death but also with suffering, and not only suffering during dying but also during living’.<sup>19</sup> Eventually martyrdom stopped being exclusively associated with those who suffered for faith, and started being associated with those who suffered for other social causes, as in the case of secular martyrs,<sup>20</sup> while, as Middleton points out ‘contemporary usage can incorporate those who suffer minor inconvenience’.<sup>21</sup> How then to define martyrdom? In this thesis, I will use the definition of Rona Fields, according to whom ‘martyrdom is attributed to those who sacrifice themselves or have been victims for a cause’.<sup>22</sup> However, this definition needs to be supplemented with three terms which are often used in relation to martyrdom: spectacle, conflict, and narrative.

Primarily, martyrdom is *spectacle*, a ‘martyr’s death must attract public attention’.<sup>23</sup> There is not a private martyrdom.<sup>24</sup> For instance, while the martyr status of those who committed suicide in the context of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 can be disputed, the spectacularity of their deed cannot be denied. According to Middleton, the use of airplanes was ‘as spectacular as it was deadly’.<sup>25</sup> If we think more into the

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<sup>16</sup> Paul Middleton, ‘Martyrdom’, in *The Routledge Companion to Death And Dying*, ed. by Christopher M. Moreman (London: Routledge: 2017), pp. 477-89 (p. 477).

<sup>17</sup> Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn, ‘A Divine Discontent with Wrong: The People’s Martyrology’, in *Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland. From Peterloo to the Present*, ed. by Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn (Cham: Palgrave, 2018), pp. 1-30 (p. 3). Middleton, ‘Martyrdom’, p. 481.

<sup>18</sup> Outram and Laybourn, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> See *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>21</sup> Middleton, ‘Martyrdom’, p. 477.

<sup>22</sup> Rona M. Fields, ‘Introduction’, in *Martyrdom. The Psychology, Theology, and Politics of Self-Sacrifice*, ed. by Rona M. Fields (Westport, London: Praeger, 2004), p. xvii-xxiv (p. xvii).

<sup>23</sup> Michaela DeSoucey and others, p. 2008.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>25</sup> Middleton, *Martyrdom. A Guide for Perplexed*, p.1.

past and the origins of early Christian martyrdom, it can be seen that martyrdom represented a public spectacle for both Roman and Christians.<sup>26</sup> On the one hand, prosecuting and executing Christians publicly in arenas, represented a means of fostering the social, moral, and religious order of the empire for Romans.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, Christians were aware of the positive impact their deaths could have on spectators. This is first recorded in the Martyrdom of Polycarp, where the martyrs maintain miraculous tranquillity for the purpose of impressing the crowd.<sup>28</sup> Displaying a ‘good show’, an attractive death, and at the same time preserving tranquillity to prove their firm faith, was a key for Christians’ ‘public testimony to the unbelievers’.<sup>29</sup>

When Fields discusses martyrdom, she contrasts it to the suffering that is nondramatic.<sup>30</sup> What assures the dramatic feature of suffering is the *conflict* from which the suffering emerges. It is important to note the way Middleton describes conflict in early Christian martyrdom is note worthy: ‘In the first instance, participants saw themselves as being engaged in a cosmic conflict between the forces of Satan and those of God, in whose cause they interpreted their own deaths’.<sup>31</sup> For the early Christians martyrs,

drama of death was not merely played out on the stage of Roman theatres, or in courtrooms, or before the governors and kings; for the early Christians who endure persecution and death, the stage was cosmic in its scope. In the eschatological battle between God and the legions of evil, disciples of Christ were principal players, foot-soldiers who could affect the outcome by their early actions.<sup>32</sup>

According to Middleton this ‘radical dualism’ was key in encouraging early Christians into ‘radical martyrdom’.<sup>33</sup>

The third aspect refers to the importance of *narrative* in the martyr-making process. Martyrdom ‘reinforces a group’s particular view of the world – whether religious, political or national’.<sup>34</sup> In order for a death to be affirmed as martyrdom,

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity* (New York, London: t&t clar, 2006), pp. 56-70.

<sup>27</sup> Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, p. 70.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 72.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> Fields, p. xxi.

<sup>31</sup> Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, p. 136.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 134.

<sup>33</sup> Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, p. 134

<sup>34</sup> Middleton, ‘What is Martyrdom?’, p. 118.

the community needs to create a narrative which will fit the community's image of reality and its needs. Once a narrative is created, it needs to be successfully disseminated through community. Outram and Laybourn argue that in order to assure a successful dissemination both the message (narrative), and the media through which the message is disseminated need 'to have certain rhetorical characteristics: performance, spectacle, an appeal to the emotions perhaps mediated by oral, musical or graphical accounts rather than the merely inscribed, written or printed; perhaps making use of the devices of dirge, ballad and song rather than those of prose alone'.<sup>35</sup>

What is the link between the above-listed features of martyrdom and saints' plays? The link with the first aspect, *spectacle*, seems obvious, since for saints' plays, as a dramatic genre, the presence of the audience is essential just as it is an essential feature of any spectacle. At the same time, as Jody Enders puts it: '[m]urder, torture, and violence, it seems, have perpetually functioned as theatre'.<sup>36</sup> I argue that this correlation has created a suitable topic for theatrical thematization. From the perspective of the medium which transmits the message of martyrdom, I argue theatre is the most powerful and effective because it engages with the recipients in a corporeal way. Theatre allows for members of the audience to project themselves into the emotional life of the characters on stage.<sup>37</sup> The experience of seeing a performance is a full bodily experience which involves all the senses, and consequently creates memory of martyrdom conflict more effectively than the other media. The identification of the members of the audience with the content of the plays is further facilitated thanks to the aspect of radical dualism which is incorporated in the genre through presentation of *conflict*. At the same time, radical dualism inherent to martyrdom is important for establishing the dialogue between the theatrical performance and the social and political context. Finally, through *narrative* messages and ideas relevant to the community in which the play is performed are transmitted.

The next section offers a discussion of the terminology and the background to the argument of my thesis.

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<sup>35</sup> Outram and Laybourn, p. 20.

<sup>36</sup> Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 48.

<sup>37</sup> See Bruce A. McConachie, *Engaging Audiences. A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 67.

## Saints' Plays in European and Croatian Theatre Historiography

### Terminology

In this research, I examine the eastern Adriatic plays that depict the lives, miracles, and martyrdoms of saints. There are several terms which can be applied to this genre: saints' plays, hagiographic drama (the first two terms are synonyms), miracle plays, martyrs' plays, martyrdom plays. The question which rises is which one of these is most appropriate for the corpus of plays explored in my research? English historiography distinguishes between all of the above mentioned concepts.<sup>38</sup> The term 'martyrdom plays' denotes a narrower meaning than 'saints' plays' because it only includes the plays about martyred saints, whereas miracle plays denotes a broader meaning given that it includes the plays about miracles in general, including biblical and nonbiblical content, and Marian miracles. However, the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.<sup>39</sup> Spanish historiography recognizes the terms *autohisorias* and *comedias de santos*,<sup>40</sup> while French historiography recognizes *miracles* and *mystères*. Italian historiography is specific for using only one term that covers the plays about the life, miracles, and martyrdom of saints – the *sacre rappresentazioni*. This term is also a general term which denotes the whole medieval dramatic production. Finally, Croatian historiography distinguishes between two terms: the term *mirakuli* which covers all the plays which stage miracles, including the plays about saints, and the term *prikazanja*, which correlates with Italian *sacre rappresentazioni*. *Prikazanja* is a direct translation of *rappresentazioni*, and it signifies complete medieval theatrical production, including the plays written in the early modern period following the conventions of medieval genres. This similarity is related to the influence of Italian drama on Croatian drama.

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<sup>38</sup> See Darryll Grantley, 'Saints and miracles', in Richard Beadle and Alan J. Fletcher eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), pp. 263-86, Catherine Sanok, 'Performing Feminine Sanctity in Late Medieval England: Parish Guilds, Saints' Plays, and the Second Nun's Tale', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32.2 (2002), 269-303, Theresa Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints Theater, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press: 2004).

<sup>39</sup> See for instance Lynette Muir, *Love and Conflict in Medieval Drama: The Plays and Their Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2007).

<sup>40</sup> See Henry K. Ziomek, *A History of Spanish Golden Age Drama* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), p. 10. See also Christopher D. Gascón, *The Woman Saint in Spanish Golden Age Drama* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2006).

When it comes to English terminology, the term miracle plays is adequate in the sense that the plays depict miracles performed by saints. Nevertheless, the term is not precise because miracles do not dominate the plays. The terms ‘martyrs’ plays’ and ‘martyrdom plays’ could seem as fairly adequate because a large majority of protagonists are martyrs and martyrdom as a topic represents an important aspect of the analysis. However, the term is restrictive in a sense that not all the saints from the corpus can be defined as martyrs. Therefore, in my research I will use the term saints’ plays, which is least restrictive and includes all aspects of sainthood relevant for my analysis. The term appears in historiography in singular and plural form. For instance, Clifford Davidson, the editor of the first monograph which attempts to study the saints’ plays of Europe, uses the singular form.<sup>41</sup> However, I choose the plural form, as several plays from the corpus which I study have more than one saint as the protagonist.

Additional terminological confusion stems from the understanding of the Protestant Reformation and Counter Reformation as watersheds in defining the genres. For instance, in Croatian historiography the *mirakuli* are only the plays which were written before the Counter Reformation, which is temporally closely related to the Trident council which took place from 1545 to 1564. Likewise, German historiography tends to see saints’ plays as a Catholic genre, therefore excluding a large part of the corpus which emerged in the context of German Protestantism. According to Dietl, this was the case because their existence contradicted ‘the traditional view that there was a clear brake in theatre history when medieval religious plays were abolished’.<sup>42</sup> However, the most recent trends in theatre history seek to overcome the trends in early modern drama history which neglect texts that stand ‘against a teleological narrative’.<sup>43</sup> Dietl’s project on German saints’ plays is an

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<sup>41</sup> Clifford Davidson, ‘The Middle English Saint Play and its Iconography’, in Clifford Davidson ed., *The Saint Play in Medieval Europe* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University 1986).

<sup>42</sup> Dietl, p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Andrzej Dabrówka argues for this approach in studies of east European drama in ‘The Middle Ages after the Middle Ages’, in *Színházvilág – Világszínház*, ed. by K. Czibula (Budapest: Ráció Kiadó, 2008), pp. 23-37. For other examples of studies which transgress the temporal distinction see D. Gascón, *The Woman Saint in Spanish Golden Age Drama*, explanation on p. 203. The approach is also applied in Nadia Thérèse van Pelt’s recent book *Drama in Medieval and Early Modern Europe Playmakers and their Strategies* (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2019).

example of such practice, where the genres are hence not strictly divided by the artistic period. In my research I will follow this path by examining together the plays which emerged before and after the Counter Reformation, and the Trident council (1545-1564).

### **Critical Enquiry of Saints in Plays and the Absence of It**

Spectacular performances of saints' play were most popular in medieval France.<sup>44</sup> They were also widely performed in Southern Europe (Spain and Italy) and to the lesser extent in Northern and Central Europe (England, Germany, Switzerland).<sup>45</sup> As a popular European genre, the saints' plays have raised significant interest in theatre historiography. This can be grouped in three different research streams. The first research stream covers the works of theatre historians who have examined the saints' plays through textual analysis, and in the context of art and iconography.<sup>46</sup> One of the most important studies which incorporates this approach is the collection of essays on European saints' plays edited by Davidson. This pioneering study on European saints' plays<sup>47</sup> is dominated by two essays – the analysis of themes and motives in the French saints' plays by Muir,<sup>48</sup> and a study of English saints' plays from the iconography

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<sup>44</sup> See Lynete Muir, 'Saint play in Medieval France' in *The Saint Play in Medieval Europe*, pp. 123-81, Vicky L. Hamblin, *Saints at Play: The Performance Features of French Hagiographic Mystery Plays* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2012), Grantley, 'Saints and Miracles', pp. 265-66, Clifford Davidson, 'British Saint Play Records: Coping with Ambiguity', *Early Theatre*, 2 (1999), 97-106, p. 97.

<sup>45</sup> See Ziomek, *A History of Spanish Golden Age Drama*, pp. 6-35, Ronald E. Surtz, 'Spain: Catalan and Castilian drama' in *The Theatre of Medieval Europe*, ed. by Eckehard Simon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 189-206 (p. 194), Sandro Sticca, 'Italy: liturgy and christocentric spirituality' in *The Theatre of Medieval Europe*, ed. by Eckehard Simon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 169-88 (pp. 181-82). Grantley, 'Saints and Miracles', pp. 265-66, Davidson, 'British Saint Play Records', Hansjürgen Linke, 'Germany and German-speaking central Europe', ed. and trans. by Eckehard Simon, in *The Theatre of Medieval Europe*, ed. by Eckehard Simon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 207-24 (p. 209), Dietl, 'Martyrs' Plays in the Context of Inter-Confessional Debates'.

<sup>46</sup> Muir, 'Saint play in Medieval France', 'Saints and Miracles', David Lyle Jeffrey, 'English Saints' Plays' in *Medieval Drama*, ed. by Neville Denny (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), pp. 69-89, Davidson, 'The Middle English Saint Play and its Iconography', in *The Saint Play in Medieval Europe*, pp. 31-122.

<sup>47</sup> *The Saint Play in Medieval Europe*.

<sup>48</sup> Muir, 'Saint play in Medieval France', pp. 126-27.

perspective by Davidson. More recently, Davidson published a study with the thematic focus of violence of saints' plays. Here Davidson studies the representation of violence in saints' plays, which according to him, was cultic and religious.<sup>49</sup>

The second field of research is closely related to the establishment of the *Records of Early English Drama* (REED) project after which more attention has been given to their performative aspect and to the attempts of reconstructing the broader context of their historical performances.<sup>50</sup> One of the most recent studies which comprises this approach includes Vicky L. Hamblin's study of the French corpus of the plays, *The Saints' Plays, Saints at Play: The Performative Features of French Hagiographic Mystery Plays*.<sup>51</sup> Hamblin provided in-depth analysis of French corpus of saints' plays, emphasizing the links of theatrical production, in particular, the cultural local setting in which they appeared. An important contribution of her work is an exhaustive scrutiny of the performance aspect reconstructed from various available sources, providing a set of tools for the imagination of performance.

The studies focused on reconstruction of performance provided a groundwork for research into spectatorship, the third research stream. An important contribution to our understanding of the reception of saints' plays' performance in historical communities came from Chester Norman Scoville's study *Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama*.<sup>52</sup> Scoville examines rhetorical strategies employed in the encouragement of complex sets of responses (and roles) from audiences. In doing

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<sup>49</sup> Clifford Davidson, 'Violence and the Saint Play', *Studies in Philology*, 108 (2001), 292–314.

<sup>50</sup> A selected and not exhaustive list of works include: Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), Grantley, 'Saints and miracles', Sanok, 'Performing Feminine Sanctity in Late Medieval England', Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints Theater, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval England*, Nerida Newbigin, *Printing and Publishing, 1485-1500: Florentine sacre rappresentazioni* *La Bibliofilia*, 90 (1988), 269-96, Nerida Newbigin, 'Agata, Apollonia and Other Martyred Virgins: Did Florentines Really See These Plays performed?', *European Medieval Drama*, 1 (1997), 77-100, Heather Hill-Vásquez, *Sacred Players: The Politics of Response In the Middle English Religious Drama* (Catholic University of America Press, 2007), Edward J. Gallagher, 'Lessons From A Fifteenth-Century Hagiographic Cycle: the Case of the Martyrs' Plays', from *Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève Ms 1131, Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 106 (2005), pp. 35-47.

<sup>51</sup> Hamblin, *Saints at Play*.

<sup>52</sup> Chester Norman Scoville, *Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 4.

so he constructs the image of implicit spectators acknowledging different conceptual frameworks which the audience bring to the performance.<sup>53</sup> Even though the primary focus of the book is on the examination of rhetorical theory used to characterize saints, Scoville manages to establish the contention between the texts of the plays and the knowledge of the audience. In particular, this pertains to the knowledge of the familiar rites of the time. The action on stage is then analysed with respect to the rituals familiar to the audience. The scope thereby mainly remains on the intention prescribed in the texts and less on the spectators' experience. Despite providing a deep scriptural and popular context of performance based on variety of evidence from the REED project, as well as despite the fact that the study is grounded on the author's own practical experience, the author limits the audience perspective to the intentional and prescribed in the text, whereas the spectators' experience is left out.

The spectators' experience is captured significantly by Marla Carlson in her study of historical and contemporary reception of pain entitled *Performing Bodies in Pain: Medieval and Post-Modern Martyrs, Mystics, and Artists*.<sup>54</sup> Carlson regards the saints' plays as a part of the broader map of public representation of physical suffering. Carlson's study contributes to our knowledge on reception of the saints' plays in two important ways. Firstly, she analyses somatic response to the suffering and points to the possible individual or collective responsive engagements which the performances might have triggered. The other important contribution comes from the cross-historical nature of her work, given that she examines the same phenomena in historical and contemporary performance perspectives, pointing out the similarities and differences in reception of representations of pain on stage.

My research represents a contribution to the research on saints' plays in several important ways. Firstly, the studies do not always consider the saints' plays as a distinctive subgenre of medieval drama.<sup>55</sup> As I have pointed out in the previous section, my research deals entirely with the saints' plays, and considers them as a distinctive subgenre. Secondly, all of these studies, with the exception of Marla

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<sup>53</sup> Scoville, p. 59

<sup>54</sup> Marla Carlson, *Performing Bodies in Pain Medieval and Post-Modern Martyrs, Mystics, and Artists* (New York, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

<sup>55</sup> Which is in line with the observation of Muir who pointed out that the saints' plays have been 'lumped in together with biblical plays' and studied in the context of the religious theatre in opposition to the other group of plays belonging to the secular medieval theatre. 'Saint play in Medieval France', p. 126.



Carlson's work, are exclusively focused on historical performances. In my thesis I follow Marla Carlson's path and I conduct cross-historical research, with the difference that I analyse the same genre in a historical and contemporary perspective. Thirdly, most discussed studies concern the early performances of saints' plays in France and England, and to a lesser extent the performances from Southern Europe. I study the corpus of Croatian early modern performance. In contrast to the Passion plays (the other main medieval dramatic genre from the eastern Adriatic coast), which have been explored to a larger extent,<sup>56</sup> the saints' plays remain a blind spot of Croatian historiography. The reason for earlier exclusion of the Croatian saints' plays from studies is related to their belated historical recurrence and, therefore, a chronologically hybrid position, which seems to have confused historians so much that they have simply left them out of their analyses.<sup>57</sup> My research will address this geographic gap in knowledge.

I will do this in three chapters each encompassing one perspective on east Adriatic saints plays. The next section offers an overview of the questions and theories which I will apply.

### **Thesis overview: Questions and Theoretical Approaches**

In this study I follow a complex research design entailing transnational comparisons, a plurality of theoretical sources, and a long-time span of used historical sources. However, the theme which holds these elements together pertains to the main research

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<sup>56</sup> This concerns primarily textual and philological aspects which were studied in Franjo Fancev, 'Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja' [Croatian Church Plays], *Narodne starine*, 11 (1932), 1-28, Nikica Kolumbić 'Postanak i razvoj hrvatske srednjovjekovne pasionske poezije i drame' ['The origin and development of Croatian medieval Passion poetry and drama'] (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Zadar, 1964), *Pasije* [The Passion Plays] ed. by Nikola Batušić and Amir Kapetanović (Zagreb: Udruga Pasionaska baština, 1998), while performative and social aspects have, with some exceptions, mostly been neglected.

<sup>57</sup> The research conducted on the saints' plays revolves mostly around the basic content analyses in studies such as Juraj Roić, 'Starohrvatska crkvena prikazanja' ['Ancient Croatian Religious Drama'] *Nastavni vjesnik*, XXIII (1915), vol. 1, 1-8; vol. 2, 81-97; vol. 3, 161-81, as well as in the work of Matija Valjavec the editor of the first (and only) publication of the corpus in Matija Valjavec, 'Uvod' ['Introduction'], in *Crkvena prikazanja starohrvatska XVI. i XVII. Vijeka*, ed. by Matija Valjavec (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademijska znanosti i umjetnosti, 1893), pp. V-XI.

question the thesis aims to explore: how the performance of martyrdom contributes to the co-construction – or disintegration – of the community? In other words, I examine how the community is being performed through martyrdom.

The first chapter of the thesis examines the genesis of the genre in the eastern Adriatic. I will first describe the corpus of the saints' plays from the east Adriatic, with a special focus on the issues of origin and authorship. On the grounds of that examination, I will propose that the genre of saints' plays in Dalmatia did not emerge as a mere translation of plays written in Italian (as it was believed by Croatian historians and historiographers), but as a product of adaptation. I will study the Dalmatian corpus in comparison with the plays written in Italian to demonstrate that the process of transfer of the plays from one coast to the other fits into the model of adaptation by Linda Hutcheon.<sup>58</sup> According to Hutcheon, adaptation can be analysed through three key moments: the adjustment of the source texts to the new context, transposition of form and motivation, and audience's modes of engagement.<sup>59</sup> I will apply Hutcheon's analytical model to the comparative analysis of the east Adriatic plays with the source plays written in Italian.

In the second chapter, I will attempt to explain the cause of the popularity and longevity of the genre by examining the case of the historical performances on the island of Hvar, the island with the longest tradition of performance of the genre in the east Adriatic. I will propose that the popularity of the genre can be explained through the two modes by which the theatrical performances became socially embedded: the mode of representation and the mode of transmission. In the first case study analysis, I follow the scholarly tradition of scholars such as Sarah Beckwith, Katie Normington, and Claire Sponsler,<sup>60</sup> who tried to break away from the harmonizing tendencies in explaining the relationship of the early performances and social cohesion, showing that medieval drama promoted the values of more the influential social groups

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<sup>58</sup> As elaborated in, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*.

<sup>60</sup> Katie Normington, 'Drama and the City: City Parades', ed by Philip Butterworth and Katie Normington, *European Theatre Performance Practice 1400-1580 - Critical Essays on European Theatre Performance Practice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 213-33; Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God. Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christ Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Claire Sponsler, 'The Culture of the Spectator: Conformity and Resistance to Medieval Performances', *Theatre Journal*, 1 (1992), 15-29; *Drama and Resistance* (Minnesota University Press, 1997).

(Church, nobility, men). In my analysis, I identify dominant groups whose interests were represented through the performance of the saints' plays. However, I will also demonstrate that the saints' plays represented and promoted values of different social groups including the oppressed ones, the commoners. The second case-study analysis concerns three saints' plays all containing female virgin saints as protagonists. Building on the work of Kathleen Ashley and Robert L.A. Clark, who rewrote the definition of conduct literature,<sup>61</sup> I will propose that saints' plays can be studied as conduct literature. Following the work of art historian Robert Mills on representational practice of medieval pain and punishment in the context of premodern gender and sexuality, I will also point out the possibility of a subversive reception of the plays among the female members of the audience. I will suggest that the performances of the saints' plays can be interpreted as a medium which allowed female viewers to construct positive narratives of embodiment and agency.<sup>62</sup>

The analysis of these two functions will be informed with insights from research in cognitive science, in particular from 'conceptual blending theory'<sup>63</sup> and the concept of 'performance literacy'.<sup>64</sup> I will study how common imagery which emerged on the island during social riots was integrated in performances of the saints' plays. I will also point to the different ways in which this imagery could have been manipulated through performance. Following the 'spectatorial turn' in early theatre studies in this part I will pay special attention to representing the heterogeneous structure of the audience.<sup>65</sup> I am pointing out that spectators had different experience of the plays depending on the spatial organization of the performance (the open public sphere/and closed convent space); class and gender background.

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<sup>61</sup> *Medieval Conduct*, ed. by Kathleen Ashley and Robert L.A. Clark (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

<sup>62</sup> Following Robert Mills's work on pre-modern gender and sexuality, Robert S. Sturges, *The Circulation of Power in Medieval Biblical Drama: Theaters of Authority* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>63</sup> The concept coined by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way we Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

<sup>64</sup> Jill Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture: Sensual Piety in Late Medieval York* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp-9-10, 41.

<sup>65</sup> As proposed by John J. McGavin and Greg Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship: From the Mysteries to the Shakespearean Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). p. 20.

The third chapter will focus on the revival of saints' plays in the context of the contemporary history of Croatia. The analysis will include the examination of performances in three different phases: the turbulent period of the late 1960s and early 1970s, marked by two social movements, the student protests from 1968 and the 'Croatian Spring' of 1971; the breakup of the Yugoslav state, Croatian acquisition of national sovereignty, and the beginning of the ethnic war in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s; and the most recent trend from 2016 of the neo-conservative backlash, rising right-wing populism across Europe, and re-traditionalization. My analysis will demonstrate how the performances of sainthood and martyrdom made the genre socially and political relevant in the context of performance of national identity, whereby national identity will be considered as 'creatively produced or staged', as proposed by Jen Harvie.<sup>66</sup>

The analysis in the third chapter will combine two approaches relevant for the research of performance and national identity. Firstly, this will include a representational approach engaged in studying how the nation is represented through aesthetics and symbols. I will argue that the symbolic stake of catholic heritage, pointed against atheism and secularity of the communist regime, as well as against Serbian Orthodox tradition, and the idea of multiculturalism, can be identified as crucial for the ideological embracement of saints' plays. I will explain how this symbolic heritage was represented in three different phases and through the different staging poetics. Secondly, following the work of Erin Hurley on performance and affects I will analyse the role of affects in performances of saints' plays in contemporary contexts. In my approach different types of affects will be identified as important in establishing the connection with a sense of national belonging. In doing so I will follow the logic of the 'cultural politics of emotion', a framework developed by Sara Ahmed with the aim of explaining the role of emotions in political life.<sup>67</sup>

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To sum up, I will list the characteristics which make the backbone of my research.

First, the theoretical approaches which are pursued in respective chapters (theory of adaptation, conceptual blending theory, study of affects) all share the focus

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<sup>66</sup> Jen Harvie, *Staging the UK* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

<sup>67</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

on audience. My research will seek to examine how *the audience* left an impact on the creation of the new texts (adaptation), how *the audience* established the connection between the saints' plays and their social reality (cognition), and how *the audience* used the plays to articulate their identity and sense of belonging (affection). The focus on reception is not accidental: earlier in the introduction, we have seen that martyrdom is *spectacle*; aimed at attracting public attention by depicting conflict; and reinforcing a group's particular view of the world through *narrative*.

Second, by looking at different historical periods, I pursue a cross-historical approach. By bringing together the modern and early modern performances of saints' plays, I will be able to speculate about the relation of the local and the national, or, in other words, about the nature of community. While in the first and the second chapter I will look at the early modern context, in the third chapter the performance of martyrdom is examined in the frame of the modern nation-state. Nevertheless, in both cases the analysis will illustrate similar patterns of inclusion and exclusion and of outlining 'in and out' boundaries, across horizontal (e.g. east/west) and vertical (higher/lower status) boundaries. Despite working with such distant contexts (at least, in the temporal sense), I will show that performing martyrdom through saints' plays has contained an unusually powerful potential to act as a mechanism of mobilization and social division.

Third, to achieve these aims, theatre and performance will need to be observed as deeply embedded in broader social and political structures of community. Even though this will be more explicit in the third chapter, where I will analyse how the saints' plays were co-opted for the purpose of constructing Croatian national identity and shared cultural values on which nationhood is based,<sup>68</sup> the earlier chapters will demonstrate that the same genre was already framed politically in the context of early modern communities. Whether this will revolve around social conflicts in early modern communities, or its entanglement with language and religion in the contemporary processes, the analysis across different parts of my thesis will therefore be substantially linked to the politicization of theatre.

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<sup>68</sup> Anton Krueger, "It's Just Changed Color". Clowning With Parodies of Religion, Race and Nation in *Woza Albert!* and *Woza Andries?*, in *Theatre and National Identity. Re-imagining Concepts of Nation*, ed. by Nadine Holdsworth (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 2-22 (p. 34).

## Sources and Methodology

My research is built on a variety of sources, including literary sources, archival material, visual records, and interview data. The literary sources include the corpus of Croatian saints' plays written in the period from the sixteenth century to the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>69</sup> With the aim of exploring the genesis of the genre I have examined the corpus of late medieval and early modern saints' plays through philological analysis and literary interpretation. I have consulted the plays published in the nineteenth and twentieth century as well as the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manuscripts which are stored in the archives of the Croatian Academy of Science.<sup>70</sup> The plays have been analysed in comparison to the other plays written at the same time or earlier in Italy. I have analysed the *Sacra Rappresentazione* from the editions published in the nineteenth and twentieth century as well as from fifteenth-, sixteenth-, and seventeenth-century early prints.<sup>71</sup> I have accessed the early prints from the Archives of the Central National Library of Florence, and from the Archives of the Laurentian Library in Florence.<sup>72</sup> Besides using literary interpretation,<sup>72</sup> the exploration of the cross-cultural transfers was done through linguistic analyses whereby I looked for the resemblances in morphology, lexicography, and syntax.

The second group of sources refers to the archival data. For the purpose of examination of the historical performances on the island of Hvar, I accessed the

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<sup>69</sup> The corpus of five out of seven play were published in *Crkvena prikazańa starohrvatska XVI. i XVII. vijeka* [Croatian Church Plays from the sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries], ed. by Matija Valjavec (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademiya znanosti i umjetnosti, 1893), Marko Marulić, *Drame* [The Plays], ed. by Marija Klenova and Slobodan Prosperov Novak (Zagreb: Hrvatsko društvo kazališnih kritičara i teatrologa, Teatrologijska biblioteka, 1986), pp. 76-80, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovno pjesništvo. Pjesme, plačevi i prikazanjana starohrvatskom jeziku* [Croatian Medieval Poetry. Poems, Laments, and Plays in the Old Croatian Language], ed. by Amir Kapetanović, Dragica Malić and Kristina Štrkalj Despot (Zagreb: Institut za hrvatski jezik i jezikoslovlje, 2008), pp. 792-867.

<sup>70</sup> Under the signatures, HAZU 1050, HAUZ, 1051, HAUZ I. a. 18, HAZU IV. a. 33

<sup>71</sup> Some Italian plays are available in various publications from the nineteenth century to the most recent twenty-first century editions: *Sacra Rappresentazione dei secoli XIV, XV e XVI*, ed. by Alessandro D'Ancona (Florence: Succesori le Monnier, 1872), *Le sacre rappresentazioni italiane: raccolta di testi dal secolo XIII al secolo XVI*, ed. by Mario Bonfantini (Milan: Bompiani, 1942).

<sup>72</sup> Palatino Catalogue of Florence National Library: the collection of 14th to 16th century prints and manuscripts.

Croatian State Archive in Zadar, the largest collection of sources related to Dalmatian confraternities.<sup>73</sup> I have studied collections of the sources related to the work of confraternities including the statutes, ordinances, and account books of confraternities. I have also examined the Archive of the Dominican Monastery in Stari Grad, Hvar. My performance analysis was grounded in the published text texts, and a play text of a more recent origin which I discovered in the monastery's archive.<sup>74</sup> The archival data studied for the purpose of the analysis of the performances from the late-1960s, and the 1990s included: festivals' booklets, official festivals' photographic records, and the newspaper and media coverage. This group of sources I have studied and recorded from the Archives of the Institute for the History of Literature, Theatre and Music in Zagreb. The analysis of the performances from the 1990s included the video recording which I have accessed from the theatre archive of the Zadar Puppet theatre. In addition, the actor and director Srećko Šestan shared his private collection of media coverage with me.

Finally, the most recent performances were studied on the basis of my experience of seeing contemporary performances of the saints' plays in the period from 2016 until 2019, and the photographic and video records of performances. On each occasion I have written an ethnographic diary of performances on the specific research site. During the same period, I have semi-structured interviews with the actors and directors who have been involved in the second and the third phases of the contemporary staging of the genre.

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<sup>73</sup> The collection is stored under the signature: HR-DAZD-335.

<sup>74</sup> *Le cose varie 3. L' Opera Di San Lorenzo*. DASG.

## Chapter 1

### SAINTS' PLAYS IN THE ADRIATIC: CONTEXT, CORPUS, AND THE ORIGINS OF THE GENRE

The genesis of the genre of saints' plays is a controversial issue and is often misinterpreted in Croatian theatre history. According to the dominant view in scholarship,<sup>75</sup> the origins of Croatian medieval theatrical genres are autonomous. In this view, dramatic genres in Croatian medieval culture developed from the genres which previously existed in the tradition of writing in Old Church Slavonic and Old Croatian, whereas the Passion plays, allegedly, emerged from medieval Croatian poetry (religious poetry known under the term *lauda*) and the saints' plays evolved from narrative accounts of saints' lives written in Old Church Slavonic. In this section of the thesis, I intend to demonstrate that the 'autonomy hypothesis' is an oversimplification and excludes the majority of the corpus of saints' plays.

Following recent trends in historiography, the genesis of the genre will be regarded from a transnational perspective and through the prism of cross-cultural transfers. In contrast to previous studies, which over emphasise the autonomy of the genre, I will scrutinize the influences from Italian medieval drama. On the one hand, the aim of my analysis is to outline the most distinctive features of the Croatian saints' plays, their literary and performative features. On the other hand, in doing so will I also challenge the idea of nationally pure plays, that is the dichotomy according to which the works of art can be divided into that of 'autonomous' and 'foreign' origin. In order to provide the whole context of the development of the genre, prior to the comparative analyses, I will provide the temporal, geographic, and cultural frame of

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<sup>75</sup> Elaborated in the works of authors such as Kolumbić, Car-Mihec, and Štrkalj Despot in Nikica Kolumbić, 'Postanak i razvoj hrvatske srednjovjekovne pasionske poezije i drame' [The Origin and Development of Croatian Medieval Passion Poetry and Drama] (unpublished dissertation, University of Zadar, 1964), Nikica Kolumbić, *Po običaju začanjavac* [Following the Tradition of 'Začinjavci'] (Split: Književni krug, 1994), Adriana Car-Mihec, *Dnevnik triju žanrova* [Diary of Three Genres] (Zagreb: Hrvatski centar ITI-UNESCO, 2003), Kristina Štrkalj Despot, 'Jezične i književnopovijesne značajke starohrvatskih pjesama u Picićevoj pjesmarici iz 1471' [Linguistic, and Literary Historical Features of Old Croatian Poetry in the Picić Poem Collection], *Colloquia Maruliana*, 19 (2010), 43-44.



the research, followed by a more focused overview of the history of theatre in the late-medieval and early modern eastern Adriatic.

### **The Eastern Adriatic in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period: Social and Cultural History**

The historical part of the study of the Croatian corpus of saints' plays covers the period from the late fifteenth century, the time of the first appearance of the saint's play on the eastern Adriatic, until the first part of the nineteenth century, when the last performance was recorded. From a geographical point of view, the area of research is the eastern Adriatic coast, the coastal part of today's Croatia – bounded by the town of Zadar on the north and the city of Dubrovnik to the south. The historical name of the region, Dalmatia, is in use even today and I will use it interchangeably with the term 'eastern Adriatic'. The term 'eastern Adriatic' will be used to emphasise the opposition to the 'western Adriatic', the territory of today's Italian coast of the Adriatic.

Urban communities represent focal points of late-medieval and early modern theatrical life on the eastern Adriatic. According to theatre historians, medieval drama first emerged in the towns Zadar, Nin, Šibenik, Biograd, and Knin.<sup>76</sup> The reason for this can be found in the advanced economic development which these cities experienced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Eventually, in the course of the sixteenth century, the plays spread along the coast both north and south; from the island of Krk to Budva, which stands on the coast of Montenegro.<sup>77</sup>

The origins of the saints' plays can be traced within a similar geographic frame. The earliest record of a saint play is again related to the area of the middle-eastern Adriatic.<sup>78</sup> The oldest record of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* was found in Florence. According to Dragica Malić the origin of the play can be geographically located to mid-Dalmatia, the area between Šibenik and Zadar, the two towns in which the copies

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<sup>76</sup> Franjo Fancev, 'Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja' [Croatian Church Plays], *Narodne starine*, 11 (1932), 143-68.

<sup>77</sup> It is, however, important to note that all scholars did not agree to accept the hypothesis that the central part of the coast was the place of the origin of medieval drama. Authors such as Branko Drechsler Vodnik, Matija Valjavec, and Rudolf Strahol propose the hypothesis that drama originated from the northern part of the coast, Vinodol or the island Krk. For a detailed overview of this debate see Francesco Saverio Perillo, *Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja* [Croatian Church Plays] (Split: Mogućnosti, 1978), pp. 13-15.

<sup>78</sup> Fancev, 'Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja', p. 148.

of the newer origin were found.<sup>79</sup> Other urban communities which will be studied include Hvar, Stari Grad, and Vis, which have the most notable tradition of saints' plays.

The borderline position which, much like today, the eastern Adriatic held in late-medieval and early modern Europe, makes this region especially interesting for research in the history of drama. This refers primarily to the proximity of Italian kingdoms and republics: Kingdom of Naples, the State of Florence, the State of Siena, and Republic of Venice. Notwithstanding the close vicinity to the lands dominated by the eastern Orthodox tradition, the eastern Adriatic coast accepted Latin Christianity and Catholic liturgy, which had an important impact on the development of vernacular drama.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, despite the permanent threat of further occupation from the Ottoman Empire, the narrow belt of coast managed to remain beyond the reach of the Ottomans which led to cultural development closely related to the tendencies in other parts of Europe in the coastal towns like Split, Šibenik, Hvar, Dubrovnik. In the first place, this refers to the growth of cultural tendencies associated with the Renaissance in the fields of philosophy, art, and architecture.

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<sup>79</sup> Dragica Malić, 'Zašto Margarita nije Marulićeva' [Why Marigarita Cannot Be Attributed to Marulić], *Colloquia Maruliana*, 19 (2010), 185-218.

<sup>80</sup> Barbara Lomagistro, 'La sacra rappresentazione croata tra Oriente e Occidente', *European Medieval Drama*, 4 (2000), 39-55.



Figure 1 Historical map of the Adriatic in the 1560s

One of the most distinctive features of Croatian medieval culture lies in the fact that the literature of the period, as well as the documents used in administration, were written in three alphabets: Cyrillic, Glagolitic, and Latin. Literacy was introduced to Slavic lands in the ninth century by followers of brothers Cyril and Methodius (826-869, 815-885), two Byzantine-Christian theologians and missionaries. For the purpose of preaching Christianity, they translated the liturgy and developed two letters: Cyrillic and Glagolitic, scripts into which they translated the Bible.<sup>81</sup> Old Church Slavonic was the language of liturgy which caused a good deal of controversy among the clergy who were convinced that the liturgy should be served in three languages exclusively: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. This is the reason why Methodius's students were banned by the Church authorities and they, after Methodius's death, found shelter on the northern and middle-eastern Adriatic. Their dedicated work in the monasteries significantly affected the development of literacy in the area.<sup>82</sup> Even though the

<sup>81</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 126. For a detailed overview of the genesis of Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabets see also Stjepan Damjanović, *Slovo iskona [The Word of the Beginnings]* (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 2004).

<sup>82</sup> Neven Budak and Tomislav Raukar, *Hrvatska povijest srednjeg vijeka [History of the Croatian Middle Ages]* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2006), pp. 82-83.

Glagolitic alphabet was in use in some parts of Croatia until the nineteenth century, by the early modern period the usage of the Latin letters became dominant. As a result, the part of the corpus of the Passion plays was recorded in Glagolitic, whereas, due to their later appearance, all of the saints' plays are recorded in the Latin alphabet.

Literacy was, in general, gender and class determined. Apart from the clergy literacy was reserved for male nobles. As for the usage of language women of all classes spoke exclusively in Croatian, as confirmed by a Venetian juridical representative who visited Šibenik in the late sixteenth century and wrote a report on it.<sup>83</sup>

The cultural life of late-medieval and early modern Dalmatian society was mostly organized around urban communities.<sup>84</sup> Those communities, which are the focus of this study, were established as early as Greek or Roman colonies from the antique period. Zadar was a colony established by the emperor Augustus and it was named Jader, while the island of Hvar was a well-developed Greek colony and, during the rule of the Romans, had two settlements, today's Stari Grad and Hvar. The invasion of the Slavic tribes started most likely around the seventh century.<sup>85</sup> Upon their arrival, the Slavic tribe of Croats found the organized urban settlements and inhabitants of Roman origin, or, Romanised Illirs.<sup>86</sup> It took centuries for the Roman population to become a minority in the area;<sup>87</sup> until the mid-thirteenth century, the Croats were

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<sup>83</sup> Grga Novak, *Prošlost Dalmacije, knjiga prva: Od najstarijih vremena do Kandijskog rata* [The History of Dalmatia, book first, From the Eriest Period until the Candian War] (Split: Marjan tisak, 2004), p. 176. See also Nevenka Bezić Božanić, 'Hvarke i Viške u svjetlu arhivskih izvora od 16. do 18. stoljeća' [Women from Hvar and Vis According to Archival Sources from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries], *Prilozi povijesti otoka Hvara*, X (1997), 101–110.

<sup>84</sup> According to Tomislav Raukar, late-medieval Dalmatian urban communities like Zadar or Šibenik had a population of 5,000-9,000 people and middle-size communities like Hvar had populations of 2,000-3,000. According to the same author the urban communities of that period were exclusively located on the coast. *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovlje: prostor, ljudi, ideje* [Croatian Medievalism: space, people, ideas] (Zagreb: Školska knjiga: Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta, 1997), pp. 168-84.

<sup>85</sup> This question is still a matter of intense discussion among historians. For the most recent discussions see Goran Bilogrivić, 'Etnički identiteti u ranosrednjovjekovnoj Hrvatskoj—materijalni i pisani izvor' [Ethnic identities in early medieval Croatia—material and written source] (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2016), pp. 8-11.

<sup>86</sup> Budak and Raukar, p. 49.

<sup>87</sup> Novak, *Prošlost Dalmacije 1*, p. 154.

concentrated in the hinterland, while, from then on, they became the dominant population on the coast. By that time, the Roman language was used only as the language of administration; however, Roman culture was still influential in urban communal life.<sup>88</sup>

In the next couple of centuries this territory was under constant exchange of rule between the Carolingian Emperor, Byzantium, Croatian dukes (later kings), and the Republic of Venice, which resulted in a variety of ethnic identities mixing. In the twelfth century, the Croatian kingdom lost its independence and became united with the Hungarian kingdom. Nevertheless, the Dalmatian communities managed to preserve their independence and Hungarian governance had a insignificant affect on the cultural life of the communities.<sup>89</sup>

In the fifteenth century, as a result of financial hardship, Hungarian and Croatian ruler, Ladislav, was forced to sell Dalmatia to the Venetian Republic.<sup>90</sup> While some communities, like Zadar, peacefully surrendered shortly after the agreement between the Hungarian king Sigismund and the Doge of Venice, other communities resisted accepting the agreement for decades. By the end of fifteenth century, whole Dalmatia was annexed to the Venetian Republic which ruled it until 1794.<sup>91</sup>

The Venetian influence was reflected in life in Dalmatian communes on several levels.<sup>92</sup> Firstly, on the political level, the Venetian Republic nominally respected the autonomy of the Dalmatian communes (which they had since Roman times), but the duke was delegated by the Venetians, and Italian was made the language of administration.<sup>93</sup> Secondly, Venice had a strong economic influence on Dalmatian towns, which established strong trading relations with cities from the western side of the Adriatic; this applied especially to the port of Hvar, from where the major part of the saints' plays originated from.<sup>94</sup> Finally, closely related to the

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<sup>88</sup> Budak and Raukar, pp. 53-54.

<sup>89</sup> Novak, *Prošlost Dalmacije 1*, p. 132, Budak and Raukar, 53-54.

<sup>90</sup> Francis William Carter, 'Settlement and Population during Venetian Rule (1420-1797): Hvar Island, Croatia', *Journal of European Economic History*, 23 (1994), 7-47 (13).

<sup>91</sup> Novak, *Prošlost Dalmacije 1*, pp. 132-36.

<sup>92</sup> The term Dalmatian commune refers to municipal unit consisting of the town and its outskirts, which are called district. The life of Dalmatian communes; their law, administration, and economy were arranged according to the communes' statutes. See Raukar, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovlje*, p. 189.

<sup>93</sup> Budak and Raukar, p. 288.

<sup>94</sup> Carter, 'Settlement and Population during Venetian Rule (1420-1797)', 7-47.

issues of economic and political hegemony, Venetian influence was crucial in a cultural sense. Exchanges with the Italian cultural sphere developed, most importantly through increased travel and migrations. One of the witnesses of this type of exchange was a Venetian representative who, after his visit to Dalmatia, wrote an observation describing Dalmatian nobles who lived, talked, and dressed in the Italian way.<sup>95</sup> The example which is even more relevant for this study is the case of the young nobles who after studying at Italian universities returned home, bringing foreign customs, ideas, and literature to Dalmatia. Among them was Marin Gazarović, a young nobleman who upon his return from Venice wrote several saints' plays inspired by Italian authors.<sup>96</sup>

Despite the importance of nobility for 'cultural flows' from the western Adriatic,<sup>97</sup> the development of the medieval Dalmatian drama was crucially affected by the social institution of confraternities. The confraternities represented civic associations (even though organized in a predominantly religious spirit) founded and regulated on the level of urban communities, in which citizens gathered to promote various aspects of piety and social care (for their own members and members of society as a whole) in accordance with Christian principles.<sup>98</sup> In the east Adriatic confraternities were (sometimes but not exclusively) also founded among members of the same profession (wine makers, fishermen, oil traders etc.) with the purpose of facilitating the business relations of their members, protect interests of the profession, and support members before civil courts and authorities.

Confraternities (or *bratovštine* as they were called in Croatian) represented the main centres of sociability in the eastern Adriatic coast. Despite their name, the

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<sup>95</sup> Novak, *Prošlost Dalmacije 1*, p. 176.

<sup>96</sup> Dušan Berić, 'Contribution to the biography of Marin Gazarović, the poet' [Prilog biografiji pjesnika Marina Gazarovića], *Prilozi povijesti otoka Hvara*, 1 (1959), 73-86, (83).

<sup>97</sup> As defined Rodanthi Tzanelli as 'multidirectional movements and reallocations of human beings, artifacts, and ideas within the ill-defined sphere of "culture" in its global, national, and regional dimensions'. 'Cultural Flows' in *Encyclopaedia of Consumer Culture* <https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/consumerculture/n145.xml> [accessed 14 January 2021].

<sup>98</sup> Raukar, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovlje* pp. 234-38. Zrinka Novak, 'Hvar Charitable Confraternity of the Mercy in the Early Modern Period' [Hvarska karitativna bratovština Milosrđa u ranome novom vijeku], *Historijski Zbornik God. LXIV*, 2 (2011), 377-433 (377).

confraternities included male as well as female members, meaning that the sociability within associations was not bounded by gender lines. Furthermore, in the context of my research it is especially interesting to point out the class composition of the confraternities. In the scholarship, confraternities are often associated with people of non-noble background, which was understandably the case with professional confraternities (as there were no noblemen among fishers). It has been argued that the commoners' confraternities were especially fostered after the rule of the Venetian Republic was established, as it was in Venice's interest to weaken the city nobility by strengthening the popular classes.<sup>99</sup> However, it is less known that membership of non-professional confraternities was often mixed, including both commoners and noblemen.<sup>100</sup> This is especially characteristic for the most active confraternities of the early modern Hvar, where the majority of Dalmatian saints plays were written and performed.

Unsurprisingly, given their importance for both social and religious activities in towns, the statutes of several confraternities contained mention of organizing plays. For instance, the inventory of Saint Krševani's confraternity in Zadar from 1414 mentions 'costume and a rope of damned Judas'.<sup>101</sup> This is why the historical statutes and inventories of Dalmatian confraternities represent an important source for this study.

It is important to note that the history of Dubrovnik, historically called Ragusa, significantly differs from the rest of the communes of the eastern Adriatic coast. From the seventh century, when this commune was first mentioned, until the early-thirteenth century, Ragusa was under the rule of Byzantium. However, by the eleventh century, the citizens of Dubrovnik understood that they could have benefits from their lucrative position on the border between the West and the rest of the Balkan countries, and therefore strived to establish the commune as an important player in maritime affairs. Both the ruling nobility and the common people of Dubrovnik gave priority to trading rather than any other business activity, which resulted in a number of trading agreements with neighbouring Bosnia, as well as Ancona, Serbia, and Bulgaria, and,

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<sup>99</sup> Zrinka Novak, 'Hvar Charitable Confraternity of the Mercy', 379-80.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. (380).

<sup>101</sup> Nikola Batušić, *Povijest hrvatskoga kazališta [History of Croatian Theatre]* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1978), p.8.

as merchants, they sailed from London to Alexandria and the Black Sea.<sup>102</sup> Given that the Venetian Republic shared the same trading ambition to dominate over the Adriatic trading routes, it represented the only serious threat for Dubrovnik. Venice actually occupied Dubrovnik in the period from 1205 and 1358 and Dubrovnik was forced to suspend trading in exchange for independence. However, the Zadar treaty, a peace agreement between Venice and Hungary from 1358, forced Venice to yield claims to Dubrovnik. Soon after this, Dubrovnik, together with the neighbouring area, including the islands of Lastovo and Mljet, and parts of the peninsula Pelješac, altogether counting 1,500 km<sup>2</sup> (579 sq. m), became established as the Republic of Dubrovnik or the Republic of Ragusa. The ruling nobility managed to preserve independence for more than four centuries until Napoleon's occupation, which had a significant impact on the development of the cultural life of Dubrovnik and the development of drama.

The nobility represented the most influential social group in the other Dalmatian urban communities. Dalmatian medieval and early modern society consisted of two main social groupings: nobility and commoners. Even though the clergy was a separate class, as a group it did not have influence on the governance of the communities — a member of the clergy could have political influence only individually, that is, on the basis of his noble background.<sup>103</sup> Even though official governance was placed in Venice, both the noblemen and commoners used to organize themselves for the purpose of political activity, as the relations between them were regulated by city statutes. In most cases, as reported in Split, Šibenik, Trogir, and Hvar, the purpose of gathering commoners, called *kongregi*, was to try to establish control over the resolutions made in noble councils, also called 'big councils'.<sup>104</sup>

Probably the most interesting struggle between the two groups happened on the island of Hvar in the sixteenth century. The haughtiness and recklessness of Hvar's

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<sup>102</sup> Budak and Raukar, p. 287.

<sup>103</sup> Raukar, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovlje*, pp. 194-206.

<sup>104</sup> At this point, it is important to be aware that the social groups were not completely homogeneous, especially from the beginning of the early modern period. The late sixteenth century is the time when the third social class — the merchant class — began to develop, especially in larger urban communities like Split, Zadar and Hvar. This group consisted of wealthy merchants or proprietors who originally belonged to the commoners, but eventually began to seek benefits and advantages on the basis of their wealth. This, for instance, included being pardoned from taking part in the city walls guard, rowing in the communal galley, or contributing to manual works for the commune.



noblemen toward commoners of the island of Hvar existed for centuries before the tensions reached a climax at the beginning of the century.<sup>105</sup> In 1510, after a number of rapes of common women were reported, a group of commoners started preparing rebellion and aimed to murder Hvar's noblemen. Although the first attempt at this rebellion was unsuccessful,<sup>106</sup> this sparked a further wave of rebellions, as the communes of Stari Grad and Hvar, transformed into fighting arenas in which the classes clashed. The rebellions lasted from 1510 to 1514 and spread on to the other Dalmatian communes.<sup>107</sup> When the rebellions had been suppressed, with significant help from the Venetian side, the Venetian Republic agreed to provide some benefits to commoners in order to prevent future bloody rebellions. For this reason, they officially introduced dual administrative bodies, one representing nobleman, and the other representing commoners. In 1610 the congress of commoners and big council of noblemen signed the peace agreement.

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<sup>105</sup> Budak and Raukar, p. 288.

<sup>106</sup> Bernardin Škunca mentions that according to the annals, a miracle in the form of a wooden cross which started bleeding occurred in the house of Toma Bevilaque, one of the leaders of the rebellion. Bevilaque and the others who were involved in the organization understood this miracle as a clear sign that it would be better to give up the planned rebellion. The word about this miraculous event spread around the island causing massive hysteria and initiating a number of pious activities in the forms of processions. On the tremendous effect of this event on the pious life on the island of Hvar see *Zakrižen na otoku Hvaru* [*Following the cross on the island of Hvar*] (Hvar: Biskupski ordijat, 2013), pp. 137-50.

<sup>107</sup> Grga Novak delivers careful reading of the sources on the rebellions in *Hvar Through Centuries* [Hvar kroz stoljeća] (Hvar: Izdavač Narodni Odbor Općine Hvar, 1960), pp. 82-93.

### Late medieval and early modern theatre on the eastern Adriatic

The earliest confirmed appearance of drama in today's Croatia concerns two examples of liturgical drama (liturgical games) which emerged by the end of eleventh century in Zagreb.<sup>108</sup> Two plays written in Latin, an Easter play and a Play of Magi, were recorded in the miscellany named *Missal Antiquissimum* of international origin.<sup>109</sup> According Nikola Batušić the plays were written in England, and the copy which reached Zagreb was made in one of French monasteries.<sup>110</sup> Before becoming the ownership of Zagreb's archbishop, the play was kept in Hungary. Annotations on the texts suggest that the plays were performed.<sup>111</sup> However, even though the first mentions of theatrical life are related to Zagreb, Zagreb did not play an important role in theatrical life until the eighteenth century when Jesuit order started exercising school drama.<sup>112</sup> Apart from these two mentioned plays in Latin, rudiments of the Easter Play are recorded in the Vrbnik Glagolitic Miscellany from 1462 in Glagolitic script and in Old Church Slavonic, which was also the language of liturgy. As elsewhere in Europe, Latin liturgical drama did not directly affect the development of vernacular religious drama.<sup>113</sup> It was the pious activities of confraternities that prepared the ground for the development of vernacular drama in Croatia.

The *laudās*, songs written in dialogue, and depicting the theme of Christ's Passion (mostly the Virgin Mary's laments) were sung in confraternities as a regular activity and contributed to the development of the Passion plays, the oldest genre of vernacular drama on the eastern Adriatic.<sup>114</sup> As part of this corpus, Croatian medieval

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<sup>108</sup> Miho Demović, 'Obredna drama u srednjovjekovnim liturgijsko-glazbenim kodeksima u Hrvatskoj' [Ceremonial Drama in Medieval Liturgical-Musical Codex], *Dani Hrvaskog kazališta*, 2 (1985), 242-92.

<sup>109</sup> Batušić, *Povijest hrvatskog kazališta*, p.1.

<sup>110</sup> Batušić, *Povijest hrvatskog kazališta*, p.2.

<sup>111</sup> Batušić, *Povijest hrvatskog kazališta*, p.2.

<sup>112</sup> Batušić, *Povijest hrvatskog kazališta*, p.84.

<sup>113</sup> *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovno pjesništvo. Pjesme, plačevi i prikazanjana starohrvatskom jeziku* [Croatian Medieval Poetry. Poems, Laments, and Plays in the Old Croatian Language], ed. by Amir Kapetanović, Dragica Malić, and Kristina Štrkalj Despot (Zagreb: Institut za hrvatski jezik i jezikoslovlje, 2008).

<sup>114</sup> The hypothesis that the origins of the Passion plays can be traced in *laudās* was challenged by Slobodan Prosperov Novak, 'Logika tijela i retorika ideologije u hrvatskom religijskom kazalištu' [Logic and Rhetoric of Ideology in Croatian Religious Theater], *Dani Hrvaskog kazališta*, 2 (1985), 398-414 and Josip Vučković in 'Kritika evolucionističkih narativa u starohrvatskim prikazanjima' [Critique of

dramatic texts include five fully or partially preserved pieces which depict the Passion of the Christ. A cycle play, *Muka spasitelja našega* (*The Passion of our Saviour*, 1556) recorded in the so-called *Play Miscellany* is the longest (3658 lines) and the only completely preserved play from the eastern Adriatic coast. The play was performed over three days during Holy week, and it represents a peak of Passion play development.

Apart from the plays which mostly depict the events around Christ's Passion, there are two other plays belonging to this genre: *Mišterij vele lip i slavan od Isusa, kako je s križa snet, zatim v grob postavljen* (*A Very Nice and Glorious Mystery about Jesus' Deposition from the Cross and How He was Taken to the Tomb*), and the *Play of Saint John Baptist*.<sup>115</sup> Apart from the Passion plays and the saints' plays, morality plays represented the third medieval genre in the history of eastern Adriatic drama. This genre is represented in the form of a single play, the *Speech of Saint Bernard's Fated Soul*. This short play thematising the reminiscences of Saint Bernard's soul upon his death, is attributed to Marko Marulić, one of the most prominent authors from the period.

The Renaissance non-religious drama on the eastern Adriatic appeared only in two cultural circles: in the Dubrovnik cultural circle which included twenty-three preserved plays, and three plays known only from the records of performances, and on the island of Hvar, which included four preserved plays. Some of the most notable authors from the Dubrovnik cycle were, Džore Držić, who wrote the first pastoral eclogue introducing the audience to the pastoral world which would become popular in Croatian drama in the upcoming centuries; Mavro Vetranović, the author known for writing both religious and secular drama, who expanded the pastoral world by adding additional mythological elements and features of religious drama for instance in the spatial organization of his play *Orpheus* which follows the pattern of medieval religious plays.<sup>116</sup> Nikola Nalješković also situated his comedies in the pastoral world,

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Evolutionistic Narratives on Old Croatian Plays], *Ricerche slavistiche*, 59 (2015), 441-90.

<sup>115</sup> Even though the title of the latter play could suggest that the play belongs to the group of saints' plays, the content of the play, which significantly revolves around the Passion of Christ, justifies the exclusion of this play from the corpus of the saints' plays.

<sup>116</sup> Franjo Švelec, 'Hrvatska renesansna drama' [Croatian Renaissance Drama], *Dani Hvraskog kazališta*, 3 (1976), 5-23 (14).

but he added novel rustic elements and obscene scenes. However, the dramaturgy of Marin Držić, represents the peak of early modern drama of Dubrovnik. Držić wrote in the tradition of *commedia arifi*, as well as rustic-pastoral comedy, which he then combined with the mythological worlds and oral tradition. At the same time Držić wrote the first tragedy in the Dubrovnik tradition, *Hecuba*, an adaptation of the play by Ludovico Dolce. Držić was a role model for many later authors in Dubrovnik, like Sassin and Zlatarić,<sup>117</sup> whose influence spread to the other part of the eastern Adriatic – the island of Hvar.

The corpus of secular plays from Hvar is significantly smaller than the one from Dubrovnik. Nevertheless, they are notable for accepting influences from Dubrovnik and for developing local features. Whereas the comedies of Benetović and Plegrinović shared similar features with the plays from the Dubrovnik circle, the play *The Slave Girl* by Hanibal Lucić, about a noble girl captured by the Ottomans, contains an original motif of captured women which would later spread along the eastern Adriatic coast.<sup>118</sup> In this respect it is important to mention that in 1612 the citizens of Hvar built what is today known as a symbol of Hvar culture — the second oldest civic theatre in Europe, after the one in Vicenza and before the one in Parma.

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<sup>117</sup> See Batušić, pp. 74-80.

<sup>118</sup> Švelec, 'Hrvatska renesansna drama', p. 19.

### **The Corpus of Saints' Plays from The Eastern Adriatic**

As shown in the previous subsection, eastern Adriatic medieval drama developed in the fifteenth century and the saints' plays emerged as its most recent genre. This corpus contains 11 plays. The *Passion of Saint Margaret*, refers to three plays of similar content, recorded without titles in three different miscellanies: in the Florentine Codex-sign: Ashb(urnham), 1582, in the Šibenik miscellany for the sixteenth century, and in the Zadar miscellany for the seventeenth century. The *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* refers to three plays recorded under the same title and under different signatures: 1050, 1051 and I. a. 18. The remaining five plays are the *Play of the History of Saint Paphnutius*, the *Play of the Life of Saint Margaret, the virgin and martyr*, the *Play of Saints Beatrice, and the brothers Simplicius and Faustinus*, the *Play of the life and martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* and the *Play of the life of Saint Guglielma the Queen of Hungary*.<sup>119</sup>

The oldest play is the *Passion of Saint Margaret* which is dated to the late-fifteenth/early-sixteenth century.<sup>120</sup> Due to its linguistic features and style, the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* can be dated to the same period. In addition to these two plays (or groups of plays), the *Play of the History of Saint Panutius* also belongs to the group of antique saints' plays, which preserved the medieval features of the genre: simplicity in delivering the plot, two dimensional characters, and strong connections to the features of the oral poetry tradition.<sup>121</sup>

The other four plays are of more recent origin; the *Play of the life and martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* can be precisely dated to the year 1631. Even though it is not known precisely when the *Play of Saints Beatrice, and the Brothers Simplicius and Faustinus* and the *Play of the life of Saint Guglielma the Queen of Hungary* were written, the fact that they were written by Marin Gazarović, who wrote the *Play of the life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina*, suggests that they can be dated to the beginning of the seventeenth century. The number of features which the *Play of the life of Saint Margaret, the Virgin and Martyr* shares with these plays indicates that the *Play of the Life Saint Margaret the Virgin and Martyr* was

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<sup>119</sup> Even though the precise date of appearance of each play is still not precisely determined I have tried to list the plays in chronological order.

<sup>120</sup> Franjo Fancev, 'Prilozi za povijest hrvatske crkvene drame', *Nastavni vjesnik*, 33 (1925), 109-24.

<sup>121</sup> Perillo, *Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja*, p. 21.

written in the same period. The main distinguishing features of these plays are their emphasized literary consciousness and their synthesis of oral tradition and literary elements.

All plays from the corpus are in the vernacular, written in the old Croatian language — different variants of the south-čakavian dialect. Furthermore, apart from the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* which was performed over two days, the other plays are shorter in content and were performed in a single day.<sup>122</sup> In this feature the corpus of eastern Adriatic plays is similar to the medieval drama from the western Adriatic coast.

The saints which are thematised mostly belong to the group of early Christian martyrs. Some of them are recognized as local patron saints in Croatia, for instance, Saint Lawrence in Vrboska, the town on the island of Hvar where this play is still performed, or Saints Cyprian and Justina whose cult was established on the island of Vis. The tendency to depict several saints in plays, as was the case with the *Play of Saints Beatrice, and the brothers Simplicius and Faustinus*, is another interesting feature of this corpus.<sup>123</sup> In the next sections, I will depict the special features of each of the plays focusing on the origin, authorship, language and style, with comment on the treatment they have had in historiography.

### **Passion of Saint Margaret**

The play begins with a scene in which Margaret is caring for sheep and singing happily in the field. Olibrius, the king of Antioquia, notices her and wishes to marry her. After Margaret rejects his proposal, he commands her imprisonment and torture. The torture scene includes stretching, whipping, and cutting of her flesh. Margaret is then attacked by a dragon who swallows her; however, being inside the dragon's interior, she crosses herself who tears the dragon's body into pieces. The torture is eventually continued and Margaret is burned with double candles and boiled alive. During the torture Margaret is accompanied by a dove who shows up after flying out from the dragon's interior. While Margaret is boiling in the pot, the dove puts a crown on her head, and

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<sup>122</sup> It is important to emphasize that these plays are short, which allows me to study the whole corpus within the scope of this thesis.

<sup>123</sup> Zrinka Pulišelić, 'A survey of Croatian Medieval Drama', in *New Approaches to Theatre of the Middle Ages: an Anthology*, ed. by Barbara I. Gusick, and Edelgard E. DuBruck (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 127-39 (p.136).

follows her as Margaret is walking towards the place where she would be decapitated. There she touches Margaret, gives her a cross and a blessing. After Margaret is beheaded the angels come and gloriously take her soul to Heaven.

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The cult of Saint Margaret, Antioch virgin and martyr, was spread across medieval Europe, and the saint often appeared as a motif in artistic representations.<sup>124</sup> The presence of Saint Margaret's life and martyrdom in eastern Adriatic medieval culture is recorded in three medieval literature genres: in narrative legends, poems, and most notably in the form of plays. There are two different dramatic elaborations of this legend in the eastern Adriatic corpus of saints' plays which are recorded in four different texts.<sup>125</sup>

The first elaboration refers to the dramatization of the legend entitled the *Passion of Saint Margaret*. As mentioned above, this dramatization is recorded in three texts which can be geographically located in middle Dalmatia (between Šibenik and Zadar). As mentioned above, the texts can be found in a) in the *Florence miscellany Ashb(urnham) 1582*, b) in the *Šibenik manuscript sixteenth century*, and c) in the *Zadar manuscript seventeenth century*. These three plays differ in minor details and — due to the fact that two out of three were not completely preserved, until 2010 they used to be published as a single play with critical apparatus supplying information on differences between versions.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovno pjesništvo. Pjesme, plačevi i prikazanjana starohrvatskom jeziku* [Croatian Medieval Poetry. Poems, Laments, and Plays in the Old Croatian Language], ed. by Amir Kapetanović, Dragica Malić, and Kristina Štrkalj Despot (Zagreb: Institut za hrvatski jezik i jezikoslovlje, 2008) p. 829. One of the examples is the altarpiece from northern Germany kept in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

<sup>125</sup> The approach of 'New Philology', as elaborated by Stephen G. Nichols and Bernard Cerquiglini since the 1990s, advocates a novel way of discovering textual meaning using variants in the manuscripts in a new way. Rather than analysing different variants of a text with the aim of reconstructing one 'original', ideal text, as in the traditional approach, the New Philologists consider the different variants of the text as originals in their own right, which then produce meaning under the different circumstances in which they were conceived. By the same token, in my analyses, each text will be studied separately, which will allow me to distinguish between different strategies among the texts of the presentation of the Passion of Saint Margaret. See Stephan G. Nichols, 'Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 1-10.

<sup>126</sup> For instance, Marko Marulić, *Drame* [The Plays], ed. by Marija Klenova and Slobodan Prosperov Novak, (Zagreb: Hrvatsko društvo kazališnih kritičara i

The origin of the play has not been a focus of scholars, and was analysed only to a limited extent. Nevertheless, two major opinions can be noted. According to Eduard Hercigonja these plays are a product of the dramatization of a saint's legend.<sup>127</sup> Given that an Italian play containing the same elaboration of Saint Margaret's passion has not been found this conclusion has not been questioned. The fact that the Saint's legends existed in the Croatian tradition appeared to be a sufficient reason for assuming that the play was written based upon the Croatian Glagolitic versions of the saint's passion.<sup>128</sup> The second theory of the play's origins belongs to Carlo Verdiani, who upon his discovery of the Florentine text proposed that the play originated from a Latin narrative legend from the script *Vat. Lat. 5771* kept in the Vatican library.<sup>129</sup> Even though Verdiani's theory is formulated in a more explicit way than the Glagolitic theory, the Latin origin is again not strongly supported by the evidence; Verdiani provided only a few examples which failed to establish a firm connection between the play from the Florentine codex and the Latin narrative legend. Moreover, even the author acknowledged that most texts (in Latin, in Croatian, and Italian narratives) thematising Saint Margaret's passion, share many features in common.<sup>130</sup> Even though Verdiani's opinion was accepted by Nikola Batušić in the first complete monograph

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teatrologa, Teatrologijska biblioteka, 1986). *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovno pjesništvo* is the first edition in which the plays were published separately.

<sup>127</sup> Fancev, 'Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja'. After Fancev claimed this, it was confirmed in other works such as Vjekoslav Štefančić, *Glagoljski rukopisi Jugoslavenske akademije. I. dio, Biblija, apokrifii legende, litorgijski tekstovi, egzorcizmi zapisi, molitvenici, teologija, crkveni govori (homiletika), pjesme* [Glagolitic manuscripts of the Yugoslav Academy of Science and Arts part I, the Bible, apocrypha and legends, liturgical texts, exorcisms and their records, prayers, theology, sermons, songs] (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnost, 1969).

<sup>128</sup> Glagolitic script was used on the eastern Adriatic only during medieval times. The major part of the eastern Adriatic Passion plays was written in this script.

<sup>129</sup> Carlo Verdiani, *On Marulić's Authorship of Florentine Croatian Collection* [O Marulićevu autorstvu Firnetinskog hrvatskog zbornika] (Split: Čakavski sabor, 1973), p.42.

<sup>130</sup> Here, it could be also helpful to consult Verdiani's first study entitled *Il Codice Dalamitico-Laurenziano, ms. Croato dei primi decenni del XVI secolo* from 1957 which at this moment was not available to me. It is necessary to conclude that a stronger statement could be given only upon the direct study of the Latin text and plays in Croatian.



on the history of Croatian theatre,<sup>131</sup> a more recent study by Amir Kapetanović, Dragica Malić, and Kristina Štrkalj Despot returned to the Glagolitic theory.<sup>132</sup>

While the origin of the play caught only limited attention from scholars, the issue of authorship was elaborated more extensively in the literature. Ever since medieval literature was the focus of study for Croatian philologists, the authorship of *The Passion of Saint Margaret* was considered to be anonymous. Verdiani's discovery of a new version of the play in Florence in 1958 brought the notion of Marko Marulić as the possible author of the plays. Several reasons led Verdiani to the conclusion that Marulić is the author of the play he found, and that the plays from Šibenik and Zadar were written later. Firstly, according to Verdiani, other texts found in the codex could be attributed to Marulić. Most notably this refers to the *Libellous* — the collection *Historiae evangelica* which, according to him, Marulić wrote for his sister Bira, a nun in a benediction monastery.<sup>133</sup> Secondly, Verdiani grounds this conclusion on a linguistic analysis, mostly focusing on the Latinisms and Italianisms which the texts in the codex share with the texts whose authorship was confirmed to be Marulić's. Finally, Verdiani admits that this conclusion was partly influenced by the fact that Marulić was the best author from the eastern Adriatic in the late medieval/early modern period.<sup>134</sup>

The hypothesis of Marulić's authorship was, crucially, refuted in a study by Dragica Malić from 2010. Based on the analyses of the palaeography, of the composition of the verses, of the dialectal sound changes which affected the text, on the morphological analyses, and an extensive phraseme analyses, the author concluded that the play originated from a geographical and temporal context different from the one in which Marulić was creating his works. According to Malić the play features the čakavian dialect which was positioned north from Split (closer to Šibenik and Zadar) and the play was written prior to the time when Marulić was writing his works.

The language of the plays belongs to the south-čakavian dialect.<sup>135</sup> All three plays are written in typical medieval verse of eight-syllable couplets which, according

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<sup>131</sup> Batušić, *Povijest Hrvatskog teatra*, p. 12.

<sup>132</sup> Hrvatsko srednovjekovno pjesništvo, p. 829.

<sup>133</sup> Verdiani, p. 31.

<sup>134</sup> For an additional piece in support of Marulić's authorship, see Verdiani, pp. 41-46.

<sup>135</sup> For more on linguistic features see *Hrvatsko srednovjekovno pjesništvo*, ed. by Kapetanović and others, p. 830.

to Francesco Saverio Perillo, have their origin in the eight-syllable verse of Latin hymns.<sup>136</sup> The rhythm of the verse is based on the stress which is in most cases placed on the third or the fifth syllable in the verse.<sup>137</sup>

Whereas, by its linguistic features, this play does excerpt from the other saints' plays from the same period, its stage directions deserve special attention. They are written in prose and can be described as extensive and sometimes very expressive: 'After saying this she falls on her knees. Then she recommends her soul to God, and the executer [executioner?] takes the sword and hits Saint Margaret's neck, and cuts her head. After that, he falls on his back in great fear and that is when the angels enter and encircle her body. Then they took her soul to the Kingdom of Heaven, happily singing'.<sup>138</sup>

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The play contains approximately 1,200 verses, which is, according to Perillo, in accordance with the length as Italian *Sacre rappresentazioni* — which are known for being short — and in contrast to the other plays of the eastern Adriatic corpus which are longer.

In this play there is a strong connection with the oral tradition and the pastoral world. The beginning of *The Passion of Saint Margaret* contains pastoral-folk elements:<sup>139</sup>

*Grass is growing, a flower is flourishing*

*The health is flourishing, a good life.*

*Graze, you healthy sheep,*

*There's enough of green grass.*<sup>140</sup>

The similar words are used in description of Margaret's beauty:

*...her hair looks like gold...*

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<sup>136</sup> Perillo, *Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja*, p. 82.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> *To rekši, kleknu na kolina. Priporuči duh svoj Gospodinu Bogu, a ubojica, poj mač svoj, udri po vratu svete Margarite, odsiče joj glavu. Odsikaši joj, pade nayada od velika straha i tudje anjeli pridoše i odkriliše tilo ne. Postavši, vazevši dušu ne ponesoše ju u krajevstvo nebesko pojući i govoreći veselo. Hrvatsko srednovjekovno pjesništvo*, ed. by Kapetanović and others, p. 811.

<sup>139</sup> *Hrvatsko srednovjekovno pjesništvo*, ed. by Kapetanović and others, p. 811.

<sup>140</sup> *Trava raste, cvate cvitak, / reste zdravje, dobar žitak. / Pasite se ovce zdrave / zelene je dosta trave. Hrvatsko srednovjekovno pjesništvo*, ed. by Kapetanović and others, p. 811.

... *she is very beautiful*  
*She glared at me with her eyes...*<sup>141</sup>

Whereas these elements can be understood in light of the influence of oral tradition, scholars have noted the opposite influence — from the play to the oral tradition. Namely, the song entitled *Zadarknjia Mare/Mare from Zadar* is, in Franjo Fancev's view, indebted for the plot of its first part to the play.<sup>142</sup> The song differs from the play in some details, such as the figure of the main antagonist: while the main threat to Margaret in the play is the king Olibrius, the prosecutor of Mare from the song is an Ottoman emperor. This can be easily explained by the context of the existing threat from the Ottomans during the time when the song was created. Another confusion for Fancev lies in the fact that this song is recorded far from Zadar, on the island of Hvar. However, Fancev most likely referred to *The Passion of Saint Margaret*, rather than *The play of the life of Saint Margaret the virgin and martyr*, since the origin of the latter could be traced to Hvar. I intend to clarify this later in my discussion.

### **Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr**

The prologue is spoken by an angel who seeks the audience's patience and compassion for the two martyrs whose suffering they are about to witness. The play begins with a sacrificial ceremony honouring Roman gods and performed by the Emperor Decius, consul Valerie, and pagan priests. Being afraid of the growing influence of Christianity, the emperor commands the arrest of Pope Sixtus, leader of the Christians. Sixtus understands that his life is coming to an end, so he entrusts the riches of the Church to one of his deacons, Lawrence, putting him in charge of distributing it to the poor. The emperor is trying to force Sixtus, together with his two deacons, Felicissimus and Ianuaris, to abandon Christianity and to begin worship of the Roman god, Mars. However, after the pope and the deacons are taken to the Roman temple, they start praying to the Christian god and the temple collapses. The emperor shows no mercy and condemns Sixtus and his two deacons to death. Immediately after they are beheaded, Lawrence is put in a dungeon and the angel announces that the first day

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<sup>141</sup> ...*kako zlato jima vlase / ...Mnogu lipost ona jima, / ustrili me ne očima...*  
*Hrvatsko srednovjekovno pjesništvo*, ed. by Kapetanović and others, p. 811.

<sup>142</sup> Franjo Fancev, ed., *Građa za povijest hrvatske književnosti XI* [The Sources for the History of Croatian Literature, vol. 11] (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1932), pp.17-19.

of the performance is over. Aiming to find out where the Christian riches are hidden, Consul Valerie interrogates Lawrence. Lawrence seemingly agrees to give the treasure to the emperor, but says he needs three days to find the wealth. After the three days he fulfils the promise and comes to meet the consul. However, instead of bringing the hidden wealth, he invites the group of poor people, among whom he distributed the goods, to accompany him when visiting the emperor, declaring that these human beings are the most precious possession of the Christian Church. The emperor realizes he has been fooled by Lawrence and puts him in a dungeon. The emperor tortures Lawrence, hoping that Lawrence will reveal where the riches are hidden, but with no success. The people of Rome are astonished by Lawrence's courage, which leads them to convert to Christianity. The emperor tortures and kills eight Christians, and finally Lawrence is put on the great gridiron with coals beneath where he dies after a long and painful torture. At the end, the other deacons and pious Christians gather around his body to mourn the great martyr. The last words are spoken by the angel, who calls the audience to abandon worldly goods and sins, and instead to follow Saint Lawrence's example and dedicate their lives to God.

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The worship of Saint Lawrence's cult in the form of theatrical performances belongs to one of the long-standing traditions of the eastern Adriatic. Three plays thematising the life and death of Saint Lawrence are preserved up to today: two scripts of a highly similar content<sup>143</sup> both dating most probably from the seventeenth century, and the third text dates from the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>144</sup> The later script, which is the most recent, is longer than the first two texts and contains more elaborate plots and a more developed system of versification.<sup>145</sup>

*The Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* earned the attention of historiographers in the mid-nineteenth century, decades prior to the interest for other medieval plays from the eastern Adriatic corpus, during the emergence of the first Croatian literary canon. The early interest resulted in the first publication of the play in 1874. Unfortunately, the research which accompanied it was not done in satisfactory

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<sup>143</sup> The text can be found in the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts under the signature 1050 (partially preserved text) and 1051 (complete text).

<sup>144</sup> The text can be found in the same archive and is stored under the signature I a. 108.

<sup>145</sup> *Leksikon hrvatske književnosti: djela* [Lexicon of Croatian literature: Works], ed. by Dunja Dujmić-Detoni and others (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2008), p. 705.

ways: a number of researchers interpreted the plays without having a good overview of the existing scholarship, and drew conclusions based on partial access to the sources. Early scholarly attention also included a strong influence from Slavic philologists from abroad who were not well acquainted with the wider context in which the literary works appeared. In the period that followed, interest for the play waned and scholars ceased analysing primary sources, relying instead on the earlier research.

Similar to *The Passion of Saint Margaret* the question of authorship revolves around the tendency of scholars to attribute the authorship of the play to a prominent literary figure from the period. Given that the scholars agreed that the scripts of *The Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the martyr* originated from Stari Grad, Island of Hvar, it is not surprising that the authorship was attributed to Petar Hektorović, the most prominent humanist of the sixteenth century from Stari Grad.<sup>146</sup> However, not all the historiographers agreed with this attribution. The debate on the authorship started in the second half of the nineteenth century, and has not yet been resolved. The most influential historiographers who took part in the debate in the nineteenth century were Pavel Jozef Šafařík, Šime Ljubić, and Nestor Memnovič Petrovskij, while Ivan Vončina contributed to the debate in the second half of the twentieth century. There are several reasons which brought the researchers to the conclusion that Hektorović may have contributed to the creation of the play stored under the signature I. a.108 by revising some parts of the play (possibly by adapting the play for one of its performances). Still, it does not fully justify attribution of the authorship to Hektorović and leaves the question of authorship unresolved.

Unlike the question of authorship, which drew much attention from the historiographers, the question of the origin of the play was almost fully omitted in the scholarship on the play. Only one mention of a possible relation of the plays to the Florentine's play *Sacra Rappresentzione di San Lorenzo* can be found in a footnote in Nikica Kolumbić's text.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> On the authorship debate see 'Petar Hektorović', in *Djela Petra Hektorovića* [The Works of Petar Hektorović], ed. by Josip Hamm, Josip Vončina and Mirko Deanović, pp. 7-34, (pp. 21-37).

<sup>147</sup> Nikica Kolumbić, 'Hrvatska srednjovjekovna drama u vremenu i prostoru' [Croatian Medieval Drama in Time and Space], *Dani Hvraskog kazališta*, 2 (1985), 1-25 (21). Later in this part of the thesis I will analyse the relation between the play written in Italian and versions of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*

All three plays are predominantly written in typical medieval verse of eight syllable couplets, and the rhythm of the verse is based on the stress which is in most cases placed in the third or the fifth syllable in the verse. There are, however, parts of the plays which can be exempt from this rule. When studying the play stored under the signature I.a.108 Vončina recognized that the play consists of two language and stylistic layers.<sup>148</sup> Whereas one layer contains the features of verses closely related to the oral tradition and the taste of popular classes, the other layer reflects a higher literary consciousness. That layer occasionally contains verses of more than eight syllables and with different rhythm and rhyme composition.

All philologists that have studied the scripts have agreed that, by these linguistic features, the plays belong to a south-čakavian literary circle. The precise geographical location was determined by a non-textual feature: namely, that the plays thematise life and death of Saint Lawrence, local patron saint of Vrboška, a place at the island of Hvar in close proximity to Stari Grad.

### **The Play of the History of Saint Panutius**

After a prologue by an angel, this short play begins with Panutius's prayer. Panutius, the hermit, asks God to tell him who is the most similar to him. In reply to his prayers, God sends him an angel who advises him to go and look for a piper. When Panutius runs into a piper, the piper begins his confession, telling Panutius about his sins. Panutius then asks the piper to recount two good deeds from his life. The Piper tells the story of when he saved a nun from his friends who wanted to hurt her, and how once he gave money to a woman who needed it to save her poor, innocent husband from prison. This convinces Panutius that the piper is a good man worthy of salvation and persuades him to join his order.

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This play is a part of the collection *Vartal (Garden)* in which the Dalmatian Renaissance author, Petar Lucić, collected a great number of works from other Renaissance authors from Dalmatia.

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written in Croatian, aiming to contribute to the ongoing debate on the authorship of the play.

<sup>148</sup> *Djela Petra Hektorovića*, p.32.

After the end of *The Play of Saint Panutius* in the collection *Vartal* there is a sentence: 'To your [reader's] knowledge, this is a work of Marko Marulić'.<sup>149</sup> This comment which was written by Lucić, Marulić's coeval, who collected the texts in *Vartal* remained an irrefutable evidence of Marulić's authorship of this play. From Ivan Kukuljević, who first found the manuscript in 1854, until Slobodan Prosperov Novak, who in the 1986 wrote one of the most recent studies of the play, no one has challenged this attribution.

The debate on the origin of the play does not completely overlap with the question of authorship. While all scholars agree that Marulić is the author of the copy found in Trogir, there are disagreements about its emergence. Ever since Armin Pavić noted the connection of Marulić's play with Feo Belcari's *Rappresentazione di San Pannuzio* (*The Play of Saint Panutius*) the opinion that the play is a translation of the Belcari's play has become largely accepted. Even though Juraj Roić noticed the difference between the numbers of verses, he did not analyse it and, as many authors after him, he also described the Marulić's play as a mere translation.<sup>150</sup> Slobodan Prosperov Novak on the other hand argues that, rather than merely a translation of Belcari's play, Marulić's play should be seen as an adaptation. In his view, the story of a captured woman, which is narrated by a character within the frame of the play, is Marulić's original contribution, as this story does not exist in the Italian role model.<sup>151</sup> Thereby Marulić placed the play within a tradition of female captive stories which are present in eastern Adriatic literature and theatre, with the play *Robinja* [Female Captive] from Hanibal Lucić, author from Hvar, as one of the most prominent examples.

The most distinctive features of this play are related to its form. First of all, with only 180 verses, this play is the shortest within the corpus. Whereas the number of verses in other plays varies from 550 to 2,500, this play is significantly shorter. Another significant feature in relation to the form of the play concerns the number of

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<sup>149</sup> 'Marula Marka toj je složenje znaj'. The quotation is taken from Marko Marulić, *Drame* [The Plays], ed. by Marija Klenova and Slobodan Prosperov Novak, (Zagreb: Hrvatsko društvo kazališnih kritičara i teatrologa, Teatrologijska biblioteka, 1986), p. 10.

<sup>150</sup> Roić, 'Starohrvatska crkvena prikazanja', p. 20.

<sup>151</sup> For more on this interpretation, which possibly is not the most accurate, but provides a good example of how to treat Croatian adaptation of Italian plays, see *Drame*, ed. by Marija Klenova and Slobodan Prosperov Novak, pp. 36-40.

syllables in the verse. As explained previously, the eight-syllables verses were almost exclusively used within the genre of eastern Adriatic saints' plays. With its twelve-syllables verse, *The Play of Saint Panutius* represents an exception in the corpus. It will be especially interesting to study these two features in the context of the performance of the play. Both the length of the play and its verse composition can imply that the audience could have had a different taste than the audience who observed (and participated) in the performances of other plays from the corpus.

### **The Play of Saints Beatrice, and the brothers Simplicius and Faustinus**

This play consists of five acts. It begins with the Roman Emperor's prohibition of Christians. Batistel, one of the Emperor's servants, denounces the brothers Simplicius and Faustinus as worshipers of Christ. During the interrogation, the brothers acknowledge the Emperor's worldly authority, but refuse to accept his religion. In response to their disobedience, the Emperor condemns them to torture. The torture, however, does not affect their strong commitment to Christ and the Emperor condemns them to death. After they are beheaded, an Angel appears and comments on their fate. In the fourth act, Beatrice, the sister of Simplicius and Faustinus, desperate after their death, seeks help from her friend Lucia. Lucia hosts frightened Beatrice in her home and helps her bury her brothers. After realizing that Beatrice is left all alone with a rich estate, Lucretius denounces her to the Emperor for being Christian, hoping that he will get hold of her estate as the reward for his loyalty. Beatrice is then interrogated in front of the Emperor, and, like her brothers, she refuses to deny her devotion to Christ. Finally, she is condemned to death by suffocation. As promised, the Emperor awards Beatrice's estate to Lucretius and in the fifth act Lucretius gathers his friends and family to celebrate this. During the celebration a child appears and puts a curse on Lucretius, after which four devils come to punish him. After seeing Lucretius being badly punished, everyone converts to Christianity. The play finishes with the blessing of Saint Stephen who emphasizes the moral of the play.

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Historians have thus far not managed to agree on the origin of this play. There is a group of authors including Armin Pavić, August Leskien, and Josip Roić who rejected



any possibility that the play had an Italian role model.<sup>152</sup> According to them, the play was a product of the dramatization of a legend from the *Golden Legend* collection; more precisely, a legend from *Acta sactorum* (t. VII, die 29, p 36).<sup>153</sup> The editor of the first publication of the play, Matija Valjavec, agreed with them, although with some hesitation. He supported the hypothesis on their originality with a quote from the legend which by content and syntax resembles a part of the play (a stage direction and couple of lines of a dialogue—altogether approximately 10 verses). Valjavec also noticed a character in the play named Batistel who does not appear in the legend and the fact that the name Batistel does not have Slavic origins made Valjavec allow for the possibility that the play was written upon an Italian role model.<sup>154</sup>

Finally, the question of the origin of the play was most recently tackled in the monograph on Croatian medieval religious drama from 1978, written by the Italian Slavic philologist Saverio Perillo, who agreed on the possibility of an Italian role model.<sup>155</sup>

### **The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina**

This play consists of three acts. The prologue is delivered by Saint Jelena who carries the cross in her arms. She addresses the citizens of Hvar and tells them the story of Cyprian and Justina.

The play begins with Justina's conversion to Christianity and the glorious appearance of Christ and angels who bless Justina for her decision. The next scene shows Cyprian, a pagan magician, who is trying to figure out the best strategy to win Justina's love. He is trying to achieve his goal with the help of three devils: Hmućko, Smet, and Zbulon, who disguises himself as a lady (and later into Justina herself). However, each attempt is unsuccessful; Justina frightens the devils with the cross, the symbol of Christ. After one of the devils confesses to Cyprian the reason for their failure, Cyprian decides to convert to Christianity. Given that Cyprian is a popular

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<sup>152</sup> Armin Pavić, *Historija dubrovačke drame*, [*The History of Dubrovnik drama*] (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti I umjetnosti, 1871), p. 13.

<sup>153</sup> Roić, 'Starohrvatska crkvena prikazanja', p. 11.

<sup>154</sup> *Crkvena prikazanja starohrvatska*, ed. by Valjavec, p. IX.

<sup>155</sup> Francesco Saverio Perillo, *Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja* [*Croatian Church Plays*] (Split: Mogućnosti, 1978), p. 45. Later in this part of the thesis I study Italian *sacre rappresentazioni*, which Perillo did not manage to cover, and try to resolve the puzzle of the genesis of the play.

pagan magician, the bishop first refuses to baptise him. Finally, Cyprian manages to convince the bishop, who names Cyprian as his successor. This happens right in the moment when people of Antioch begin to convert to Christianity, following Justina's example. Their popularity grows and the word about the deeds of Bishop Cyprian and nun Justina reaches the emperor's regent, who wants to interrogate the pair and convince them to reject Christianity. During the interrogation they claim their firm faith in Christ and the regent sentences them to death—they are to be boiled alive. However, before this is carried out, the fire catches the pagan priest and kills him. The regent, angry at his shameful failure, then commends the pair to be beheaded and their heads to be hanged on the road to the city. Antioch citizens gather to steal the bodies and to bury their heroes. At the end the angel emphasizes the importance of dedication to the cross and invites them to worship these saints just as they are worshipped in the Italian town Piacenza.

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The discussion of the origin of this play followed a similar pattern to the one on the origin of *The Play of Saints Beatrice, and the brothers Simplicius and Faustinus*. In the foreword to the first edition of the play the editor Valjavec stated that the origin can be traced to the *Golden Legend*. In his opinion, Gazarović took the plot from the collection of legends, although excluding a scene which he found inappropriate. Roić also excluded the possibility of the existence of a foreign role model, emphasising that this play is an 'original product of Croatian author's creativity'. In support of this statement he provided a number of quotations proving similarities between the play and the legend.<sup>156</sup> Finally, the historiographer Stevanović supported the originality hypothesis, although tracing the origin to a story from Domenico Calvace's translation of the collection *Vite dei Santi Padri*.<sup>157</sup>

In contrast to the previously mentioned author, Milorad Medini proposed a hypothesis that Gazarović was inspired by a play written somewhere in today's Italy, most likely in Piacenza; he was led to this conclusion by the verses from the epilogue of the play in which the character of Angel explains that Cyprian and Justina are highly

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<sup>156</sup> Roić, 'Starohrvatska crkvena prikazanja', p. 162.

<sup>157</sup> Pavle Stevanović, 'Izvor Gazarovićevog Prikazanja i muke Sv. Ciprijana i Justine' ['Sources for Gazarović's Play of the Passion of Saint Cyprian and Justina'], *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor*, XVI (1936), 39-50.

worshiped in Piacenza.<sup>158</sup> This hypothesis was almost forgotten until 1961 when Franjo Trogrančić found another piece of evidence in support of this hypothesis.<sup>159</sup> After studying Italian *sacre rappresentazioni* this Slavic philologist based in Italy indicated that the possible origin of the play could be found in the play *The Martyrdom of Saint Giustina (Martirio di Santa Giustina)* written by Caltado di Moro at the beginning of the seventeenth century in Padua.

As it can be seen, even the proponents of the originality hypothesis do not challenge the possibility that the plays can be traced to Italian origins in some form; after all, both *Golden Legend* and *Vite dei Santi Padri* undoubtedly belong to the Italian cultural corpus. The point of contestation revolved around the question of authorship, rather than the question of transnationality. According to the opposing camp, the plays, not only were, inspired by the Italian tradition, but they represented pure translations of Italian dramas.

### **The Play of the Life of Saint Guglielma, the Queen of Hungary**

The prologue of this play is delivered by two angels who retell the story of Guglielma's life. The play begins with the conversion of the Hungarian king to Christianity. Excited about the new stage of his life, he wants to marry a noble and pious woman and therefore sends his brother to propose (on his behalf) to Guglielma, a young Christian daughter of the king of England. Even though she is vowed to virginity, Guilelma agrees, following her parents' advice. Upon her arrival the king prepares a big celebration in honour of their marriage. However soon after the king has departed to fight in crusade, Guglielma is left alone with the king's brother who is in love with Guilelma and wants to seduce her. Guglielma rejects him and the king's brother, as an act of revenge, accuses her of infidelity upon the return of his brother. Guglielma is then sent to be executed, but the executioner believes her and lets her go. Lost, lonely and frightened, Guliema is visited by the Virgin Mary, and then by an angel who encourages her. Soon after they have left, Guglielma meets a bargee and his sick

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<sup>158</sup> Milorad Medini, *Povijest hrvatske književnosti u Dalmaciji i Dubrovniku I* [The history of literature in Dalmatia and Dubrovnik I] (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1902), pp. 21-25.

<sup>159</sup> Unfortunately, this book was unavailable to me, therefore here I refer to Berić, 'Contribution to the biography of Marin Gazarović, the poet', p. 78. Later in this part of the thesis I analyse the similarities between the play written in Italian and the play from the eastern Adriatic.

friend whom she miraculously heals by saying a prayer. One of them takes her to the monastery where the nuns accept her as one of them, appreciating her gift of healing. In the third act, the king's brother is sick and dying of leprosy. The doctors are sceptical about the possibility of his recovery, and one of the servants suggests a visit from the famous healer from the monastery, who represents the last hope for the king's brother. Guglielma, the healer, agrees to heal him under condition that he admits his sins. He does so and is saved by Guglielma, who then reveals her real identity to the king. In the end, the couple are reunited and decide to leave the court and to start a new life as hermits. In the epilogue, two angels call on the audience to follow the example of Guglielma and believe in God.

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In the first published study of the play, Armin Pavić informed us about the play entitled *Le miracle de l'imperatrice de Rome* which is a part of the French collection of mystery plays entitled *Les miracles de notre dame*. According to him the French play contains the same plot as *The Play of the Life of Saint Guglielma, the Queen of Hungary*. However, the few shared details between two plays made Pavić conclude that it is unlikely that the play in French served as a direct role model to Gazarović. Still, he warned of the existence of an Italian play, written by Antonia Pulci, which was not available to Pavić at the time of writing of the study, but which in his opinion might have served as the role model.<sup>160</sup>

Valjavec followed Pavić's suggestion and in the foreword to the publication of the play presented the eastern Adriatic play as a translation of the Italian play. This was criticized by Roić who pointed out differences between the two plays, arguing that Gazarović in fact modified the original play while translating it. In his analysis Roić provided a list of differences between these two plays, mostly focusing on the number of verses and the scenes which were added and excluded in Gazarović's play.<sup>161</sup>

The last three plays which were presented all share the same authorship – they were written by Marin Gazarović, an early modern writer from the island of Hvar. Gazarović was a nobleman, born in the second half of the sixteenth century who spent most of his life working as a teacher in Hvar community school. Even though his

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<sup>160</sup> Pavić, *Historija dubrovačke drame*, p. 14.

<sup>161</sup> Roić, 'Starohrvatska crkvena prikazanja', pp. 169-70. I expand the comparative analysis of the two plays later in this part of the chapter.

interests in writing literature were broad, including secular poetry and drama, as well as pastorals, yet he was mostly dedicated to writing religious drama. Apart from the saints' plays, Gazarović also wrote an Easter play.

An interesting fact from his biography, which adds a special light on the transnational approach to his corpus, is that during 1623 he was a representative of the commune of Hvar in the Venice Republic. Besides his diplomatic tasks, Gazarović used the time in Venice for writing and he published his two plays on secular themes there.<sup>162</sup>

### **Play of the Life Saint Margaret the Virgin and Martyr**

The prologue of the play is spoken by an angel who summarizes the story of Saint Margaret. In the opening of the play, Margaret, the daughter of Antiochian pagan priest Theososius, is baptized by a Christian priest. After Margaret's nanny, who raised her after the death of her mother, tells her father about Margaret's conversion, he renounces Margaret for good. In the next scene, Olibrius, the king of Antioquia, notices Margaret while she is caring for her sheep in the fields and wishes to marry her. Margaret rejects his proposal claiming that she is engaged to Christ. Olibrius, angry with her response, commands Margaret's torture. The first act ends with the angel's comment on Margaret's destiny. The second act includes a detailed presentation of Margaret's torture. Her pain and suffering, however, cannot affect Margaret's strong commitment to Christ, and Olibrius commands her imprisonment. While in prison Margaret is visited by an angel who gives her a cross, a gift from Christ. She uses the cross when, first the dragon, and then another beast, visit her dungeon and attack her. She fights them with the cross. The next miraculous event in the prison is the appearance of food which is sent from Heaven, giving her strength for the next round of torture. After Olibrius's offer is rejected once more, he sentences her to death. In her last moments, Margaret prays for the salvation of her executioners' souls and both of them repent. The people of Antioquia are shattered by her death while Olibrius is afraid of their anger. Instead of revenge, the final act shows the glorious celebration of the martyred Margaret as choirs from Heaven sing together with the people of Antioquia.

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<sup>162</sup> Dušan Berić, 'Contribution to the biography of Marin Gazarović, the poet' [Prilog biografiji pjesnika Marina Gazarovića], *Prilozi povijesti otoka Hvara*, 1 (1959), 73-86.

*The Play of the Life of Saint Margaret the Virgin and Martyr* is a second type of dramatic elaboration on the martyrdom of Saint Margaret in eastern Adriatic corpus of plays. It can be differentiated from the three other texts by the later appearance and by different stylistic features. According to Pavić and Roić the play is a translation of the Italian play: *Rappresentazione di santa Margherita*.<sup>163</sup> Even though the historiography managed to recognize that this play has a role model in an Italian play, the comparative approach was not the focus of the scholars. The comparative approach was conducted only by Roić in 1840, and only to some extent; after describing the content of the play, Roić listed some scenes which could be found in the play written in Croatian, but not in the play written in Italian.<sup>164</sup> There is no mention of the possible author. However, further comparative study of the play in relation to other plays which make part of the same manuscript might give some hints on the authorship.

Like the rest of the corpus, this play is written in the eight-syllable verse. However, whereas in *The Passion of Saint Margaret* this verse is constant, in the *Play of the life of saint Margaret the Virgin and Martyr* there is a number of exceptions, in the sense that the verses sometimes contain more than eight syllables. Perillo relates these exceptions to more recent plays when theatre audience becomes more heterogeneous.<sup>165</sup>

### **The Origins of the Genre: Rejected Traditions and Theatrical Adaptations**

A careful look at the attitude of historiographers towards to the saints' plays, as outlined in the overview above, reveals two important trends. Firstly, the interest in historiography of the saints' plays was at its most extensive during the late-nineteenth century. Exceptionally, the saints' plays were in the focus of contemporary debates in cases where there were assumptions that the authorship of the plays could be assigned to the most prominent canonical authors of the period. The second important notion is related to the fact that the historiographers were most interested in discussing the issue of the plays' originality, or, in the other words, in discovering if the plays were

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<sup>163</sup> Pavić, *Historija dubrovačke drame*, p. 27.

<sup>164</sup> Roić, pp. 172-74.

<sup>165</sup> Perillo, *Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja*, p. 80. I will study this topic further later in this part of the thesis.

originally Croatian or if they were indebted to foreign (almost exclusively Italian) traditions. The interests of historiographers corresponds with the emergence of the Illyrian movement: a cultural and political movement of prominent writers, intellectuals, and politicians who fought for the Croatian national establishment within the Habsburg Monarchy – based on linguistic and ethnic unity – which marked the beginning of a nation-building process in Croatia.<sup>166</sup> One of the major activities of people and institutions<sup>167</sup> involved in this movement was work on the creation of a cultural canon which would serve to legitimize the nation's cultural identity.<sup>168</sup> The canon was shaped according to the following ideas. Firstly, the movement was based on the prioritisation of the new language standard, based on the štokavian dialect;<sup>169</sup> all works that did not fit into the 'invented tradition'<sup>170</sup> had to be excluded. Secondly, in line with Ernest Gellner's work on nineteenth-century nationalism,<sup>171</sup> the Illyrian movement demonstrated a strong preference for high culture, modelled according to

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<sup>166</sup> The term Habsburg Monarchy relates to the area ruled by the Habsburg dynasty (1526-1745) and its successors the Habsburg-Lothringens (1745-1918). The capital of the monarchy was Vienna (with short exemption from 1583 to 1611 when it was Prague). From 1804 to 1867 the Monarchy transformed into the Austrian empire, and since 1867 until the end of its existence it was Austria-Hungary.

<sup>167</sup> Institutions involved in the formation of the canon include schools, publishing houses and literary journals, as well as agents such as authors, publishers, critics, or censors, according to Pierre Bourdieu, *The field of cultural production: essays on art and literature* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1993), pp. 29-73. In the context of Croatian late-nineteenth century formation of the canon Marina Protrka emphasizes the role of periodical journals for being the medium which established a special relationship with their audience by educating them. Marina Protrka, *Stvaranje književne nacije: oblikovanje kanona u hrvatskoj književnoj periodici 19. stoljeća* [Creation of Literary Nation: Formation of the Canon in Croatian Literary Periodicals in the Nineteenth Century] (Zagreb: Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Filozofski fakultet, 2008).

<sup>168</sup> Protrka, p. 14.

<sup>169</sup> For more on the process of constructing a literary standard see Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and symbolic power*, trans. by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity in association with Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 17-18. In the case of Croatia in the context of Pan-Slavic movement, the choice of the štokavian dialect as the standard was logical due to being the closest to the standard of the neighbouring nations with which they tended to unite.

<sup>170</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in *The Invention of Traditions*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 1-14.

<sup>171</sup> As Ernest Gellner explains, the culture of the modernized nineteenth century societies must be 'great or high (literate, sustained) culture, and it can no longer be diversified, locally-tied, illiterate little culture or tradition'. *Nations and nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), p. 38.

the taste of the new liberal class; popular literary genres were on the other hand excluded from the new ‘imagined community’.<sup>172</sup> Thirdly, the Illyrian movement emphasised the Pan-Slavic objectives,<sup>173</sup> which were in opposition to the attempts by the Hungarian government to include Croatia in their own respective nation-building frame.

The corpus of saints’ plays failed to fulfil these criteria for several reasons. First, it could not be used as a role model of linguistic standardization since the genre of Dalmatian saints’ plays was written in čakavian, rather than štokavian dialect. Secondly, the saints’ plays belonged to popular, rather than high culture. Thirdly, given that no other Slavic tradition shared the practice of performance of the saints’ plays, these plays were understood as not reflecting Pan-Slavic ideas. On the contrary, given that the plays were written according to Italian role models,<sup>174</sup> most saints plays were qualified as non-representative of Croatian tradition.<sup>175</sup> Due to the described ‘inappropriateness’ and the genre’s inconsistency with the concept of national literature, the corpus of these plays was positioned at the very edge of the Croatian cultural canon. As a consequence of that peripheral position, the saints’ plays were rejected as irrelevant and aesthetically worthless in the first histories of drama and theatre they.<sup>176</sup> One element plays a crucial role in the aesthetic argument of worthlessness – the criterion of originality. In their discussion of the saints’ plays, the historians built their argument about the aesthetic worthlessness primarily through

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<sup>172</sup> As defined in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 2006).

<sup>173</sup> Related to the Pan-Slavic movement, the movement from the nineteenth century aimed at the unity of Slavs on political, cultural, and religious levels. The impact of this movement was the strongest among south Slavs.

<sup>174</sup> Based mostly on the fact that they knew of the existence of a play with a similar title written in Italian – in most cases, however, they admit they did not have a chance to study the Italian plays

<sup>175</sup> The *Passion of Saint Margaret*, is an exception in that sense – as a product of dramatization of the Croatian prose legend, its origins could be traced in Croatian tradition. As a consequence, the *Passion of Saint Margaret* is the most studied plays in the scholarship and has a special place in school and university curricula. Marija Krnić, ‘Rejected Traditions: Saints’ Plays in Croatian Dramatic Canon’ [Odbačene tradicije: svetačka prikazanja u hrvatskom dramskom kanonu], *Dani Hvarškoga kazališta*, 46 (2020), 149-67 (p. 151).

<sup>176</sup> See for instance Medini, p. 29.



lack of originality, while the phrase with which the authors were mostly operating was that the plays can be characterized as ‘products of pure translation’.<sup>177</sup>

In my analyses I challenge this way of thinking in Croatian historiography, and I argue that the transfer of the plays from the western to the eastern coast, according to Linda Hutcheon’s distinction, is not a result of *translation* but of *adaptation*. In most concepts of translation, ‘the source text is granted an axiomatic primacy and authority, and the rhetoric of comparison has most often been that of faithfulness and equivalence.’<sup>178</sup> When talking of adaptation, however, Hutcheon assumes a new work has been created. Three distinctive but interrelated criteria need to be met for this to happen. First, the work of culture needs to be a product of transposition, which means there needs to be shift of medium, genre, frame, or ontology (‘from the real to the fictional, from a historical account or biography to a fictionalized narrative or drama’)<sup>179</sup>: thanks to this, the story is told from a different point of view. Second, it should involve the process of re-interpretation and re-creation of the other work: for instance, two different adaptations of Thomas Mann’s novel *Death in Venice* necessarily have different focus and impact.<sup>180</sup> Third, the audience should experience it as the form of intertextuality in the sense that another work resonates in the memory of the audience; to use Hutcheon’s example, watching the movie *Resident Evil* invokes different experiences for those who have played the videogame from which the film was adapted, than for those who did not have this experience.<sup>181</sup>

Originally, Hutcheon built her model by analysing contemporary phenomena and media of more recent origin: contemporary novels, theatre productions, cinema, and video-games. Nevertheless, if we look at the process of emergence of the saints’ plays on the eastern Adriatic, it can become clear that in fact we are describing a phenomenon similar to the one which Hutcheon gave in her definition of adaptation: the process in which authors transposed the plays from one context to another (different geographical and temporal frame: Italy to Dalmatia, fifteenth to seventeenth century), re-interpreted the content of the work (for instance, the strong emphasis on

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<sup>177</sup> For a detailed discussion of this scholarship see Krnić, ‘Rejected Traditions’, pp. 156-57.

<sup>178</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 150.

<sup>179</sup> *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 8.

<sup>180</sup> Hutcheon, p. 19.

<sup>181</sup> Hutcheon, p. 8.

the melodramatic aspect of the plot in the *Play of Saint Guglielma, the Queen of Hungary*), and worked with the narratives which at least to some extent were familiar to the audience (as the Dalmatian audience either travelled to Italy and knew the genre, or were familiar with the accounts of saints' lives from the oral tradition).

In order to explain her theory, Hutcheon presented it through five key aspects. The first question, *what?*, addresses the transformation of the mode of engagement (telling, showing, and interacting as three main modes through which people are engaged in the process of adaptation; for instance, from novel to stage performance — from telling to showing) or form (this refers to different genres within the same mode of engagement, for instance when opera is turned to drama) which the work experiences in the process of adaptation.<sup>182</sup> In the context of my research, the latter form of adaptation will be more represented, given that in the early modern period the diversity of modes in which the story could have been presented were less differentiated than nowadays. Moreover, according to Hutcheon, adaptation can occur also within the same mode of engagement and within the same form. This happens often when a work of art is adapted in a different time period,<sup>183</sup> for instance in the case of Dalmatian saints' plays, where texts which were written in Florence around year 1500 reached the peak of production in Dalmatia more than a century later.

In order to problematize the status of adapters and motivation for adaptation Hutcheon merges two questions, *who?* and *why?* Regarding the question *who?*, she points out that, due to complexity of their productions, in some types of cultural works such as film or opera, it is difficult to distinguish who acquires merit for each segment of production. Furthermore, concerning the question *why?*, Hutcheon points out two main sources of motivation: economic (profit from the adapted work) and didactic (e.g. transmitting political messages through the adaptation). Both questions are equally complex when it comes to early modern performances. Even though, starting from the early modern tradition, the name of the adaptor is acknowledged in the written form, the role of the other participants remained unacknowledged. In order to achieve a better understanding of motivation for the adaptation of early modern performances it is important to expand the unit of analysis to the communities within which they were performed, at large. In the case of the early modern Dalmatian

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<sup>182</sup> Hutcheon, pp. 22-27.

<sup>183</sup> Hutcheon, pp. 142-45.

society, this will concern in the first place the activities of confraternities, which had crucial influence on the cultural life of both urban and rural communities (e.g. the performance of saints' plays dedicated to the local patron saints).

The question *how?* switches the focus from the adaptors to the recipients: their knowledge, expectations, and modes of participation. For instance, the audience familiar with the work which is being adapted ('knowing audience') will have higher demands and expectations than the 'unknowing audience', and might experience 'pleasure in intertextuality'.<sup>184</sup> Although it is unlikely that most members of the audience in Dalmatia had a chance to see the original Italian performances, many of them were familiar with the plots and characters thanks to the written accounts of the saints' lives. Moreover, they were familiar with the frame of the performance, and had developed performance literacy,<sup>185</sup> as they could draw from their experience of watching other theatrical forms, such as Passion plays, which were performed previously in their communities. Given that, as Hutcheon describes, a theatrical event is highly immersive, one can assume that the audience in Dalmatia had an important impact on how the saints' play genre was modelled, and this will be studied from a comparative perspective.<sup>186</sup>

With the final two questions, *when* and *where*, Hutcheon acknowledges that no adaptation exists in a vacuum, but travels through time and space. She uses the questions to explore what happens when a story travels from its context of creation to the context of reception. In the new context, the story is being transformed results in a new hybrid product.<sup>187</sup> Hutcheon borrows an anthropological concept of indigenization to describe this type of cultural encounters, as 'people pick and choose

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<sup>184</sup> Hutcheon, p. 117.

<sup>185</sup> Jill Stevenson defines this as 'a strategy of seeing in which they [audience] derived the devotional meaning from the rhythmic encounter with an image's material'. *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture. Sensual Piety in Late Medieval York* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 41.

<sup>186</sup> For more on the high level of engagement of the audience within processional space in Corpus Christi's performances see David Wiles, *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), pp. 63-92. For the specific Dalmatian context, with the regard to the performance of the Passion plays see Marija Krnić, 'Passion & Devotion: Passion Plays and the Performance of the Piety on the Eastern Adriatic Coast', unpublished master thesis (Budapest: Central European University, 2014).

<sup>187</sup> Hutcheon, p. 149.

what they want to transplant to their own soil.’<sup>188</sup> This will be especially important in the study of cultural transfers in the early modern Adriatic, where theatrical practices were transferred from cultural centres of the early modern Europe to the Dalmatian semi-periphery.

In the following three subsections, I apply the concept of adaptation in analysing the genesis of saints’ plays in Dalmatia. The analysis is carried out via a comparative analysis of three Dalmatian plays from the corpus and their Italian source plays.

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<sup>188</sup> Hutcheon, p. 150.

## Comparative Approach to the Saints' Plays from the Western and Eastern Adriatic

*Martyrdom of the virgin saint on both sides of the Adriatic coast: La sacra rappresentazione e festa di Santa Margherita and the Play of the Life of Saint Margaret, Virgin and Martyr.*<sup>189</sup>

The Italian play *La sacra rappresentazione di Santa Margherita* belongs to the corpus of the plays written by an anonymous Florentine author from the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>190</sup> The play is based on the legend from the *Golden Legend* written by Jacobus da Voragine, and was seen as a direct role-model for the Dalmatian saint's play the *Play of the Life Saint Margaret the Virgin and Martyr*.

A brief look at the *dramatis personae* of both plays indicates an immediate difference between the two plays. Both plays include characters who are essential for elaborating the plot of Saint Margaret's martyrdom and death, such as Saint Margaret, Olibrius, and Margaret's old nun. However, the Croatian play contains a much longer list of characters. Some of the characters present in the *Play of the Life Saint Margaret the Virgin and Martyr, the Martyr and Virgin* and who do not appear in the play written in Italian include: *a little shepherd, young men (older and younger), peasants, a group of young virgins, Jesus Christ, the choir of martyrs, the choir of angles*. The principle of addition of the characters (which are not present in the Italian original) can be recognized as an 'expansion', which is, according to Hutcheon, one of the typical

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<sup>189</sup> I used the most recent edition of *La sacra rappresentazione e festa di Santa Margherita* edited by Mario Bonfantini and published in *Le sacre rappresentazioni italiane: raccolta di testi dal secolo XIII al secolo XVI*, ed. by Mario Bonfantini (Milano: Bompiani, 1942), pp. 433-54. The Croatian play, *Prikazanje života Svete Margarite, divice i mučenice* [The Play of the Life of Saint Margaret, Virgin and Martyr] is cited from the only published source *Crkvena prikazaња starohrvatska XVI. i XVII. vijeka* [Sacral Old Croatian Plays from the 16th and the 17th century], ed. by Matija Valjavec (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademiya znanosti i umjetnosti, 1893), pp. 256-80. In order to avoid confusions, in my analyses I will refer to the Italian play as the *Sacra rappresentazione di Santa Margherita* and to the Croatian play as the *Play of the Life Saint Margaret the Virgin and Martyr*.

<sup>190</sup> *Le sacre rappresentazioni italiane: raccolta di testi dal secolo XIII al secolo XVI*, ed. by Bonfantini, p. 18.

principles in adaptation,<sup>191</sup> and in this case of adaptation can be understood as inspired by the specific context to which the plays were adapted.

The appearance of new characters does not affect the plot, as both plays deliver a similar story. The added elements, however, change the atmosphere in the adapted version, as in the scene in which Margaret, accompanied by the group of young virgins, talks to a young shepherd and asks him to take a look for her sheep.<sup>192</sup> In the Croatian play, this scene appears between the scene in which Margaret is spotted by Olibrius, and the scene in which he prosecutes Margaret. In the Italian play, on the other hand, Margaret is immediately prosecuted by Olibrius.<sup>193</sup> The characters of shepherds, peasants, and young virgins belong to the rustic world familiar to the audience of the early modern Dalmatian communes, far more than it was the case in the developed urban communities on the western side of the Adriatic Sea. The new elements therefore could serve to make the content of the play more familiar to the ordinary folk.

The presence of the figure of Christ can be explained by the same token. Whereas in the Italian play, Angel Gabriel visits Margaret in the dungeon and brings her a gift from Christ, in the Croatian play, the visit of the angel is preceded by the scene displaying Christ in Heaven handing the cross for Margaret to Angel Gabriel.<sup>194</sup> After Saint Margaret's death, which is where the Italian play ends, the Croatian play finishes with a scene of the choir of martyrs and choir of angels singing and taking Margaret's soul to the Heaven, while other characters repent.<sup>195</sup> The new elements, again, change the atmosphere in the Dalmatian version of the play, without necessarily changing the plot. The presence of the choir of martyrs and choir of angels, and the character of Jesus Christ, create a more solemn atmosphere than in the Italian play. Unlike Italian theatres of the time, characterized by cultivation of expression and

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<sup>191</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 181.

<sup>192</sup> *Prikazanje života Svete Margarite, divice i mučenice* [The Play of the Life of Saint Margaret, Virgin and Martyr] is cited from the only published source *Crkvena prikazańa starohrvatska XVI. i XVII. Vijeka* [Sacral Old Croatian Plays from the 16th and the 17th century], ed. by Matija Valjavec (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademiya znanosti i umjetnosti, 1893), pp. 256-80, (pp. 261-3).

<sup>193</sup> *La sacra rappresentazione e festa di Santa Margherita*, pp. 444-5.

<sup>194</sup> *Prikazanje života Svete Margarite*, pp. 270-1.

<sup>195</sup> *Prikazanje života Svete Margarite*, pp. 277-80.

diminished spirituality,<sup>196</sup> social developments in early modern Dalmatian towns were less affected by the values of humanism and the Renaissance. Therefore, it can be concluded that in order to reach the horizon of expectation of the local audience,<sup>197</sup> the author who adapted the *Sacra rappresentazione* emphasized the rustic and solemn atmosphere of the play, and did it in such a way to adjust it to the taste of the Dalmatian audience.

It is interesting to note that both plays display a similar tendency of using metatheatrical elements to add negative features to the characters. In the Italian play this concerns the character of a pagan priest dressed ‘in veste di buffone’.<sup>198</sup> Even though originating from Italian medieval humoristic tradition, the characters of *buffone* were commonly used in *sacre rappresenazioni* to represent figures of crippled or deformed characters.<sup>199</sup> In this case, the comic elements associated with *buffone* are used with a similar purpose, to point out the negative characterization of the pagan priest. The appearance of the character of satyr in the role of the demon who appears in Margaret’s dungeon in the eastern Adriatic play,<sup>200</sup> can be explained by the same principle. By the time when this play was written (most likely the beginning of the seventeenth century) the tradition of grotesque satyrs was largely established in the neighbouring theatrical area in Dubrovnik. By reaching out for a theatrical equivalent and adding an additional negative layer which the audience could recognize thanks to their background knowledge, the author on the eastern Adriatic play also made the play appealing in the eyes of the audience thanks to combining familiarity and novelty.<sup>201</sup> It is highly likely that the common people of Hvar could not have been aware of the rich theatrical tradition of the neighbouring Dubrovnik, in opposition to the noble people of Hvar. Preserved correspondence of the noblemen from Hvar demonstrates that some of them were very familiar with the literary and theatrical

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<sup>196</sup> As Bonfantini describes the Italian play in ‘L’introduzione’, in *Le sacre rappresentazioni italiane: raccolta di testi dal secolo XIII al secolo XVI*, ed. by Mario Bonfantini (Milano: Bompiani, 1942), pp.1-18. (p.9).

<sup>197</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an aesthetic of reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Brighton: Harvester, 1982).

<sup>198</sup> *La sacra rappresentazione e festa di Santa Margherita*, p. 434.

<sup>199</sup> Laura Bonato, *Tutti in festa: antropologia della cerimonialità*, (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2006), p. 82.

<sup>200</sup> *Prikazanje života Svete Margarite*, p.272.

<sup>201</sup> Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, p. 114.

trends in Dubrovnik.<sup>202</sup> The combination of the elements appealing to common people of Hvar and to the noblemen implies the multiple layers of the audience which author had in mind while he adopted the play.

The comparative analyses demonstrate that author did not only translate the play but he/she carefully adapted it according to the taste of the local audience. The next comparative analysis will focus on the theatrical practices of the communities in which the plays were performed.

*The Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence, and history of staging on both sides of the Adriatic coast*

As I explained earlier in this section, life and martyrdom of Saint Lawrence, an early Christian martyr, was dramatized in three plays on the east Adriatic coast. Two of them share many similarities and, judging by the language features, are of an older origin (I refer to those plays as 1050 and 1051, according to the signatures under which they can be found in the archive of Croatian Academy of Science and Arts). The third version is not completed, and is of more recent origin (I refer to this play as I a. 108., according to the signature in the same archive).

I will compare these plays with the Italian play – the *Play of Saint Lawrence, When He Was Martyred* [La rappresentazione di santo Lorenzo quando fu martirizzato] written by an anonymous author, and printed by Bartolomeo dei Libri in 1486 in Florence.<sup>203</sup> I argue that this play is the source for the Croatian plays on the basis of three features which they share together.<sup>204</sup> The first feature pertains to the fact that the Dalmatian plays follow the plot represented in the Florentine's play. The main

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<sup>202</sup> See 'Petar Hektorović', [Petar Hektorović] in *The Works of Petar Hektorović* [Djela Petra Hektorovića], ed. by Josip Hamm, Josip Vončina and Mirko Deanović, pp. 7-34 (pp. 21-37).

<sup>203</sup> I have consulted *La rappresentazione di santo Lorenzo quando fu martirizzato* (Florence: 1490-1495), Biblioteca Riccardiana, R. 686. For the date of origin of the play see Nerida Newbiggin, 'Four Notes on Florentine *Rappresentazioni*' [Quattro Postille alle rappresentazioni fiorentine], *Letteratura italiana antica*, 8 (2007), 393-98 (p. 396).

<sup>204</sup> I have also analysed the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* [Sacra Rappresentazione di San Lorenzo] written by Giovanni Angelo Lottini and printed in Florence by Michelangelo di Bartolomeo Sermartelli in 1592 (Florence: 1592), Palat 12. 5. 1. 44. Among these two plays, only the former could have served as a source play to the Dalmatian authors, since the latter is dated to 1592 while the Dalmatian plays were written in the beginning of the sixteenth century.



elements of this plot include: the martyrdom of Saint Sixtus, the break-down of the temple, Saint Lawrence's interrogation, presentation of the poor people to the Emperor, torture, and death. Furthermore, these elements are delivered in a similar way. In contrast to this, another Italian play which dramatized martyrdom of Saint Lawrence, entitled the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* [Sacra rappresentazione di San Lorenzo] by Giovanni Angelo Lottini, omits the dramatization of the events which precede Lawrence's imprisonment; and provides a less elaborated scenes of physical torture.<sup>205</sup> The second similarity pertains to the dramatization of martyrdom of Pope Sixtus. In putting the focus on the martyrdoms of both saints (not only Saint Lawrence, but also Pope Sixtus), they function as two-part plays. Finally, the third similarity pertains to the style of writing, as they are both written in verse. In the case of the *La rappresentazione di santo Lorenzo quando fu martirizzato*, this is *ottava rima*, eleven syllable stanza typically used in *sacre rappresentazione*, whereas in the *Plays of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* it was an eight-syllable couplet, also typical for Dalmatian saints' plays. However, notwithstanding these common features, the goal of my analysis is to analyse divergences between the Dalmatian plays and the Florentine play, in order to explain the process of adaptation.

**Firstly, the *dramatis personae*.** The source play consists of approximately twenty characters (given that some characters are presented as groups, it is not possible to give the exact estimate), while the Dalmatian plays contain thirty characters. The Dalmatian plays involve all characters from the Italian play: Saint Lawrence, Saint Sixtus, Valerian, Roman Emperor – Decius. These are drawn from the collection *Golden Legend* by Jacobus da Voragine and the legend on Saint Lawrence.<sup>206</sup> However, the Dalmatian play includes additional characters, who are associated to the main characters of the story. For instance, one of the main characters from the Italian play is Hypolith, whose conversion from paganism to Christianity is important in developing the plot: he starts off as a servant to Valerian, but in the course of the play he becomes one of Lawrence's main followers and accompanies him in several scenes.

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<sup>205</sup> Which is related to convention of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century religious plays to keep violent actions offstage. See Louise George Clubb, 'The Virgin martyr and the Tragedia Sacra', *Renaissance Drama*, 7 (1964), 103-126 (p. 109).

<sup>206</sup> Even though the Legend fuses about authority, the Italian source play chooses that the action takes place in the time of Decius, and Dalmatian play follow it in that.

The Dalmatian versions, on the other hand, also introduce the characters of Hypolith's wife and two children who are brutally executed. Interestingly, this is the fate of most characters added in Dalmatian adaptations: they are Christians who get executed by Romans, one by one, becoming martyrs.

In the previous point, we have seen a similar pattern to the one previously described in the case of the *Play of the Life Saint Margaret the Virgin and Martyr*, where the main principle of adaptation consisted in adding new characters. This is related to the second aspect of adaptation, pertaining to the duration of the plays. The addition of new characters in the Dalmatian version of the play on Saint Lawrence did not affect the plot, as all the plays delivered a similar story. However, the addition of the characters affected the modes of staging, and in particular the length of the play. To put it simple: more characters required more space. The Florentine play is 841 verses long, whereas the Dalmatian play is significantly longer as it includes 2189 verses. At the same time this translated to the duration of the plays: while the Italian source play was performed within one day, because of the addition of new characters and scenes in the Dalmatian version, here performances took place within two days. We can trace this in the text of the Dalmatian version, when the character of Angel appears after the imprisonment of Saint Lawrence. The character of Angel, who, typically for the medieval Italian and Dalmatian plays, speaks the prologue and the epilogue, invites the audience to return to see the rest of the performance the next morning: *Go with the blessing of God / and return with morning.*<sup>207</sup> This therefore marks the last scene of the first day of performance.

The third aspect refers to the configuration of the stage. It is known that the Italian 'new *sacre rappresentazioni*', the group of plays to which the source play belongs,<sup>208</sup> were not performed as grandiose public celebrations 'expressing the city's collective faith in its patrons and desire to do them honour'.<sup>209</sup> We can thus imagine that the source play was performed on a classical stage, a smaller stage, or even in the

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<sup>207</sup> *Play of Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* [Prikazanje života svetog Lovrinca, mučenika] in *Poems by Petar Hektorović and Hanibal Lucić* [Pjesma Petra Hektorovića i Hanibala Lucića], ed. by Ivan Vončina (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1874), 79-171 (p. 116).

<sup>208</sup> Nerida Newbigin, *Feste d' Oltrarno: Plays in Churches in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1996), p. 210.

<sup>209</sup> Nerida Newbigin, 'Agata, Apollonia and Other Martyred Virgins: Did Florentines Really See These Plays Performed?', *European Medieval Drama*, 1 (1997), 77-100 (p. 77).

court. The same cannot be said for the Dalmatian plays 1050 and 1051, which is what we can learn from the analysis of the stage directions.

On first glance, the stage directions in the source play and in the Dalmatian plays seem highly similar, being of the same length and frequency. They are also referential in that they serve to designate both the fictional space where the action takes place (for instance court, dungeon, temple), and to instruct the players on how to act. However, a closer analysis reveals a major difference. In contrast to the Italian text in which the stage directions suggest that the performers enter and leave the stage, as for instance in this stage direction: *As Saint Sixtus is being taken to the prison, Saint Lawrence comes on the scene by chance and seeing him, says to Saint Sixtus as follows,*<sup>210</sup> the stage directions in Dalmatian plays 1050 and 1051 suggest that players should be present on the stage for the whole duration of the play. Rather than entering and leaving the stage as required by the activity of their personages, in the Dalmatian plays the players who were already present on the stage should just step to the front of the stage when it was their personage's turn to speak. For instance: *Subsequently, this is the moment when the Emperor needs to stand up and go to his post...*<sup>211</sup> When not actively performing their role, or when they are in their 'neutral position', the players therefore shared a similar structural position as their spectators: quietly observing the performance.<sup>212</sup> As a result, the performance entailed a group event with around 30 players constantly present on the stage, with the players interchangeably taking the roles of the players and spectators. This is important for our understanding of the stage configuration, firstly, because it implies a larger stage, in contrast to the smaller stages in the courts, as this was the case with the source plays. Secondly, it is possible that the stages of such dimensions were publicly more exposed, in contrast to the plays from Tuscany which had had lost the public dimension and importance which old *feste* had in the fourteenth and the beginning of fifteenth century.

**Multiplication of characters/performers, timeframe of several days within which the performances took place, as well the configuration of the players on the stage represent the divergence of the Dalmatian plays from their source play.** These features indicate that the Dalmatian authors did not merely translate the plays,

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<sup>210</sup> Mentre che san Sisto è menato alla prigione San Lorenzo, abattendosi e vedendolo, dice a san Sisto così. *Play of Saint Lawrence, When He Was Martyred*

<sup>211</sup> 'Prikazanje svetog Lovrinca', p. 85. Za tim cesar ima ustati i pojti na svoje misto.

<sup>212</sup> Butterworth, *Staging Conventions*, p. 89.

but have taken into consideration theatrical practices of the community while adopting it into the local performative context. The insight into the adaptation of the Martyrdom of Saint Cyprian and Saint Justina will further enhance our understanding of the theatrical practices of the Dalmatian audience.

*Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina in Different Genres of the Two Sides of the Adriatic*

The third analysis of adaptation refers to the Dalmatian *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina*. In contrast to the previous two cases of adaptations, in which, according to Hutcheon's model, adaptation took place within the same genre, I consider this case as an example of adaptation across genres.<sup>213</sup>

As I have demonstrated in the last subsections, the previous two cases represent adaptation of Italian *sacra rappresentazione* to Dalmatia: *La sacra rappresentazione e festa di Santa Margherita* was adapted to the *Play of the Life of Saint Margaret, Virgin and Martyr* and *La rappresentazione di santo Lorenzo quando fu martirizzato* was adapted to the *Play of Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*. There, I have discussed how the adaptation to the Dalmatian context resulted with plays significantly different from the source plays written in Italian. The plays were different in atmosphere, length and, consequently, in duration of performance, as well as in mode of staging. I have interpreted these changes resulting from the Dalmatian authors' intention to adapt the plays according to the expectation of the local audience. However, in both cases the result of adaptation remained within the conventions of the source genre: the adopted plays followed conventions typical for the medieval genre including the style, structure, and presentation of characters. The case of the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* is exceptional in the sense that the Italian corpus of *sacra rappresentazioni* does not contain a play about Cyprian and Justina. This explains why the Croatian historians, as I have explained earlier in this section, tended to explain the genesis of this play exclusively through its relationship with a legend from the *Golden Legend* written by da Varagine.

The *Golden Legend* represents a narrative standard for a large number of saints' plays in Europe, including numerous *sacre rappresentazioni*. In that sense, tracing a relationship between the play and the collection was a logical thing to do.

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<sup>213</sup> *Theory of Adaptation*, p. XIV.

And indeed, a comparative analysis confirms that the legend was the main source for the Dalmatian author. Notwithstanding several differences, such as different names of the characters of devils and the exclusion of one scene with a magician and Justina, this play closely follows the action as it is narrated in the legend. Moreover, the dialog between Cyprian and a demon is directly translated from the legend.<sup>214</sup> However, although Croatian historiographers were right to trace the genesis to the *Golden Legend*, their explanation does not reveal the whole story of the genesis of the play. Apart from the prose legend, equally important for the creation of the play was the influence of contemporary dramatic production from the other side of the Adriatic.

In the late-sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, there was a proliferation of plays dramatizing the life and martyrdom of saints Justina and Cyprian. The list of plays includes: *Justina, the Queen of Padoua* [Giustina, Reina di Padoua. Tragedia] by Cortese Cortesi,<sup>215</sup> *Justina Virgin and Holy Martyr, Hierotragedia* [Giustina Vergine e Martire Santissima, Heroic Tragedy] by Giovanni Battista Liviera,<sup>216</sup> *Justina, Spiritual Tragedy* [Giustina, Tragedia Spirituale] by Bonaventura Morone,<sup>217</sup> *The Slaves of Love, Comedy* [Gli schiavi d'amore, Comedia] by Francesco Podiani<sup>218</sup>, and *Cyprian Converted, Moral Play* [Il Cipriano conuertito, opera scenica morale] by Giacinto Andrea Cicognini.<sup>219</sup> These plays were written in various genres which emerged under the influence of the counter reformation and the strong influence of neoclassical tendencies which resulted with a 'mixture of religious

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<sup>214</sup> Marin Gazarović, *Play of Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* [Prikazanje života i muke svetih Ciprijna i Justine] in *Crkvena prikazana starohrvatska XVI. i XVII. vijeka* [Croatian sacred representations from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries], ed. by Matija Valjavec (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademiya znanosti i umjetnosti, 1893), 238-55 (p. 243). This feature was noted by Roić, 'Starohrvatska crkvena prikazanja', p. 160.

<sup>215</sup> Cortese Cortesi, *Justina, the Queen of Padoua* [Giustina, Reina di Padoua. Tragedia] (Vicenza: Pietro Greco et Giacomo Cescato, 1607).

<sup>216</sup> Giovanni Battista Liviera, *Justina Virgin and Holy Martyr, Hierotragedia* [Giustina Vergine e Martire Santissima, Heroic Tragedy] (Padova: Serravalle di Vinetia, 1593).

<sup>217</sup> I have consulted the edition Bonaventura Morone, *Justina, Spiritual Tragedy* [Giustina, Tragedia Spirituale] (Venice: Laconeta: 1634). The same author published the same play in 1602 under the name Cataldo Morone.

<sup>218</sup> Francesco Podiani, *The Slaves of love, Comedy* [Gli schiavi d'amore, Comedia] (Perugia: Accademici Augusti: 1607).

<sup>219</sup> Giacinto Andrea Cicognini, *Cyprian Converted, Moral Play* [Il Cipriano conuertito, opera scenica morale] (Bologna: printed by per Giacomo Monti with license of Superiori, x).

content and up-to-date [...] the neoclassical and pseudo-neoclassical forms',<sup>220</sup> which was either tragedy or comedy; the majority of those plays were written in *versi sciolti* and prose, which was fashionable at the time;<sup>221</sup> and most of them incorporate chorus singing as a part of the *intermezzi*, a break between the acts. I identify two main elements which the Dalmatian author included in the play and which can be traced to this corpus of plays.

I argue that there are several important aspects inherent to the prologue delivered in this way. Firstly, Saint Helena addresses the local audience, the community to which the play was related which then can be seen as a most direct sign of localization of the play: *I am praying for you people of Hvar, because you do care a lot about me...*<sup>222</sup> The aspect of establishing the connection with the local community is further emphasized thanks to the fact Saint Helena is a saint worshiped in Dalmatian archdiocese to which Hvar belongs. Finally, while delivering the prologue, Saint Helena carries the cross which she addresses in the prologue: *God will be merciful if you honour the moral cleanness of the cross.*<sup>223</sup> She also describes the cross as *glorious and / more powerful than any arms in this world.*<sup>224</sup> After being introduced in the prologue, through the play the cross is evoked several times as a powerful tool used by the saints to fight the enemies, as well as in the epilogue of the play. The presence of the cross in the play is significant because it recalls the veneration of the Cross, tradition which emerged on the island at the same time when the genre flourished, and which with time became embodied ritualistic practice on the island. Recalling of this ritualistic practise allows for the deep embedment of the play into community.<sup>225</sup>

**The second similarity** refers to the introduction of the group chorus in the role of the people of Antioch. In the Dalmatian plays the *community* appears as a character that comments on the action, in the manner of classical tragedy play. However, it also negotiates its position, demonstrating its agency, and leaving the impact on the

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<sup>220</sup> Clubb, 'The Virgin martyr and the Tragedia Sacra', p. 108.

<sup>221</sup> Clubb, 'The Virgin martyr and the Tragedia Sacra', *Versi sciolti* refers to the lines of eleven syllables without rhyme. Blank verse is its equivalent in English, p. 111.

<sup>222</sup> *Molim za vas ja Hvarane. hajete jer vele za me...* Gazarović, *Play of Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina*, p. 238.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> I will elaborate more to detail about this ritual practice in the second chapter. For more on the procession *Za križen* see Škunca *Za križen na otoku Hvaru*.

development of the action, especially the motivation of Justina's martyrdom. This happens in the beginning, and the end of second<sup>226</sup> act and in this the Dalmatian play is similar to Cortesei's play which introduces the people of Padua as a group character which has its agency.

Earlier in this chapter I have explained how Hutcheon borrowed from anthropology the concept of indigenization to explain the process of adaptation as a selective process in which the author chooses what he wants to transplant into his or her soil. In the analyses of the elements which the Dalmatian author picked from Italian popular genres to transplant to his own 'dramatic soil', it is both interesting: what the author chose to transplant and what he decided to leave out. On the one hand, we have seen that the author rejected major neoclassical elements such as strict adherence to the principles of unity and a sophisticated style. Nevertheless, the author did incorporate some novelties and their main function was to enable the localization of the play within the community, or, in the other words, to further foster their adaptation.

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A comparative analysis of three Dalmatian plays and their Italian role models illuminates the main questions outlined at the beginning of this chapter. It traces the transnational origin of the Dalmatian saints' plays, challenging the prevalent opinion of the Croatian historians that the Dalmatian saints' plays were a mere translation of the Italian source plays. On the contrary, the comparative analysis helps understand the complexity of the transposition of the plays from one side of the Adriatic to another.

With the first comparative analysis I have demonstrated that the tendencies characteristic for Renaissance humanism, which were already present in the Italian plays, did not survive the transfer to the eastern coast of the Adriatic. In my analysis I have pointed out how the play of sophisticated courtly style<sup>227</sup> was transformed into a rural play which emphasized spiritual atmosphere. The second analysis illuminated how the Dalmatian author inscribed existing performance practice into the play. The result of such an adaptation was a significantly longer play, which could be staged as

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<sup>226</sup> Gazarović, *Play of Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina*, p. 238.

<sup>227</sup> L' 'introduzione', in *Le sacre rappresentazioni italiane: raccolta di testi dal secolo XIII al secolo XVI*, ed. by Mario Bonfantini (Milano: Bompiani, 1942) pp.1-18. (p.9).

a communal public performance. Finally, in the third analysis resistance to the humanistic tendencies were further underlined, while the adaptation took place through the localization of the plays. I argue that these changes to the source plays can be read as signs of embedding of the plays into the community to which they were adapted.

Earlier in this thesis I have discussed the importance of martyrdom for reinforcement of a particular group's view of the world – whether religious, political or national,<sup>228</sup> and I have pointed out that in order for a death to be affirmed as martyrdom, the community needs to create a narrative which will fit the community's image of reality. In this chapter I have discussed how this was done through the adaptation of the dramatic genre. In the second chapter I will focus on the impact of the martyrdom narrative on the specific community, in which this genre was recorded a long history of performance. As Hutcheon argues, '[a]n adaptation, like the work it adapts, is always framed in a context— a time and a place, a society and a culture; it does not exist in a vacuum'.<sup>229</sup>

In the next chapter, I will provide a necessary context for further understanding of how adaptation was carried out, and how the martyrdom narrative was disseminated through specific Dalmatian communities.

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<sup>228</sup> Middleton, 'What is Martyrdom?', p. 118.

<sup>229</sup> Hutcheon, *Theory of Adaptation*, p. 143.



## Chapter 2

### THEATRE AND SOCIAL RELATIONS: SAINTS' PLAYS ON THE ISLAND OF HVAR

Due to theological changes and the influences of classical humanism on art and literature, the popularity of medieval drama in many parts of sixteenth-century Europe began to wane.<sup>230</sup> However, by the end of the sixteenth century, the performances of medieval genres on the island of Hvar were neither discouraged, nor banned, and they were not replaced by newer forms of poetics.<sup>231</sup> The peak of production of medieval theatrical forms, which almost exclusively thematised the life and martyrdom of the Christian saints, was reached only by the beginning of the seventeenth century and it continued until 1847, when the last performance was recorded.

The late appearance and the long-lasting presence of saints' plays on Hvar poses a puzzle which this part of the thesis aims to address. In order to explain the popularity and longevity of the genre, I will analyse the modes by which theatrical performance on the island became socially embedded. I argue that the saints' plays played an important role in the formation of identity and self-understanding in the local communities on the island. I will focus on two specific aspects: how the saints' plays served to represent power relations within the community; how they were used to transmit dominant values by teaching 'conduct'. In my analysis, I will use these two functions (representation and transmission) to construct a model which explains the development of the theatrical form on the island.

Late-medieval and early modern Dalmatian culture was predominantly oral, and thus today there is little written evidence of cultural life from that period.<sup>232</sup> The

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<sup>230</sup> Alan Hindley, 'Introduction', in *Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1999), pp. i-xi (p. ii).

<sup>231</sup> Among others this included: the *Festa d'Agost* from the Spanish town Elche; *Corpus Christi* plays from Valencia which have records right to the nineteenth century; the *Oberammergau Passion Play*, also interesting for its later date of origin (in the seventeenth century). See Lynette R. Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995), pp. 158-70.

<sup>232</sup> To illustrate the dominance of orality I will mention the example of jurisprudence, where orally-achieved consensus was of great importance for the legitimacy of power until the last decade of the twelfth century. This explains why the major commune-related decisions were issued at the assembly of the inhabitants

only recorded traces belong to the domain of church officials and public administration, existing almost exclusively in Latin and Italian, the languages accessible to aristocracy and clergy, but not to the commoners. The main sources which I use are the earliest preserved copies of plays dating from the seventeenth century. I also use preserved account books, letters, and the statutes related to the performances, and visual representations. One of the consequences of the predominant orality of early Dalmatian culture is the lack of theatre performances' eye-witness testimonies. In my analysis I am partially overcoming this shortcoming through examination of preserved eye-witness' accounts of other events which were characterized by a high dramatic potential and which took place on the island at the same time when the saints plays were performed. The analysis of those testimonies will help reveal how the early modern people from Hvar perceived theatrical events and will be used to grasp performance reception.

In the next section, I elaborate further on representation and transmission. Then I turn to insights of cognitive science, pointing out how they can be applied to the analyses of historical performances of saints' play on the island of Hvar. This is followed by the historical background to the case of Hvar. A general historical introduction and elaboration of several important features of Hvar communities, such as social conflict, tradition of martyrdom, and religious rituals, that inspired miracle veneration, will provide necessary context for understanding theatrical performances. Finally, structural functions of the medieval theatrical tradition are analysed through two case studies.

## **Representation and Transmission**

Through the discussion of the first function, representation, I will contribute to the debate on early drama and social cohesion. After David Aers criticized medieval literary studies for neglecting class and gender struggles present in medieval culture,<sup>233</sup>

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(arengum). Nella Lonza warns that the written form was virtually of lesser importance. 'Legal Culture of Medieval Dalmatia between Oral and Written Tradition' [Pravna kultura srednjovjekovne Dalmacije između usmenosti i pismenosti], *Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta u Zagrebu*, 63 (2013), 1203-232.

<sup>233</sup> David Aers, 'The Good Shepherds of Medieval Criticism', *Southern Review*, 20 (1987), 168-85.

Robert Sturges in his recent book extended the argument to medieval drama.<sup>234</sup> According to Sturges, the interpretations of late-medieval biblical drama, including saints' plays, continued to exhibit the harmonizing tendency of medieval Christianity. However, some scholars including Sarah Beckwith,<sup>235</sup> Katie Normington,<sup>236</sup> and Claire Sponsler<sup>237</sup> tried to break away from harmonizing tendencies, showing that the medieval drama promoted values of more influential social groups (church, nobility, men). In this scholarly tradition, I use the case study of performances of the *Play of Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* in Stari Grad on Hvar to identify dominant groups whose interests were represented through the performance of the play. However, I will also demonstrate that the saints' plays represented and promoted values of different social groups including the oppressed ones, the commoners.

The second function, transmission, will be used to present a gendered perspective on the saints' plays, which will be analysed as conduct literature. I will argue that the plays which dramatized martyrdom of female virgin saints were recognized as a suitable medium for promoting desirable values in teaching conduct to noblewomen of Hvar. However, I will also point out the possibility of a subversive reception of the play among the female audience, by interpreting the saints' plays as a medium which allowed female viewers to construct positive narratives of embodiment and agency.<sup>238</sup> I will explore this by using case studies of three saints' plays written by the Hvar nobleman Marin Gazarović: the *Play of the life and martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina*, the *Play of Saints Beatrice, and the brothers Simplicius and Faustinus*, and the *Play of the life of Saint Guglielma, the Queen of Hungary* all presenting female virgin saints as protagonists. The analysis will be informed by the

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<sup>234</sup> Robert S. Sturges, *The Circulation of Power in Medieval Biblical Drama. Theaters of Authority* (Basingstoke: PalgraveMacmillan, 2015).

<sup>235</sup> Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God. Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christ Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

<sup>236</sup> Katie Normington, 'Drama and the City: City Parades', in *European Theatre Performance Practice 1400-1580: Critical Essays on European Theatre Performance Practice*, ed by Philip Butterworth and Katie Normington (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 213-33.

<sup>237</sup> Claire Sponsler, 'The Culture of the Spectator: Conformity and Resistance to Medieval Performances', *Theatre Journal*, 1 (1992), 15-29; *Drama and Resistance* (Minnesota University Press, 1997).

<sup>238</sup> Following Robert Mills's work on pre-modern gender and sexuality in *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2005).

work of scholars who reject typological and eschatological approach to hagiography, and argue for studying culturally specific, feminine religious sanctity.<sup>239</sup> The second body of literature in which I situate my analysis refers to the authors who have redefined conduct literature including Kathleen Ashley and Robert Clark, and Jennifer Fisk Rondeau.<sup>240</sup> These authors payed special attention to the intersection of text and performance, and regulation of gender determinate behaviour. Following their work, I argue that there is no coherent model of gender to be imitated through practice; instead diverse subjectivities resist prescription. Supported by the data from other historical documents in which the disobedience of the members of convents is confirmed, I will attempt to demonstrate that, rather than being a source of oppression, the performances of the saints' plays could be understood as a source of empowerment for the female audience.

### **Cognitive Approach to Early Drama**

In the last two decades, theatre and performance studies have been enriched by insights from cognitive neuroscience.<sup>241</sup> Cognitive research applied to drama has been focused on the perception of visual and auditory stimuli, especially with regard to how meaning is constructed in the brain.<sup>242</sup> Among other approaches, the application of theory of conceptual blending has been one of the most fruitful approaches contributing to the understanding of how social and historical context determined reception of

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<sup>239</sup> In the first place this refers to the work of Theresa Coletti, who in her seminal work on the Digby Mary Magdalene saint play investigates the convergence of drama, gender, and religion: Theresa Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints: Theater, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press: 2004).

<sup>240</sup> *Medieval Conduct*, ed. by Kathleen Ashley and Robert L.A. Clark (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

<sup>241</sup> With the first monograph published in the 2006, *Performance and Cognition: Theatre Studies and the Cognitive Turn*, ed. by Bruce A. McConachie and F. Elizabeth Hart (London, New York: Routledge), followed by similar works including titles such as Bruce McConachie, *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), James R. Hamilton, 'Understanding Plays', in David Krasner and David Z. Saltz, eds, *Staging Philosophy: Intersections of Theatre, Performance, and Philosophy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), pp. 221-42.

<sup>242</sup> See Nadia Thérèse van Pelt, 'Early English Spectatorship and the Cognitive Turn', *Medieval English Theatre*, 38 (2017), 100-14 (110).

performances. This was achieved by illuminating the imageries, concepts and ideas pivotal for the way the spectators experienced the performed scenes. The conceptual blending theorists, Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner in their book *The Way We Think*, conceived a model of integration of differing concepts located in various mental spaces. According to them, conceptual blending takes place when ‘structure from two input mental spaces is projected to a new space, the blend,’<sup>243</sup> producing ‘an emergent structure that results from the combination’.<sup>244</sup>

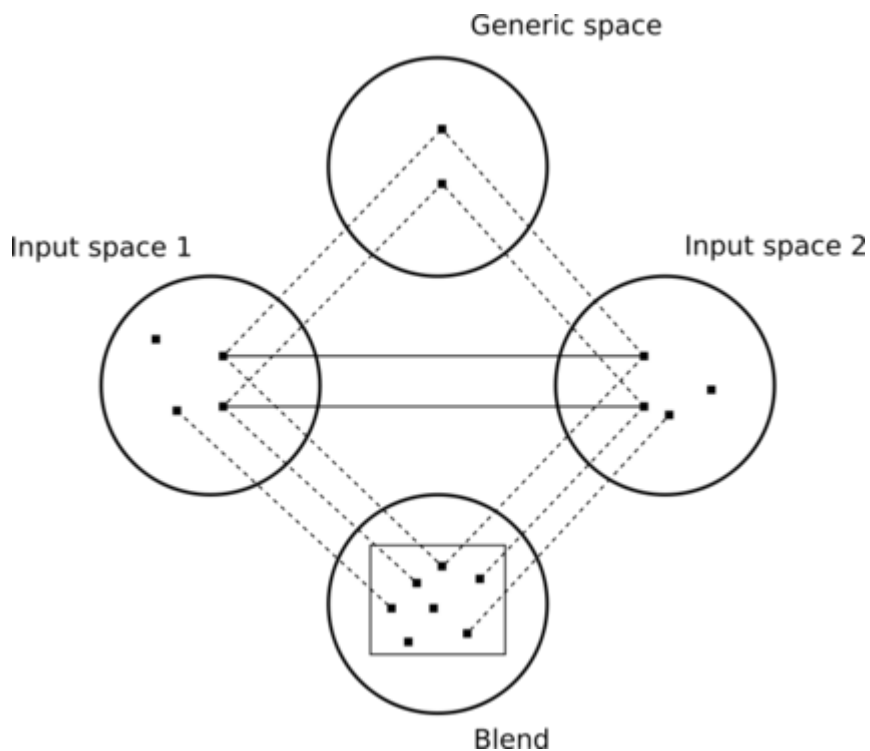


Figure 2 Basic Network.<sup>245</sup>

The inputs from both mental spaces (Input space 1, Input space 2) take a part in ‘cross-space mapping’ based on the associations between content in each input space. Furthermore, common elements of inputs which take part in blending are contained in the mental space called the Generic space.<sup>246</sup> Blends which emerge can have several

<sup>243</sup> Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The way we think: conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), p. 47.

<sup>244</sup> Patrick Colm Hogan, *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts: a Guide for Humanists* (New York, London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 107-08.

<sup>245</sup> Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way we Think* p. 46

<sup>246</sup> Ibid, p. 41

input spaces and even multiple blended spaces.<sup>247</sup> Fauconnier and Turner argue that blends which emerge through conceptual integration networks as a combination of elements in such projections are essentially novel imaginative achievements.

Despite being widely used; the theory has been criticized for bringing intricacy not essentially needed for understanding how concepts integrate. Peter Harder and David Ritchie, the most vocal critics, argued that the blending process could be explained by a simpler integration processes, without the need of four separate spaces.<sup>248</sup> Being aware of this critique, I nevertheless, make use of the model composed of four elements, with a special focus on Generic space. In my research, the analysis of the Generic spaces, is especially interesting because it facilitates the understanding of how the audience's realities could potentially become a part of the integration process. This aspect is crucial for my explanation of the long duration of saints' plays on the island. Blending theory does not aim to predict the exact blend constructed from any given set of evoked mental spaces. However, when applied to history of drama, Amy Cook has pointed out, blending theory helps in illuminating images evoked in the background that are central to the comprehension of the whole scene, a character, or the play.<sup>249</sup>

In the context of medieval drama, the scholarship was concerned with the question of how material artefacts which belonged to the spectators' realities – such as images, objects, buildings – prompted the creation of a new blended cognitive space. In that sense the most influential was the work of Jill Stevenson who, in her study of devotional practices of laypeople in medieval York, applied conceptual blending theory to explain mechanisms of perception and perceptual experience which were at work in manipulating meaning.<sup>250</sup> The author argued that medieval performance events offered the spectators 'sensually enhanced blending opportunities that could generate extremely powerful devotional encounters which therefore made it a valuable tool for generating, manipulating, and perpetuating devotional meaning

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>248</sup> Peter Harder, 'Mental Spaces: Exactly When Do We Need Them?', *Cognitive Linguistics*, 14 (2003), 91-96, L. David Ritchie, 'Lost in "Conceptual Space": Metaphors', *Metaphor and Symbol*, 19 (2004), 31-50.

<sup>249</sup> Amy Cook, 'Interplay: The Method and Potential of a Cognitive Scientific Approach to Theatre', *Theatre Journal*, 4 (2007), 579-94 (580).

<sup>250</sup> Jill Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture. Sensual Piety in Late Medieval York* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

in the Middle Ages'.<sup>251</sup> Stevenson created the concept of living in 'sacred blends' which describes the process through which devotional objects 'trace a sacred identity into the everyday body'.<sup>252</sup> For instance, the author claims, the objects such as alabaster sculptures could sacralise domestic space and identity because the sacred frame prevailed over the domestic, everyday input. Further, Stevenson has suggested that the material characteristics of devotional media sometimes prompted laypeople to 'live in' specific sacred blends. In this mode, Stevenson argues, spectators of religious performance for instance make sense of the action by blending the living actors with the identities of their characters, and within these blends, the spectator selectively navigates multiple frames. The newly coined concept of 'living in sacred blend', thus according to Stevenson is an experience fundamental to 'performance literacy', which is an umbrella term that relates to the cognitive experiences of seeing a performance in relation to the previous knowledge and experience of the spectators. Stevenson defines performance literacy as 'a strategy of seeing in which they [the spectators] derived devotional meaning from their rhythmic encounter with an image's material actuality'<sup>253</sup> and the imagery patterns which are recalled while watching (and participating) in the performance.

Karen Ward contributed to the application of the conceptual blending theory in studies of medieval drama by emphasizing the role of the blended spaces created from the metatheatrical elements and polysemy in the reception of medieval performances. In her study of performances of the Crucifixion play in York, Ward demonstrated how, by breaking mimetic frame, the source domain (Biblical narrative) was effectively mapped onto the target domain (medieval reality).<sup>254</sup> These new blended cognitive spaces, created by metatheatrical elements, as well as by polysemic words, allowed for spectators not only 'to realize the applicability and relatedness of Biblical events to their own subjective realities, regardless of their temporal estrangement from such events,'<sup>255</sup> but also to enhance their affective experience of

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<sup>251</sup> Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory*, 89

<sup>252</sup> Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory*, 88.

<sup>253</sup> Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory*, 89.

<sup>254</sup> Karen Ward, 'Polysemy, Metatheatricality, and Affective Piety: A Study of Conceptual Blending in the York Play *Crucifixion*' in *Spiritual Temporalities in Late-Medieval Europe*, ed. by Michael Foster (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 127-39.

<sup>255</sup> See Ward, 'Polysemy, Metatheatricality', p. 128.

performance. For example, when the guild of Pinners (the makers of the nails and hammers), were assigned to perform the Crucifixion play, the appearance of the props of nails and hammer during the crucifixion is accompanied with the lines: ‘And I have gone for speede, / Bothe hammeres and nayles, large and lange’ (29/30). These lines, according to Ward, function as an advertisement of the product of the sponsoring guild, and can cause laughter due to the impropriety of the guild’s ‘hocking of the implements of the crucifixion’.<sup>256</sup> However, the laughter, combined with the seriousness of the content presented, could create a blend of the serious and comedic senses by which the ‘playwright elicits a very complex and effective cognitive response from the audience that incorporates a wide range of emotional and rational functionalities’.<sup>257</sup> In turn the created blends provoked the vast range of responses which prompted both affective piety and a better understanding of biblical events.<sup>258</sup>

These two studies share in common the tendency to treat an audience member (or in Stevenson’s case a ‘layperson’) as a coherent subject. This is the reason why these studies were recently criticized for failing to address adequately the individuality or diversity of possible spectator responses and neglecting the heterogeneity of the medieval audiences. The critiques have drawn attention to the fact that spectatorship was not effectively homogenized into a single community but was differentiated according to spatial positions, as well as social status, gender, religious commitment and affiliation, personal agency, and the operation of the cognitive processes themselves.<sup>259</sup> Moreover, they were criticized for not taking the social and political identity of a specific performance as a starting point.<sup>260</sup> In other words, if cognitive inputs are some kind of luggage that the audience carry with them into the theatre, a meaning-producing device which determines their understanding of the play, then the assumption that all spectators arrive with the same belongings must be brought into question. Drawing on this critique, in my analysis of three case studies I will focus on decompressing the blends exactly by taking as the starting point the social and political identity of the island on which the performances took place. This will be done by

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<sup>256</sup> Ward, p. 135.

<sup>257</sup> Ward, p. 131.

<sup>258</sup> Ward, pp. 130-31.

<sup>259</sup> See John J. McGavin and Greg Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship: From the Mysteries to the Shakespearean Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 1-41.

<sup>260</sup> Van Pelt, p. 27.



identifying different meaning which the activated input spaces, blended in the new spaces, had for the different groups of spectators. Besides conceptual blending, my analysis will be informed with insights from the other cognitive theories.

This will include the insights from the perceptual simulation theory, which I use complementary to the conceptual blending theory and according to which, ‘the processing of all language, whether literal or nonliteral, is accomplished through the partial simulation of associated bodily states, actions, and sensory perceptions’.<sup>261</sup> Benjamin K. Bergen explains the main principle of the perceptual simulation theory in a simple way: ‘we understand language by simulating in our minds what it would be like to experience the things that the language describes’.<sup>262</sup> Furthermore, according to Bergen, when we simulate seeing or performing actions we activate the same part of the brain that allows us to see the world and interact with it.<sup>263</sup> The idea proposed by the theory that the words we hear create mental imagery which can be reactivated in future, will help me to explain how the events which took place on the island, and which were orally transmitted through time, could become a part of the mental inputs in the process of conceptual integration. In my analysis I will argue that visualisation was at work when the members from the Hvar community perceived narration about important events for their community. The visualisation resulted with different imagery which in their content overlapped with images created during the performance. The overlapping, comprised in the Generic space, in my interpretation, then becomes the driver of the process of conceptual blending which results in different interpretations for different social groups.

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According to Michal Kobialka, medieval performances of religious theatre in public spaces can be best understood as a production of a ‘series of tensions, rather than monolithic beliefs’.<sup>264</sup> In order to achieve a better understanding of the social dynamics and tensions which rendered the saints’ plays possible, and which created the input spaces for the creative blending process subsequently I explain the social,

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<sup>261</sup> Elisabeth El Refaie, ‘Reconsidering “Image Metaphor” in the Light of Perceptual Simulation Theory’, *Metaphor and Symbol*, 30 (2015), 63-76 (64).

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.* p.14

<sup>264</sup> Michal Kobialka, *This Is My Body: Representational Practices in the Early Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 205.

economic, and political context of the late-medieval and early modern island of Hvar focusing on social tensions which existed in the island communities. The elaboration of the context in which the performances took place will also offer framing for the process of adaptation which I have discussed in the last chapter. I will elaborate on the details of three manifestations, which happened in the sixteenth century: commoners' uprising against the nobility, narratives of martyrdom which emerged from the bloody insurrections, and blood-veneration miracles which constituted an important element of the late medieval and early modern imagery of the Hvar communities.

### **Social and Historical Context: Island of Hvar**

Hvar belongs to the middle-Dalmatian archipelago whose ecology was quite uniform.<sup>265</sup> Middle-Dalmatian islands were marked by insufficient water reserves, poor soil quality, and undeveloped agricultural production.<sup>266</sup> Despite these similarities, the island of Hvar was more prosperous and economically developed than the neighbouring islands. In 1575, Sebastian Giustiniano, a Venetian envoy to Dalmatia, recorded the year's income from the most important Dalmatian towns; with 12,800 ducats the town of Hvar had the highest income, comparable only to the annual income of Zadar (12,364 ducats).<sup>267</sup> In order to grasp the full extent of the wealth with which the Hvar commune had on disposal in that time, it can be useful to list the incomes of islands and towns in proximity to Hvar: 7-8,000 ducats in Vis; 1,500 ducats in Split; 850 ducats in Korčula; and 374 ducats in Brač.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Following the recent research in islandic studies which argue 'for an archipelagic relationality to replace the solid monadism of the island', the geographical position of Hvar needs to be regarded in relation to the other islands of the Dalmatian archipelago. Elizabeth McMahon, *Islands, Identity and the Literary Imagination* (London: Anthem Press, 2016), p. 11.

<sup>266</sup> Bojka Milicic, 'Exchange and Social Stratification in the Eastern Adriatic: A Graph-Theoretic Model', *Ethnology*, 4 (1993), 375-95 (375).

<sup>267</sup> According to Ciro Paoletti, the value of a Venetian ducat in the seventeenth century is approximately today's \$ 2,000. *A Military History of Italy* (Santa Barbara CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008). To illustrate the value of the ducat, it can be mentioned that the revenue of Venice in 1469 was around 1 million ducats, whereas the amount of 12,000 ducats corresponds with the amount with which the duty on taverns took part in the internal revenues of Venice. Lane F. Fargher and Richard E. Blanton Revenue, 'Voice, and Public Goods in Three Pre-Modern States', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 4 (2007), 848-82 (863).

<sup>268</sup> Andro Gabelić, *Ustanak hvarskih pučana [The Uprising of Hvar Commoners]* (Split: Književni krug, 1988), p. 91.



Figure 3 The islands of the middle-Dalmatian archipelago.

The wealth of Hvar can be explained by its lucrative geographic position in the centre of Adriatic trade routes, and its proximity to the open sea.<sup>269</sup> Its position was especially important in the period from the late-fifteenth to the nineteenth century when Dalmatia was under Venetian rule, which allowed Hvar to become part of the broad Mediterranean trading network. Furthermore, in contrast to the western Adriatic coast which is low, marshy, and includes few islands, Hvar offered excellent harbour conditions for ships. The combination of locational advantage and excellent natural harbours enabled Hvar to maintain the most important position in the Dalmatian archipelago during the entire period of the Venetian regime.

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<sup>269</sup> As Miličić has pointed out: ‘Among Adriatic ports Hvar played an exceptional role as one of the most frequented Mediterranean voyaging was, and still is, for the most part restricted to the conservativative technique of port hopping. In the past the need for frequent stops supplies of food and water, as well as for refuge from bad weather and pirates dictated most often sailing in the daytime and staying in a protected harbour at night’. ‘Exchange and Social Stratification’, *Ethnology*, 4 (1993), p. 375.



Figure 4 Historical map of Dalmatia from 1560s

In the period from 1420 to 1797 Hvar was part of the *Stato da mar*, the overseas empire of the Republic of Venice, one of the most powerful maritime republics in Europe.<sup>270</sup> Even though the Venetian Republic nominally respected the autonomy of Dalmatian communes (which they had since the Roman times), the Venetians controlled their Dalmatian provinces through the political body of the Count. Previously the Count was elected among the nobleman of Hvar. However, since the beginning of the formal domination of Venice over the island of Hvar, the Count began to be appointed directly by the Doge of Venice, together with his administration and consiglieres. The Count had a power to accept or reject the decisions of the Communal Great Council, as well as power for direct tribunal actions.

During its dominance over Dalmatia, Venice was a key contributor in the process of transport of goods from the East to the West. The ports which were located on the routes were in charge of supplying commercial ships, and providing them a shelter, and were thus of immense importance in the Venetian trading network. Through its relationship with Venice, Hvar became involved in the Republic's foreign affairs and wars. Even though the Dalmatian islands were not in the sphere of influence of the Ottomans, during the War of Cyprus (1570-1573) the Ottomans attacked Hvar due to its strategic position in the Venetian overseas empire. In 1571 they burnt down

<sup>270</sup> Frederic Chapin Lane, *Venice. A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

and robbed the towns of Hvar, Stari Grad, and Vrboska. Many civic buildings were completely destroyed including the building of the communal archive. The destruction of the communal archive explains why there are so few documents left from that period, which would enhance our understanding of the medieval and early modern history of Hvar.<sup>271</sup>

One of the repercussions of Hvar's trading activities and economic development pertains to the early development of social differentiation between social strata.<sup>272</sup> Given the strategic location of Hvar on the crossing of marine routes and one of the Venetian most valuable ports,<sup>273</sup> the aim of preserving stability on the island was especially important.<sup>274</sup> This in the first place included control of the noblemen, and securing their compliance with the Venetian authority. Exercising *divide et impera* politics, the control was achieved by the empowering of the commoners, and therefore securing a counterbalance to the autocracy of the Hvar noblemen.<sup>275</sup> For instance, the commoners would regularly send their missions to Venice in which they would report their problems, all under sponsorship of the *Signoria*.<sup>276</sup> Interestingly, the emergence of class structure was not only characteristic of the town of Hvar, most directly involved in the capitalist trade routes, but the same trend was felt also in rural communities.<sup>277</sup> Inequalities which were manifested most clearly in land ownership, were transmitted inter-generationally through marriage homogamy and the dowry

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<sup>271</sup> Grga Novak, *Povijest Hvara, Prošlost Dalmacije, knjiga prva: Od najstarijih vremena do Kandijskog rata* [*The History of Dalmatia, book first, From the Earliest Period until the Candian War*] (Split: Marjan tisak, 2004), p. 175.

<sup>272</sup> Miličić proves the argument by applying the graph-theoretic model. 'Exchange and Social Stratification', *Ethnology*, 4.

<sup>273</sup> Andrej Žmegač, 'The Arsenal at Hvar in the Context of Other Venetian Arsenals', *Ars Adriatica*, 2 (2012), 157-66 (157).

<sup>274</sup> Francis William Carter, 'Settlement and Population during Venetian Rule (1420-1797): Hvar Island, Croatia', *Journal of European Economic History*, 23: 1 (1994), 7-47.

<sup>275</sup> It is again important to mention the control which Venice imposed onto nobility in Dalmatia in general. The case of Zadar, when Venice encouraged the establishment of the Confraternity of Saint Jacob, as a stronghold for commoners, explains the attitude towards nobility. The Council of the Republic had dedicated an extremely political role to the confraternity—the members of the confraternity were obliged to notify the Count of Zadar about any attempts of noblemen political activity against Republic of Venice.

<sup>276</sup> Grga Novak, *Hvar kroz stoljeća* [*Hvar through the Centuries*] (Zagreb: JAZU, 1972), p. 75.

<sup>277</sup> Miličić, 'Exchange and Social Stratification', *Ethnology*, 4, p. 375.

system which favoured class endogamy. The degree of social differentiation in the rural areas was, according to Bojka Miličić, exceptional in the Mediterranean context.<sup>278</sup>

In the previous part of the thesis it was explained that confraternities represented the most important form of social organizations in Dalmatia. The composition of confraternities from Hvar illustrates the position of women in social life of the communities. Since the sixteenth century women of all social classes were represented in confraternities, and their number even increased by the eighteenth century.<sup>279</sup> Yet the statutes of the confraternities prohibited women from being elected as council members, or even taking part in their annual assemblies. Furthermore, women were legally subjected to their husbands with regard to inheritance and property: the wife could not freely dispose of her inherited material goods, as the dowry once the marriage was established became the property of the husband. However, there are indications that women had some degree of protection. The statute of town of Hvar ordered that in cases when husband would cast the wife out of the house, the wife would be entitled to a monthly stipend, allocated by the count and judges, until the moment she is again sheltered in their household.<sup>280</sup>

Besides gender inequalities and social conflict between commoners and noblemen, animosity on the island also existed in relation to the inner organisation of the power sharing on the island. The life on late medieval and early modern Hvar was organized in urban (*civitatis*) and rural (*districtus*) communes, in which the latter were governed by the former.<sup>281</sup> However, compared to other Dalmatian islands, where the multiplicity of rural communes was ruled by a single urban commune, the island of Hvar was exceptional for having two centres (*civitatis*) over the course of the middle

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<sup>278</sup> Milicic, 'Exchange and Social Stratification', *Ethnology*, 4, p. 376.

<sup>279</sup> Zrinka Novak, 'Uloga bratovštivna u svakodnevnom životu hvarske komune u ranom novom vijeku' [The Role of Confraternities in Everyday Life of Early Modern Commune of Hvar], *500 obljetnica ustanka hvarskih pučana [500 Years of Uprising of Hvar Commoners]* ed. by Mateo Brantić (Hvar-Zagreb: HAZU, 2014), 123-54, pp. 151-54. During my examination of the account books of the confraternities from the island I have also noticed the appearance of the word *consorella* to signify a female member of the association in contrast to *confratello*, a male member.

<sup>280</sup> Nevenka Bezić Božanić, 'Women of Hvar in Vis in the Archival Data from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century' ['Hvarke i Viške u svjetlu arhivskih izvora od 16. do 18. stoljeća'], *Hvarke i Viške u svjetlu arhivskih izvora od 16. do 18. stoljeća, Prilozi povijesti otoka Hvara*, 10 (1997), 101–10.

<sup>281</sup> Raukar, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovlje*, p. 188.

ages: the town of Hvar and the town of Stari Grad. Until the late-thirteenth century (1278), Stari Grad was the centre of the island and the centre of the diocese. The name Stari Grad means Old Town, which signifies that it was previously the centre of the whole island. However, in contrast to Stari Grad which was heavily reliant on agriculture, the town of Hvar developed as an important port and commercial centre.<sup>282</sup> In the centuries that followed, the differences became even more evident, creating tensions between the two communities.

Finally, conflict existed between the old and new inhabitants of the island. This concerned the fifteenth-century migrations initiated by Ottoman forces, which started pervading the coastal and continental parts of Dalmatia.<sup>283</sup> The eastern part of the island, which was previously uninhabited, arid land, became the home for refugees who fled from the hinterland, creating tensions between the native Hvar population and the newcomers. This can be illustrated by Vinko Pribojević, a sixteenth-century humanist and historian from Hvar, and his oratorio 'De origine successibusque Slavorum' (On the Origin and Glory of the Slavs), in which the population from the eastern part of the island are described in a negative and stereotyped way.<sup>284</sup> While the western and central part of the island (encompassing both Hvar and Stari Grad, together with their surroundings) are depicted as tame, civilised, and inhabited by gentle people, the eastern part of the island and its population are shown as harsh and unpleasant.

In his contemplation on islands, Gilles Deleuze recognizes the tendency of the Westerners to imagine the island as a perfect geography which embodies the harmony between man and space, and the alignment between ego and geography.<sup>285</sup> The way Pribojević sees the relation between the land and its inhabitants illustrates the tendency described by Deleuze in the sense that the eastern part of the island takes over the role

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<sup>282</sup> Which is one of the major criteria for a community to be defined as a rural community. See Sue Kilpatrick and Ian Falk, 'Learning in agriculture: building social capital in island communities Learning in agriculture: building social capital in island communities', *Local Environment*, 5 (2003), 501-12 (502).

<sup>283</sup> Ana Perinić Lewis, *Otoci otoka Hvara. Pluralizam lokalnih otočnih identifikacija* [The Islands of the Island of Hvar. The Plurality of the Local Islandic Identifications] (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2017).

<sup>284</sup> Cited and analysed by Ana Perinić 'The Harsh Inhabitants of Hvar' in the Speech of Vinko Pribojević (A. D. 1525)', *Collegium antropologicum*, 3 (2006), 629-35.

<sup>285</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953–1974.*, trans. by Michael Taorima (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 9–14.

of what Deleuze describes as the deserted island. As Deleuze further argues, people who come to inhabit the island ‘reduce themselves to the movement that brings them to the island, the movement which prolongs and takes up the *elan* that produced the island’.<sup>286</sup> This way of thinking, can also be understood as a justification for antagonism and tensions which natives created towards the new inhabitants of the island, who were reduced only to the idea of a search for shelter, which is why they could not adapt to the island’s dynamics. Finally, the substantial part of the identity of the previously deserted part of the island, and its inhabitants, is represented through the collective imagination. Moreover, the most profound in elements of that imagination, its rites and mythology, according to Deleuze, are ‘not simply willed into existence, and the peoples of the earth quickly ensured they would no longer understand their own myths’.<sup>287</sup> This is the moment in which, according to Deleuze, literature begins. He writes, ‘[l]iterature is the attempt to interpret, in an ingenious way, the myths we no longer understand, at the moment we no longer understand them, since we no longer know how to dream them or reproduce them.’<sup>288</sup> In that sense, the deserted part of the island can be understood as differentiated from the rest of the island not only by the ecology and the sense of otherness of the inhabitants, but also for the aura of protection from their own mythology. Most importantly Deleuze’s insights can offer an explanation of why the inhabitants for that part of the island appear in the history of the saints’ plays only as points of fictional reference, never as socially involved in the performance.

### **Commoners, Nobility, and Conflict**

Even though riots and conflict were common in the early modern period in Europe, no other part of Dalmatia experienced so many uprisings against nobility as Hvar in the beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>289</sup> The most intensive riots spread through the island in the period 1510-1514. However, the roots of the revolt of the commoners can

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<sup>286</sup> Deleuze, p.10.

<sup>287</sup> Deleuze, p.12.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Tomislav Raukar, ‘Dalmacija u doba ustanka pučana na Hvaru’ [‘Dalmatia in the Time of People’s Uprisings on Hvar’], *500. obljetnica ustanka hvarskih pučana: zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa (Hvar-Stari Grad-Vrbanj, 26.-28. V. 2010) [500 Years for the Uprising of Hvar Commoners: Collection of Papers from the Symposium (Hvar-Stari Grad-Vrbanj, 26-28 May 2010)]* (Hvar, Zagreb: Muzej hvarske baštine; Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 2014), pp. 1-18, p. 9.



be traced back to 1334 when the Communal Great Council, a political body which included commoners as well as nobleman, was shut down, resulting in an exclusion of commoners from political life. This decision to shut down the Communal Great Council initiated the Slavogostović's Riot, the first of many smaller riots which occurred on the island. Having lost their voice in political matters, the uprisings became the sole channel through which the commoners could express their discontent, which grew larger by each decision which favoured the noblemen. Among other things, this included the exemption of the noblemen from the obligation to take part in the town walls guard, row in the communal galley, and contribute to manual works for commune.

In an environment characterized by distrust, adversarial relations, and sometimes open conflict between noblemen and commoners, one event served as trigger for the uprising of 1510: the raping of common women by noblemen.<sup>290</sup> The report of Venetian envoy, Gereonimo Contarini, from Spring, 1510 informs us about the details: 'I had been told about the three noblemen who went to Stari Grad to have some fun. There they did some shameful deeds to the women of the local people. This gave rise to the commoners taking up arms and to begin the rebellion'.<sup>291</sup>

During the five years of riots, the commoners negotiated peace with the noblemen on several occasions. Their demands were always founded on the principle of equality which required that the commoners had a say in political affairs. The diary of Marino Sanudo, a Venetian senator and chronicler, is a valuable source, since it contains the letter from the envoy Nicolò Molin in which he writes about the proclamation of the commoners' demands in Spring, 1510.<sup>292</sup> 'There were over one thousand of them in Hvar [...] They went to the palace of the Conte, and exposed their demands, namely, for both noblemen and commoners to enter the (Great) Council, and

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<sup>290</sup> See Kovačić, 'Arhivsko gradivo o ustanku hvarskih pučana', pp. 47-50.

<sup>291</sup> 'Rečeno mi je da su prije tri dana trojica plemića otišla na zabavu u Stari Grad. Ovi su nekim ženama tamošnjih stanovnika nanijeli neke sramotne stvari, pa je to dalo povoda da se podignu na oružje.' The original source is currently not available to me, therefore I cite the published translation of the document by Andro Gabelić. In 1988 Gabelić translated and published all the sources related to the uprising on the island of Hvar. *Ustanak hvarskih pučana*, p. 590.

<sup>292</sup> 'Eranno più di 1,000 armati a lessina nova, (...) e vennenno a palazzo al dil conte, e fato alcuni capitoli videlicet che al consejo entrasse nobeli e popolari, e che li nobeli fosseno sotoposti alle angarie insieme con ili populo.' Sanudo, *I dirari*, p. 527.

for noblemen to have the same obligations as the commoners'.<sup>293</sup> However, the uprisings were followed by other uprisings, while the periods of truce would never last long.

One of the most notable battles pertained to the siege of the town of Hvar, in 1514. The commoners attacked Hvar, and held it under siege, with the trigger again being an incident which included raping and assault against common women. The noble castellan Vincenzo Malpieri from Venice found himself on Hvar during the siege. He testified about the events on the island, in a letter which he sent to Sanudo, on 8 August 1514, which Sanudo included in his diary:

He arrived on August 6, at 2 pm., finding the town under the armed siege; [...] The reason for the siege were the noblemen who assaulted the commoners by raping their women and by doing other deeds. The commoners could not stand those things anymore, so they took arms. [...] on Sunday morning, August 6, those two noblemen who sailed on ship from Venice with him were killed. On Monday, August 7, they entered the town and had killed 24 noblemen, and kidnapped everyone they could take with them. The castellan who arrived with them pleaded with the commoners with tears in his eyes to show mercy and to lay down the arms, but not even he could help. The commoners were that much fed up of noblemen's injustice.<sup>294</sup>

The siege ended in 1514 thanks to Venetian forces, when fifteen galleys led by Provisor Capello suppressed the rebellion.<sup>295</sup> After a month of fighting, the island was pacified, ending a volatile period of commoner uprisings. As a retaliation against the

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<sup>293</sup> Lessina is the Italian name for Hvar. By 'Lessina nova' it referred to the new administrative centre in contrast to the old one, Stari Grad (Old Town).

<sup>294</sup> 'Znose a di 6, a hore 14 e trovò tutta la terra in arme; (...) (...) perche questi nobleli havia fa gran insulti a popolo con sforzar donne e altro, *ita* che non volse il popolo più sofrir tanat insolentia, e hanno piglianto le arme, e la mattina primo... havia fertito uno, e poco avanti uno altro; et ozi a di 6, Domenega, hanno amazato do nobeli, qual venivano con lui su la nave di Venecia, et eri, Luni a di 7, sono intrati al terra et hanno amazato nobeli zercha 24, tolti dove li hanno potuti havere, nè li valso a lui castelan, apena zonto tra loro, sempre con pregireet lacrime dimandarli de gratia, de ponesero le arme, tanto erano pieni di le injurie de' dieti nobeli, *tamen* la roba non è stata toccata dal alcuno.' Marino Sanudo, *I dirari*, vol. 18 (1. Marzo-31. Agosto, MDXIV) (Venice: F. Visentini, 1883), p. 441.

<sup>295</sup> Bracanović, Joško, 'Pučka opsada grada Hvara (1.- 7. kolovoza 1514.)' ['The Siege of the City of Hvar by the Commoners, 1-7 August 1514'], *Zbornik Odsjeka povijesnih znanosti Zavoda za povijesne i društvene znanosti* (2012), 219-30.

strong and united resistance of the commoners,<sup>296</sup> what ensued was revenge described in detail in the report of Hvar's Count Zaccario Vallaresso from 16 July 1517. According to Vallaresso, the Provisor Capello banished eight leaders of the rebellion from the territory, which was in the possession of Venice. Next, he commanded that ten commoners should each have one eye plucked out, and one hand cut off. He also commanded that twenty prominent commoners, including two priests, be hanged on his galley, and the bodies of the hanged not be buried. Finally, he ordered the bodies of the commoners who had been punished by death to be dismembered and displaced all over the commune of Hvar (the whole island).<sup>297</sup>

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The uprisings from Hvar provoked similar events in urban communities on the mainland, such as at Trogir and Split, yet there the insurrections were of much shorter duration. Based on critical analysis of the sources, scholars have identified two historical conditions, one internal and one external, that explain why Hvar provided such fertile ground for class conflict.<sup>298</sup> The internal reason lies in the broad dispersion of nobility across the island, in urban and rural areas alike, which was again related to the polycentric division of influence and power between Hvar and Stari Grad (Old Town). Unlike other islands where the nobility was situated within the town walls, where the periphery was inhabited solely by commoners, the two estates co-existed and lived in close proximity in all parts of the island. The fact that the most intensive combats took place in Hvar, whereas the leaders of the commoners originated from Vrbanj, which is situated in the more central part of the island, in the proximity of Stari Grad, illustrates this fact.

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<sup>296</sup> According to Marina Zaninović as elaborated in 'Nova otkrića o tijeku borbe i fizionomiji pučkog ustanka Matije Ivanića' ['New Discoveries about the Course and of the Struggle and the Characteristics of the People's Uprising Led by Matija Ivanić'] in *500. obljetnica ustanka hvarskih pučana: zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa (Hvar-Stari Grad-Vrbanj, 26.-28. V. 2010) [500 Years for the Uprising of Hvar Commoners: Collection of Papers from the Symposium (Hvar-Stari Grad-Vrbanj, 26-28 May 2010)]* (Hvar, Zagreb: Muzej hvarske baštine; Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 2014), pp. 37-46.

<sup>297</sup> Zaninović wrote about it in his article. The document is available in the Venice state archive. 'Nova otkrića', p. 44.

<sup>298</sup> Raukar, 'Dalmacija u doba ustanka pučana', pp. 1-18.

The external reason pertains to the broader geo-political position of Venice, and its role in Hvar's domestic affairs. Earlier in this section I emphasised the strategic importance of Hvar for the Venetian trade routes, due to which the aim of preserving the stability on the island was especially important. It was said that the need to secure the compliance of Hvar to the Venetian authority led Venetians to control the Hvar noblemen by supporting the commoners, hence securing counterbalance to the nobility's autocracy. However, the Venetian *divide et impera* politics in Hvar reached its limits when constant armed conflict and siege-like conditions began to endanger the key Adriatic trade route.<sup>299</sup>

Due to its military involvement in other areas, such as Cyprus and Corfu, Venice could not afford to intervene after the uprisings began in 1510. Even though it was in the interest of Venice to preserve peace on the island, the Republic needed to adhere to diplomatic means, and delegates were sent to foster dialogue between the two groups in conflict and to end the riots. This included creating a parallel council of the island with representatives of commoners,<sup>300</sup> which marked a great success for the rebels, as in this way the insurgent commoners not only gained political legitimacy, but also facilitated further mobilization. However, after it recovered from the crisis caused by the war of the League of Cambrai, which corresponded with the final siege of the town of Hvar in 1514, Venice finally could send military force. The Republic of Venice therefore played a crucial role in the putting down of the uprising, ending the period of volatility and bringing back stability on the island.

## **Martyrs**

The commoners' rebellions created lasting common imageries for late-medieval and early modern Hvar society, which pertained largely to the emergence of martyrs on both sides whose deaths represented strong symbolic milestones. As later in the analysis I demonstrate that this divergent experience played an important role for the reception of the saints' plays for members of conflicted classes, here I need to first elaborate more broadly on the symbolic construction of martyrdom. In the early modern period, the purpose of martyrs was seen exclusively as the conformation of

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<sup>299</sup> For the detailed chronology of the involvement of Venetian Republic during the last siege of Hvar see Bracanović, 'Pučka opsada grada Hvara', 219-30.

<sup>300</sup> Zaninović, 'Nova otkrića'.

religious truth.<sup>301</sup> However, as I have underlined in the introduction of this thesis, religious martyrdom is only one form of martyrdom. Martyrdom can be defined as sacrificing for a cause emerging from conflict which can be of political, local, or cosmic nature.<sup>302</sup> The deaths on Hvar during the riots should be understood in the broader meaning whereby the martyrs are defined essentially as those ‘who sacrificed themselves, or have been victims for a cause’.<sup>303</sup>

Rona Fields argues that martyrdom incorporates two significant symbols: power and purity.<sup>304</sup> A careful look at the narratives which worked in favour of construction of noble martyrs during the riots confirms this view, as demonstrated by the letter of one nobleman who happened to be in Hvar during the siege:

Due to the huge poverty, they [the commoners] did not have a capability to abolish our *immunity and privilege* [marked by MK], however, given that those rebels were firmly convinced in the possibility of being killed, they took the arms and *got by force* what they wanted... ..and then they had cruelly cut into pieces twelve noblemen. Not those which were of ill fortune, as it was told by those perjured rebels, but all faire, honourable men, the sons of knights and merchants, which took part in different services, and who were of good reputation. The similar were the credits of departed, dignified miser Nikola Paladinić, whose deeds were pictured in his eternal glory, even on the walls of the Doudge of Venice.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Susannah Brietz Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1-6.

<sup>302</sup> Paul Middleton, *Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2011), p.6.

<sup>303</sup> Rona M. Fields, *Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology, and Politics of Self-Sacrifice* (Westport, London: Praeger, 2004), p1.

<sup>304</sup> Fields, *Martyrdom*, p. 2.

<sup>305</sup> Zbog velikog siromaštva nisu bili u mogućnosti da ponište naš imunitet i privilegije, međutim, budući da nismo ni sumnjali da bismo mogli biti ubijeni, rečeni su pobunjenici učinili silom što su htjeli. ... zatim su okrutno sasjekli na komade dvanaest plemića, ne one koje je zadesila zla kob, kako to kažu spomenuti vjerolomni pobunjenici, već sve poštene ljude, koji su bili u časti, sinovi vitezova i trgovaca koji su vršili razne službe i koji su uvijek uživali dobar glas i položaj. Takve su, eto, i zasluge, pokojnog uglednog gospodina Nikole Paladinića, čija su djela na vječnu uspomenu naslikana čak u mletačkoj (duždevoj) palači. Jakov Stipišić, ‘The Main Sources for the Understanding of the Uprising of the Commoners on Hvar (Translation)’ [Glavni izvori za poznavanje pučkog ustanka na Hvaru. (Prijevod)], *Radovi. Institut za hrvatsku povijest Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, 10 (1977), 551-92(580).

This testimony demonstrates that the construction of martyrdom took place through contested power relations. The power of the noblemen was based on their noble immunity and inherited privilege (which was the reason why they were not punished for the rapes and assaults), and it was confronted by the power of the commoners, built primarily on their physical force and their number. Repetitive emphasis of the honourability of the noblemen present in the letter reveals that their martyrdom was established on the account of the purity of their character – and purity of their blood. While power and purity were crucial for establishing the martyrdom of the killed noblemen, the same cannot be said for the martyrs among commoners. If we compare the above-cited letter to the testimonies presented in the previous section, which described the deaths and physical punishment of the commoners, it becomes evident that those testimonies are purely factual, lacking emphatic elements. The contemporary perspective throws a special light on the noblemen and commoners martyrdom distinction in this respect. Today, when the uprisings are mentioned, they are always related to the leader of the commoners, Matija Ivanić to whom the memorials on the island of Hvar are also dedicated, rather than to the noble martyrs. Given the absence of written testimonies which supported the construction of the martyrdom of the commoners, it can be concluded that the status of martyr was constructed through oral transmission, and as a product of the politics of memory.

Dramatical aspect is, according to Fields, one of the crucial aspects of martyrdom. She argues, ‘in circumstances of violence and war the soldier who dies in combat is not essentially defined as martyr’.<sup>306</sup> What attributes to a death the status of martyrdom is that ‘martyrdom contrasts with the suffering that is nondramatic’.<sup>307</sup> Given the previously explained context of combats on Hvar, it can be said that in some respects they took the form of public performances. The citizens of the towns of the island of Hvar, the audience, were exposed to the enormous level of violence while their public space was transformed into the arena of spectacular, violent clashes, including public punishments and executions. Moreover, the combats that took place within the frame of the city walls, in front of the citizens who watched them and reflected upon them in their testimonies as if they saw performed events. Finally, the

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<sup>306</sup> On politics of memory and construction of martyrdom see Fields, *Martyrdom*, xviii.

<sup>307</sup> Fields, xxi.

fact that those who took part in the riots had their roles ascribed by being divided into two groups, all contributes to the understanding of the riots as events which, according to Schechner, can be studied *as* performance.<sup>308</sup> Later in this part of the thesis I will show how studying these events of bloody conflict in the island communities can inform us about the reception of the saints' plays; in the subsection below I turn to another historical event from the same period which was equally important for comprehending Hvar saints' plays.

### **Miracles**

The miracles that are of high importance for the communities of the island of Hvar happened in February 1510 in the town of Hvar, in the house of the port armourer Nikola Bevilaque. According to the testimonies dating from the time when this occurred, the event started to unfold after the owner's granddaughter noticed red liquid dripping from the old wooden cross on the wall.

Around noon it became very dark and raining, and the roof of the church of Saint Annunciation, which was in the street leading to the church of Saint Mary of Mercy, collapsed. In the very same moment, the crucifix which was in the port armourer Nikola Bevilaque's house in the room of his son Toma, and which was old, and black of smoke. That crucifix started bleeding when the daughter of Toma started cleaning it. A couple of drops dripped on the scarf, and this is where they can still be seen.<sup>309</sup>

Bevilaque and the local priest called a painter, who confirmed that the liquid dripping from the crucifix was not a paint, as some suspected, but blood. The eerie atmosphere in which the event occurred was furthermore highlighted by a horrifying storm and three earthquakes during which the church of Saint Annunciation, which was in the

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<sup>308</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: an Introduction*, ed. by Sara Brady (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 38-40.

<sup>309</sup> In the report which the Count of Hvar wrote to the Contareno, the Patriarch of Venice, he writes about the event in this way. '...oko podne nastala je velika tama s kišom i srušio se krov svete Marije Anuncijate koja je u ulici što vodi prema prema sv. Mariji od Milosti. U tom istom času, raspelo koje bijaše u kući Nikole Bevilaque, lučkog admiral rečenog mjesta, u sobi Tome, sina rečenog Nikole koje je bilo maleno, staro i sasvim pocrnjelo od dima, kada ga je rečenog Tome htjela očistiti od prašine, počelo je krvariti tako da je nekoliko kapi palo na rečeni rubac, one se tu nalaze još i sada.' In 2010 Joško Bracanović published all relevant sources related to the event. The quotation is from his book, *500 godina čašćenja Sv. Križića [500 Years of Celebration of Saint Crucifix]* (Hvar: Biskpski ordinijat-Hvar, 2010), p.40.

close proximity of Bevilaque's house, was completely destroyed. The crucifix was taken to the cathedral, and on the next day the people of Hvar formed a penitent procession. As one of the witnesses testified: 'The procession was massive and accompanied with tears and sighs. Everyone were barefoot and with nooses around the their necks, many of them carrying candles'.<sup>310</sup> The procession was repeated three days later, on Sunday, marking the beginning of a new practice of veneration of the cross on the island which would become a long-lasting tradition. (One of the most remarkable pious events is the procession entitled 'Following the cross' which is preserved to today under UNESCO protection, and which includes the participation of the member of the six villages of the island).<sup>311</sup> The witness, Pavle Paladini spoke about the events in this way:

The miracle affected so much the locals and the foreigners [the other people living on the island] to the extent that there wasn't a living person who didn't expect something of great evil to appear, therefore they started doing repentance either secretly, or publicly, so that no one would guess it was the time of carnival. People were naked whipping themselves with their faces covered.<sup>312</sup>

Unpacking of the narrative used to describe the event by its contemporaries in the testimonies, informs us about the event's reception. A detailed testimony of a citizen of Hvar, Pavle Paladini, establishes a direct connection between the house in which the miraculous event occurred and the activities of the commoners against the noblemen. He refers to Toma Bevilaque as 'the leader of the commoners, aiming to eliminate all the noblemen'.<sup>313</sup> Furthermore, he mentions a local priest who confirmed the miracle in Bevilaque's house as the leader of the anti-noblemen revolt, adored by the commoners: 'All the plans against the noblemen were made in one of those two

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<sup>310</sup> Bila je to ogromna procesija popraćena suzama i uzdisajima u kojoj su svi bili bos i s omčama oko vrata, mnoštvo njih sa svijećama. Stipišić, *Glavni izvori*, p. 885.

<sup>311</sup> See the description provided by Bernardin Škunca, *Za križen na otoku Hvaru* [*Following the cross on the island of Hvar*] (Hvar: Biskupski ordijat, 2013).

<sup>312</sup> Toliko je čudo utjecalo na lokalne i strance, da nije bilo čovjeka koji nije očekivao neko veliko zlo, pa su počeli u skupinama činiti pokoru tajno i javno da se ni po čemu nije vidjelo da je doba karnevala, već su se ljudi goli bičevali na trgu i na ovim brdima, pokrivši lica. 885.

<sup>313</sup> Ovaj je bio vođa puka sa željom da zбриše ime plemića, Bracanović, *500 godina čašćenja*, p. 44.



houses'.<sup>314</sup> Several other testimonies mention that the conspirators swore on the cross, which was the reason why the crucifix started to bleed. According to the noblemen Antun Gazzari: 'the leader of the commoners, who was the first to swear upon the cross which started bleeding, had gone mad, and was found below the arsenal, on the sea coast, cutting the sea ooze with his own'.<sup>315</sup> As explained by the noble historian Gazzari, this was the punishment for conspiracy.

During the middle ages, miracles in Europe were the rule rather than an exception, including blood venerations. This late-medieval phenomenon flourished in the fifteenth century, and it was manifested through the proliferation of Christ's blood motifs in various media: in literary and theological texts; in iconography; as well as in ritual enactments of the Passion such as in form of processual flagellations; and through the public appearance of the female mystics.<sup>316</sup> The miraculous capability of material things to enact the Passion through bleeding was part of the same trend, which according to the Caroline Walker Bynum in some parts of Europe such as North Germany, could be described as 'blood obsession'.<sup>317</sup> In general, the miracle event from Hvar could be described as part of the same trend. However, Bynum emphasises, what matters for the interpretation of miracles is how they were framed within the given social, political, and economic circumstances.<sup>318</sup>

There are two important implications of the miraculous event that should be stressed at this point. The first one refers to the potential influence of those events on emergence of religious theatre on the island. This suggest that, if we draw a parallel between the ritual procession on the island entitled 'Following the Cross' and religious theatre on the island, as the expression of devotional piety, we can trace the same origin of emergence of the devotional practice and popularity of saints plays. If this was the case, it is important to think of the political meaning which was granted to the miraculous event, and the events which followed it. In any other hypothetical

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<sup>314</sup> Zaključci protiv plemića doneseni su jednoj od te dvije kuće, Bracanović, *500 godina čašćenja*, p. 44.

<sup>315</sup> '...da je onaj pučki prvak koji se bio prvi zakleo nad križem u kući Bevilaque, iz kojeg je potekla krv, otišao u ludilu pod arsenal i tamo se valjao po morskoj obali vadeći ustima morski glib.' Bracanović, *500 godina čašćenja*, p. 44.

<sup>316</sup> As explained by Caroline Walker Bynum in *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p. 33.

<sup>317</sup> Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, p. 44.

<sup>318</sup> See Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, p. 31.

circumstances, a miracle of this kind might have been understood as a part of lay piety, and as the statement of Christ's full humanity. Respectively, the ritual processions which emerged after the event, and in which the citizens of the island belonging to both of the conflicted social groups participated, could have been ascribed a unifying role. However, in the context of the tensions and instability within which it occurred in Hvar, the interpretation was framed differently. Among those who were examined as part of the prosecution, as well as among those which referred to the event in correspondences and reports, the bleeding of the cross was a sign against the rebels.

Following the riots, the martyrologic symbols (dismembered and hanged bodies, gallows, towns in flames) which emerged from the riots became the common place in the imagery representing the values of the communities of the island. Furthermore, the social and historical context bounded by riots and martyrdom determined the framing of the veneration of the Cross, which with time became embodied ritualistic practice on the island. Anthony P. Cohen's theory of community can explain significance of veneration rituals for the communities of Hvar. Cohen defines a community as a symbolically constructed system of values, norms, and moral codes which provides a sense of identity within a bounded whole to its members.<sup>319</sup> In Cohen's post-structural interpretation, the symbols and rituals hold crucial places in the construction of the community. The author claims: 'It should not be surprising, therefore, to find ritual occupying a prominent place in the repertoire of symbolic devices through which community boundaries are affirmed and reinforced'.<sup>320</sup> Moreover, ritual confirms and strengthens social identity and people's sense of social location: it is an important means through which people experience community. Finally, according to Cohen the symbols of community are mental constructs: they provide people with the means to make meaning.

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The two events (or series of events) discussed above describe the complex social and political setting of sixteenth century Hvar – the wave of commoners' rebellions and a miracle of the venerating cross served to illustrate the series of social conflicts which in numerous ways tore the social fabric of the island communities. However, detailed description of these two events here serves primarily to provide background

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<sup>319</sup> Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 71-75.

<sup>320</sup> Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction*, p. 50.

knowledge necessary for understanding religious theatre and performance of saints' plays, as both events created lasting common imageries, and embodied practices in the culture of late-medieval and early modern Hvar society. Carol Symes has argued, 'medieval drama enacts what a community needs to enact, in whatever venue is available or appropriate'.<sup>321</sup> How they reflect in the performances and how they influence the meaning-making process will be studied in the case studies here.

### **United or divided? The *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* and Social Conflict (Representation Function)**

Late medieval and early modern theatrical performances were social events accessible to a wide range of people, and therefore had an important role in the social life of societies in which they were performed. While this has been recognized in the scholarship, the question of whether the plays helped foster collective experience or served as a source of social exclusion has created disagreement among researchers. The cohesive features of performances have been underlined in the works of authors such as Mervyn James and Elie Konigson who argue that urban performances in Paris acted as symbolic representations of the social order.<sup>322</sup> In his pioneering study of the Corpus Christi festivities in York, social historian Mervyn James explores a mechanism through which 'opposites of social wholeness and social differentiation could be both affirmed and brought into a creative tension with one another'.<sup>323</sup> When discussing public space and performances in medieval Paris, Konigson also refers to the 'collective message' delivered by the performances.<sup>324</sup> Authors who emphasise divisive tendencies of early plays by looking at the complex dynamics of social conflict, and power relations involved in performances, regarded medieval drama through a somewhat different angle. Sarah Beckwith, again in the case study of York, argues that 'far from unifying the city of York, the Corpus Christi festivities are

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<sup>321</sup> Carol Symes, 'The History of Medieval Theatre / Theatre of Medieval History: Dramatic Documents and the Performance of the Past', *History Compass* 7 (2009), 1034–35, (p.1034).

<sup>322</sup> Mervyn James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Past & Present*, 98 (1983), 3-29. In his examination of rituals within England, James included Corpus Christi plays. Konigson, pp. 23-36.

<sup>323</sup> James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body', p. 4.

<sup>324</sup> Konigson, p. 35.

intimately bound up with diverse political regulation of labour'.<sup>325</sup> Authors such as Katie Normington and Robert Clark also tried to break away from harmonizing tendencies by demonstrating how the performances promoted values of more influential social groups (clergy, aristocracy, rich merchant class).<sup>326</sup>

While the former approach brought in an important theoretical perspective borrowed from sociological and anthropological explorations of social rituals, the latter warned that the integrative effect happened at the expense of the lower classes; the performances were used to reaffirm the social status of the dominant groups, and therefore served as an act of symbolic violence. What both approaches, however, have in common is the assumption that medieval audience members shared a uniform reception of theatrical performances. In my analysis, I challenge this assumption. In her essay about processional performances,<sup>327</sup> Claire Sponsler indicated the possibility of varied audience responses to the same event. In this section I am following this line of thinking, seeking to break away from a fallacy. Rather than discussing whether the spectators experienced theatre as the symbolic representation of the social order, or the theatrical audience was *en masse* 'interrelated' in the ideology of the dominant classes,<sup>328</sup> I am interested primarily in the diverse and competing interpretations. With my first case-study, of the performance of the *Play of Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* in Stari Grad on Hvar, I demonstrate that the saints' plays represented and promoted values of different social groups including the oppressed ones, the commoners.

### **Conditions of performance**

My analysis does not seek to imagine one particular performance of the play, but rather imagines different performances which took place over the centuries on Hvar. The

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<sup>325</sup> Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God. Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christ Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 42.

<sup>326</sup> Normington, 'Drama and the City: City Parades', pp. 213-33, Robert L.A. Clark, 'Community versus subject in late medieval French confraternity drama and ritual' in *Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1999), pp. 34-56.

<sup>327</sup> Claire Sponsler, 'The Culture of the Spectator: Conformity and Resistance to Medieval Performances', *Theatre Journal*, 1 (1992), 15-29; *Drama and Resistance* (Minnesota University Press, 1997).

<sup>328</sup> See Louis Althusser, *On Ideology*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London, New York: Verso, 2007).

sources which I have consulted include: an account book of a Dominican monk, Vincenzo Milašić, who organized the Dominican synod in Stari Grad in the context of which the *Play of the Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* was performed in 1714,<sup>329</sup> and three facsimiles of the play dating from the seventeenth century published in the nineteenth century, which were most likely produced after a performance.<sup>330</sup> This dating can be concluded by the well-elaborated explicit stage directions, the language in which the directions were written (in Italian/different from the language of the play), and the fact that this was common in the period.<sup>331</sup>

### *Temporal dimension*

The *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* is the largest play in the studied corpus of Dalmatian saints' plays. In the first part of the thesis, it was shown that the play was adapted from the Florentine source play *Sacra rappresentazione di San Lorenzo*. In the comparative analysis it was demonstrated that the number of verses has almost doubled, which extended the performance to more than one day. All preserved seventeenth-century facsimiles indicate that the performance took place over two days, with the imprisonment of Saint Lawrence as the last scene marking the end of the first day of the performance. The character of the Angel, who, typically for the medieval Dalmatian plays, speaks the prologue and the epilogue, invites the

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<sup>329</sup> The account book is stored in the Public Archive of Split and published by Antonin Zaninović, 'Troskovi prikazanja sv. Lovrinca u čast dominikanskih kapitularaca godine 1714. u Starom Gradu na otoku Hvaru' ['The Expenses for the performance of the Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence in the Honour of the Dominican Capitulars, in 1714. in Stari Grad'], *Hrvatska prosvjeta*, 10 (1930), 10.

<sup>330</sup> *Prikazanje života svetoga Lovrinca, mučenika* [The Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence] HAZU 1050, HAZU 1051, HAZU I. a. p. 18.

<sup>331</sup> Philip Butterworth, *Staging Conventions in Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 17. After studying preserved manuscripts related to the French saints' play performance tradition, Vicky Lou Hamblin has created a typology of the sort of manuscripts according to the step in the process of performance production for which it was used. Given that the facsimiles which I have been using contain well-elaborated stage directions, as well as signs that the text was revised in a number of places, it can be said that they belong to the group of manuscripts copied with all annotations after the performance as a commemorative souvenir for the sponsors, or the group which was in charge of the organization of the performance. *Saints at Play: The Performance Features of French Hagiographic Mystery Plays* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications. Western Michigan University, 2012).

audience to return to see the rest of the performance the next morning: *Go with the blessing of God / and return with morning*.<sup>332</sup> The discrepancy in the number of days and the time of the day within which the performances took place according to the available sources, indicates that the groups in charge of performances were flexible in adapting the content of the play according to the occasion for performance.

I will provide a more in-depth analysis of the temporal aspect of the performance on the basis of the performance from 1714 organized by a Dominican monk, Vicenzo Milašić. The performance was organized in honour of the church fathers gathered at the Dominican synod in Stari Grad, and the account book indicates that the performance took place over the course of three nights.<sup>333</sup> Given that the text used for the performance in 1714 is not preserved it can be assumed that the first day of performance in this case ended after the martyrdom of Pope Sixtus, whereas the second day finishes after Saint Lawrence's imprisonment. The extension in length of the performance can also be interpreted as indication of the growing popularity of the play within the communities, and the greater involvement of their members.

It can be assumed that performances of the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* commonly took place on 10 August, on the feast day, especially since the cult of Saint Lawrence was venerated in central Hvar. Although there are no sources from Hvar to confirm that, the scholarship on saints' plays offers conclusive evidence that saints' plays have been performed on the feast day of the patron saints.<sup>334</sup> However, the 1714 performance began on 20 April 1714, corresponding with the first day of the synod.<sup>335</sup> This inconsistency can be found elsewhere in the secondary literature. The research on processional celebrations of Saint George in Norwich shows that the date of the performance was shifted from the saint's day to the day of the election of the mayor. According to Katie Normington, the tendency of performing the procession on dates unrelated to the ritual celebration of the patron saint indicates

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<sup>332</sup> *Play of Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* [Prikazanje života svetog Lovrinca, mučenika] in *Poems by Petar Hektorović and Hanibal Lucić* [Pjesma Petra Hektorovića i Hanibala Lucića], ed. by Ivan Vončina (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademiya znanosti i umjetnosti, 1874), 79-171 (p. 116).

<sup>333</sup> 'Troškovi prikazanja sv. Lovrinca', p. 10.

<sup>334</sup> Hamblin was only one of the authors who has recently thematised the issue, *Saints at Play*, 164-74.

<sup>335</sup> A. Zaninović, 'Troškovi prikazanja', 10.

an increasing association of the procession with civic life.<sup>336</sup> This development, in her view, marks a shift from the stage where a procession is employed as a form of religious ritual, to the stage where it becomes an important source of fashioning social identities. I believe that a similar trend is at work in the case of performing the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* on the occasion of the Hvar synod in mid-April, indicating a transition from religious to a more secular understanding of the local saint's play. In addition to having a role to venerate the patron saint, the performance was also used to demonstrate pride in front of the important guests who visited the town for the purpose of synod. Thanks to this feature, a performance of the saint play also became an important asset for demonstrating a desired civic identity. In the given context, it will be interesting to see in the further analyses to whom this identity ascribes, and whose power is demonstrated through the performances.

### *Spatial dimension*

The explicit stage directions found in the texts of the play help recreate the configuration of the stage and location of the players. The stage directions suggest that players should be present on the stage for the duration of the play. Rather than entering and leaving the stage as required by the activity of their personages, the players who were already present on the stage should just step to the front of the stage when it was their personage's turn to speak. As can be illustrated in the stage direction from the beginning of the play: *Subsequently, this is the moment when the Emperor needs to stand up and go to his post.*<sup>337</sup> When not actively performing their role, or when they are in their 'neutral position', the players therefore shared a similar structural position as their spectators: quietly observing the performance.<sup>338</sup> As a result, the performance entailed a group event with around 30 players constantly present on the stage, with the players interchangeably taking the roles of the players and spectators.

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<sup>336</sup> Katie Normington, 'Drama and the City: City Parades', ed. by Philip Butterworth and Katie Normington, *European Theatre Performance Practice 1400-1580 - Critical Essays on European Theatre Performance Practice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 213-33.

<sup>337</sup> 'Prikazanje svetog Lovrinca', p. 85. Za tim cesar ima ustati i pojtii na svoje misto.

<sup>338</sup> Butterworth, *Staging Conventions*, p. 89.

Furthermore, the performance took place on a circular stage, which was not an unusual staging convention in Europe.<sup>339</sup> There were interpretations saying that the circular performances contributed to the perpetuation of stability and order, as the performance staged in the circled, closed form, might be seen as uniting, and able to bring together diverse groups of spectators.<sup>340</sup> As Philip Butterworth has pointed out, such performances ‘do not take place in conventionally designed theatre spaces but operate in ones that spatially mimic the more formal relationships that occur between stage, players and spectators and their shared space’.<sup>341</sup>

Finally, the performances were held in Stari Grad, as can be seen from the facsimiles of the play which were found in Stari Grad, as well as from the written evidence from the Dominican account book. However, the performances may have also been held in other towns, such as Vrboska, a town located in a short distance from Stari Grad, with St Lawrence as the patron saint. In the fifteenth century a parish church was built dedicated to the Saint Lawrence containing several artistic expressions of veneration of the cult, including the poliptych on the main altar which represents Saint Lawrence and depicts scenes from Lawrence’s life.<sup>342</sup> Another town where the play may have been performed in the early modern period is Vrbanj. According to ethnographic research from 1860, citizens of Vrbanj are reported to mention a recent performance of the *Passion of Saint Lawrence* in their town which came as continuation of a longer historical tradition.

Given the proximity of all three communities, it can be assumed that the tradition travelled from one place to another. They are all located within a radius of three miles, and belong to the central part of the island, which gravitated to Stari Grad as regional centre, which makes it likely that the play indeed had been performed beyond Stari Grad. Moreover, the fact that these towns have shared other forms of ritual devotional practices further supports this. Most notably, the communities from the central part of the island remained symbolically connected through performance

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<sup>339</sup> Andrea Louise Young summarizes them in *Vision and Audience in Medieval Drama a Study of the Castle of Perseverance* (London: Palgrave, 20105).

<sup>340</sup> Butterworth, *Staging Conventions*, p. 89.

<sup>341</sup> Butterworth, *Staging Conventions*, p. 30.

<sup>342</sup> Zorka Bibić, ‘The Altarpiece of Lady of Rosary in Vrboska and the Other Artworks of the Painting Family Bassano on the Island of Hvar [‘Oltarna pala Gospe od Ružarija u Vrboskoj i ostala djela slikarske obitelji Bassano na otoku Hvaru’], *Prilozi povijesti otoka Hvara*, 1 (2014), 193-215 (193).



of the ritual procession *Following the Cross (Za Križen)*, which dates from the sixteenth century. To draw an analogy with Coletti's work on dramatic representations of the *Saint Mary Magdalen Play* in East Anglia, all this leads to the conclusion that the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* should be regarded as a product of a coherent regional culture.<sup>343</sup>

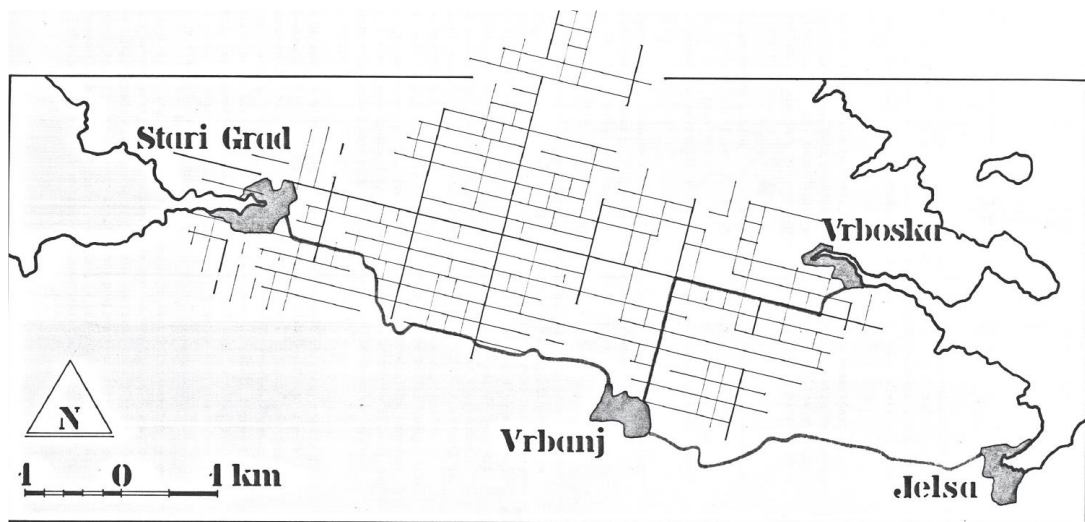


Figure 5 Ager Farenis<sup>344</sup>

### Players

Historical sources reveal a direct connection between the Dominican monastery in Stari Grad and the performances of the *Play of Saint Lawrence*. We have seen that the Dominican monks bore the costs of staging, while the space around the monastery was suitable for hosting the performance. If we take into account that saints' plays elsewhere in Europe were performed by monks,<sup>345</sup> it is reasonable to assume that Dominican monks from Stari Grad were also engaged in the staging of St Lawrence as performers. However, the examination of the monastery administration books from the period from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, shows that the monastery hosted on average only eight monks at the time, in the period from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. If we remember that the staging of *Play of the life of the saint Lawrence* in Stari Grad involved 30 characters played by the similar number of

<sup>343</sup> Coletti, *Mary Magdalene*, 12.

<sup>344</sup> Jakša Barbir, 'Urban development of Stari Grad' [Urbanistički razvoj Starog Grada], *Prilozi povijesti otoka Hvara*, 12 (2014), 42-58 (54).

<sup>345</sup> See for instance Clark, 'Community versus subject'.

performers, it is clear that monks themselves could not perform the play alone. Likely candidates for filling in additional roles could be found among the members of confraternities.

The confraternities were civic associations, albeit organized in a predominantly religious spirit, where citizens gathered to organize charity work and to exercise devotional practices.<sup>346</sup> The confraternities, which existed both in urban and rural communities, represented the main ‘foci of activity’<sup>347</sup> in early modern Dalmatia, while religious performances were among their central social activities. This is indicated by my archival research on confraternities in Stari Grad, which discovered props used in the performance of the Passion plays in the inventories. A historian, Škunca, recently discovered the document in the inventory of the Confraternity of the Saint Cross from Hvar which mentions performance equipment including masks, ropes, nails, and other wooden props.<sup>348</sup> Given the central position of confraternities for early modern sociability, as well as their importance for devotional practices and theatrical performances, it is possible that they aided Dominican monks in Stari Grad in performing the *Play of Saint Lawrence*, or even that the confraternity members alone carried out the whole performance. This may also explain the fact that in the account books of Dominican monks, there is no mention of expenses related to the costumes of performers among the expenditure for the performance.

Given Škunca’s discovery and the possibility that the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* could have been performed by the Confraternity of the Saint Cross, here I should recall the fact that this confraternity is one of the charitable confraternities which had mixed composition with regard to social status of its members (it included both noblemen and commoners), the aspect which I have elaborated in the previous chapter. Even though we do not know which confraternity performed the plays this fact might imply that the collective which was in charge of

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<sup>346</sup> Raukar, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovlje*, pp. 234-38.

<sup>347</sup> Scott Feld and William C. Carter define ‘foci of activity’ as social, psychological, legal or physical entities around which joint activities are organized and which bring individuals together in repeated interactions in and around the focused activities. ‘Foci of Activity as Changing Contexts for Friendship’, in *Placing Friendship in Context*, ed. by Rebecca G. Adams and Graham Allan—(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 136-52 (p.136).

<sup>348</sup> Škunca recently discovered the document in the inventory of the Confraternity of the Saint Cross from Hvar which mentions performance equipment including masks, ropes, nails, and other wooden props. See *Za križen na otoku Hvaru*.

the production of the *Play of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* might have been composed of both classes. A playtext which I discovered in the monestary in Stari Grad,<sup>349</sup> dating most likely from the nineteenth century, indicates that in the nineteenth century the play was performed by the members of both classes. We know that thanks to the fact that the roles are assigned to the particular people and from their surnames we can read their class belong. Unfortunately, it is difficult to tell exactly with which confraternity that playtext was related. The statutes of confraternities from Stari Grad prescribed wearing confraternity tunics for all confraternity members in cases of public activity and for devotional practices.<sup>350</sup> While the public display of confraternity tunics was obligatory, the inventories of confraternities from Stari Grad which mention props related to the performances (mostly related to the performance of the Passion plays) also do not mention expenses for clothing.<sup>351</sup> This may imply that the players performed in confraternity tunics, especially since the performance of saints' plays at the same time represented a devotional practice and, thanks to its worldly character, belonged to public activity. Although the available historical sources say little about the impact of the confraternities' engagement in the performance of the *Play of Saint Lawrence*, it can be speculated that the public exposure of their symbols on such important social events had important ramifications for the community, especially with regard to political and symbolic competition between various groups.

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The structural analysis of the performance has pointed out performative features of the *Play of Saint Lawrence*. Furthermore, the analysis indicated that the performance served as a means of veneration to the important local (patron) saint, but also that with time it became an important source of fashioning social identity. The link to confraternities showed that the performance allowed the groups, who were involved in their organization, to promote their values and interests. The next section aims to demonstrate how the process of representation took place, especially in relation to the content performed on stage.

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<sup>349</sup> Le cose varie 3. L' *Opera Di San Lorenzo*. DASG.

<sup>350</sup> Novak, 'Uloga bratovština', pp. 123-54.

<sup>351</sup> *Bratovštine razne. Volume primo di atti, parti e altri documenti alla Scuola della Carita*, BAH kut. 202.

## Conflicted Groups in Blends

In the previous chapter I have demonstrated that there are two related features which differentiate the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* from other plays in the corpus: first, the strategy of constructing dramatic conflict, and second, the multiplication of martyrdoms. In order to explain how different social groups from Hvar experienced the performances of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*, aspects of both distinctive features will be analysed. I will begin by analysing the former aspect through the theory of conceptual blending. In terms of CBT,<sup>352</sup> the violent imagery which marked the island's history and which emerged from the conflict constituted one group of cognitive inputs which the audience carried with them, while the elements of performance constituted the other group of inputs which produce meaning. However, in order to explain how the blending process was possible at all, I will recall the work of scholars proposing perceptual simulation theory who have argued that all language about things we perceive with our eyes can trigger visual simulations. Furthermore, 'simulation creates echoes in our brains of previous experiences, attenuated resonances of brain patterns that were active during previous perceptual and motor experiences'.<sup>353</sup> This finding has important implications for our understanding of how the imagery which the audience from Hvar inherited from the oral tradition in relation to the riots and the martyrs were 'materialized' into the cognitive inputs which were blended with the content seen on scene.

The dramatic tension in saints' plays, which revolved around the martyrdom of early Christian saints, was based on conflict between a martyr saint who defends her or his unshakable faith against the supreme ruler.<sup>354</sup> According to the hagiographic legend, Saint Lawrence was the early Christian church's archdeacon who succeeded Pope Sixtus II after the previous pope was beheaded together with his six deacons. One of the most famous legends of Saint Lawrence was that, after becoming the archdeacon, he dispersed the church's wealth. When he, too, was summoned before the emperor, he brought with him a huge crowd of the poor and needy, to send a key message: that they constitute the church's true wealth. The disgruntled emperor

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<sup>352</sup> Subsequently I will refer to the conceptual blending theory as CBT.

<sup>353</sup> Benjamin K. Bergen, *Louder Than Words* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), p. 16.

<sup>354</sup> Early Christian saints are dominant in the corpus which I study, as well as in the French and Italian corpuses. Nevertheless, late-medieval saints, whose martyrdom narratives differ somewhat from those of Early Christian saints, are also present in those corpuses.

commanded the torture of Lawrence, who was in the end grilled to death for his faith. The culmination of the play comes with the death of the saint, an apparent defeat, which however represents the victory of Christian values. In the case of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* as this structure is somewhat modified. First of all, the focus on the martyrdom of Pope Sixtus II is equally as strong as the focus on the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence. The dramatic conflict is therefore not based on one-on-one dynamics, but on collective effort.<sup>355</sup> Given the fact that the performances took place for several days, the focus on the martyrdom of Pope Sixtus II was even more emphasized, allocating each martyr the centre of attention on one day of performance.

The same modification applies in the case of villain characters. As explained in the first part of the thesis, the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* contains an additional villain unlike the Italian source play, as the adaptor of the play from Hvar created two characters out of one. Virtually all known European variants of this saint play contain a single villain character, Emperor Valerian, which is accurate according to the hagiography. In the *Play of Saint Lawrence*, however, Valerian's antecedent Decius is the emperor, while the character of Valerian also appears in the play, but only as a prominent Roman figure, not as an Emperor. In the play, both characters demonstrate strong agency, sometimes one even opposing the other.

As I have pointed out in the last chapter as one of the most important distinctive feature of Dalmatian play, in comparison to its source plays, is an increased number of characters, mostly pertaining to the Christian martyrs. As the play progresses, the number of characters participating in the conflict gradually increases on both sides. The characters appear in group scenes which come in sequence, one after another. A group scene of Lawrence gathering the poor and the needy, when he attempts to bring them in front of the Emperor, is followed by the scene in which Roman characters gather around the Emperor and Valerian to celebrate their gods through sacrifice. Correspondingly, the discourse of the characters also changes. While in the first scenes Lawrence and the Emperor address each other directly, the new characters as they

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<sup>355</sup> I am aware of the existence of the pair saints, and the group saints; however, in my next case study analysis, I will argue that their agency is in fact represented through the figure of only one of them. For instance, in the case of the *Play of Saints Cyprian and Justina*, Justina carries the whole martyrdom. Contrarily, the agency of Saint Lawrence and Pope Sixtus II is specific for being equally distributed among two characters.

appear in group scenes begin to address the audience. When Pope Sixtus II replies to Valerian, as his soliloquy approaches the end, he starts addressing the Hvar audience who represent Christians as an abstract group: ‘That is why, you, the nephews of Jesus / in case the Emperor decides / to put you to torments / don’t change your will / even if he grills you, welds you, or butchers you’.<sup>356</sup> The two groups of characters, Christians and Romans, appear on stage interchangeably until the scene in which Valerian calls for a direct clash of two groups: ‘You, the butchers, don’t stand/go and bring your followers / because this trouble can’t be finished without you / those shams should be executed / they should pay for badness’.<sup>357</sup>

The dramatic conflict in the play is developed by the struggle of two groups, each of them being represented by several leaders. Thanks to the ‘radical dualism’ characteristic for the martyrdom which was embedded in saints’ plays we can assume a unified reception as seen from the perspective of the audience.<sup>358</sup> In the conflict of good and evil the audience from the late-medieval and early modern Hvar clearly identified with the group represented by Pope Sixtus II and Saint Lawrence. However, the identification pattern is more complex, as some scenes are more unambiguous. Cognitive approach helps us to identify different possible meanings produced for different groups.

One such scene concerns Valerian’s examination of Saint Lawrence which I will consider through the application of the conceptual blending theory. During the examination, Valerian says the subsequent lines: ‘That is why I have decided / that this town will be wiped out /that all Christians / who worship god Jesus / Starting with you/this will be dedicated to my god’. These lines can be considered as an Input 1.<sup>359</sup> In order to unfold the Input 2, I suggest recalling the narratives of the noblemen who had testified about the uprisings. There, one can notice that narratives reported on the behaviour of the commoners use the same expressions. When a nobleman, Pavle Paladini, comments on the miracle of the bleeding cross which occurred in Toma

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<sup>356</sup> ‘Prikazanje svetog Lovrinca’, p. 90. *Za to sinovci Isusovi/ako cesar stavi ruku/da vas pada za tu muku/ne prominit vaše volje/da vas peče vari i kolje.*

<sup>357</sup> ‘Prikazanje svetog Lovrinca’, p. 106. *Vi kocani sad ne stojte/po učenike vaše pojte/jer se ovi teg ne more/prez vas svršit nikore/da se oni hinci strate/ter da svoje zledi pate,* p. 106.

<sup>358</sup> Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom*, p. 134.

<sup>359</sup> ‘Prikazanje svetog Lovrinca’, pp. 135-36. *Sve krstjane vića toga/ki Isusa slave boga/odlučil sam posvetiti/i grad od njih očistiti./Da na tebi ja ću početi/momu bogu posvetiti.*

Bevilaque's house, he refers to Bevilaque as 'the leader of the commoners, aiming to eliminate all the noblemen'.<sup>360</sup> The noblemen's discourse reveals a fear of the alleged attempt of the commoners to wipe them out. Hence, we can imagine that, for many noblemen in the audience the words of the Emperor were projected onto the perceived intentions of the commoners.

We know from Fauconnier and Turner that blending 'demands systematic matches between the inputs and selective projection to the blend'.<sup>361</sup> I argue that, following the simple conceptual blending network model, the Generic space contains concepts of the wiped-out town – the town in which one group of people is eliminated. The results of violent aggression against one group of people represents a content shared between two spaces. The character of Saint Lawrence, and other Christians from the hagiographic legend, to whom the threat was addressed, therefore become the representatives of the noblemen. While the blends produced through integration provided the noble spectators with an opportunity to identify themselves as persecuted Christians, Valerian and other Romans are, in their perspective, equated with reckless commoners who want to eliminate them.

Another scene of a similar impact refers to the execution of the two virgins which takes place prior to the scene of Lawrence's martyrdom. Just before they are about to be executed, the two virgins give a moving account in which they recall their joyful life mentioning the images such as 'the dance of virgins, song singing, laughing out loud'.<sup>362</sup> I consider their account as an Input space 1. Earlier in this chapter I have discussed the records of sexual violence of noblemen against the commoner women which triggered commoners' insurrections. The imagery related to this event I take as an Input space 2. We can imagine that for the commoners in the audience, seeing a performance of this scene would prompt integration of these two input spaces, whereby Generic space would contain an image of the assaulted women. This implies that attendance at the play produced the emerging mental space where the fictional representation of violence against Christian virgin saints was blended with the historical (factional) sexual violence against the common women (wives, daughters,

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<sup>360</sup> Bracanović, *500 godina čašćenja*, p. 44. 'Ovaj je bio vođa puka sa željom da zбриše ime plemića'.

<sup>361</sup> Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, p. 29.

<sup>362</sup> 'Prikazanje svetog Lovrinca', p. 152, *Divic tanci pisni spijuć, grohotom se vazda smijuć*.

sisters etc.) from Hvar, which again perpetuated the sense of injustice among the commoners in the audience.

The two presented cases of conceptual blending are, in several ways, opposite. The first case depicts the perspective of the noblemen, while the second case depicts the perspective of the commoners. While in the former case, the feeling of threat was triggered by the phraseology ('eliminate', 'wipe out'), the blend in the case of commoners was based on figural association (sacrificed virgins stand for their raped and harmed women). Each way, however, the association triggers the blend which allows the members of both groups to identify with the oppressed Christians, while projecting the negative features of the Romans onto their adversaries.

Stevenson and Ward had demonstrated how material objects and verbal expressions activated the blends which facilitated mapping of the biblical past into the reality of spectators in medieval York. At the same time, they show that this process determined their understanding of the biblical and historical content, affecting their devotional experience.<sup>363</sup> A similar process happened in the case of the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* and its audience. From the perspective of the spectators, the verbal expressions and characters observed on the stage could support mapping of hagiographic content onto their realities. The spectators derived the meaning by situating their past *inside* the blend, drawing from the 'heteroglossic' dramatic text.

Mikhail Bakhtin coined the term 'heteroglossia' to draw attention to the fact that the language of the novel consisted of conflicting voices, in his classic study of the nineteenth-century.<sup>364</sup> According to Bakhtin, each statement, no matter if it consists of one word only, contains within itself two main tendencies of the language, to unite and to dysfunction.<sup>365</sup> In my analysis of the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* I argue that the play also contains conflicting voices, which are only recognized in the domain of reception, and when the interpretations of the different

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<sup>363</sup> Ward, 'Polysemy, Metatheatricality', Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory*. Both approaches are elaborated in the subsection of this part of the thesis entitled 'Medieval drama and blended spaces'.

<sup>364</sup> As elaborated in Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (London and Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), in particular p. 272.

<sup>365</sup> Vladimir Biti, *Pojmovnik suvremene književne teorije* [Thesaurus of Contemporary Literature and Cultural Theory] (Zagreb, Matica hrvatska, 2000), p. 463.



groups are confronted. Thanks to the application of CBT these conflicted voices become visible, as different input spaces which emerged from the performance could have produced various meanings for different groups, depending on the social class to which they belonged.

### **Martyrhood and Performance Literacy**

In the previous section I analysed the reception of the play in the context of conflict between the noblemen and the commoners. It was demonstrated that both groups had the possibility of using elements from the play to draw legitimation to their struggle, as they identified with Christian characters in their righteous fight for their faith. Moreover, I showed that this was further facilitated thanks to the change in the strategy of constructing dramatic conflict, which was not based on one-on-one dynamics, but on collective effort. This emphasizes even more the partisan character of the performances, leading to the second distinctive feature of the play: the multiplication of martyrdoms. While the issue of multiple interpretations and competing meanings remain impossible to dissociate from the wider set of power relations,<sup>366</sup> in this section I further examine the described phenomenon from the reverse perspective – by analysing how the play was adapted to the codes of the spectators.

In comparison to the *La rapresentazione di santo Lorenzo quando fu martirizzato*, the Florentine source play, the play from Hvar contains more characters. Interestingly, each character added to the Hvar adaptation dies as the play progresses, becoming a martyr. In the previous chapter I have illustrated this principle by using the example of character Hypolith and his family. Hypolith is present in both plays, and has an important role in developing the plot thanks to his conversion from paganism to Christianity. He starts off as a servant to Valerian, and in the course of the play he becomes one of Lawrence's main followers, and accompanies him in several scenes. However, the version from Hvar also introduces the characters of Hypolith's wife and two children. Their role in the play is not significant, as soon after they are inaugurated as characters, they are brutally executed. Hypolith's family is not alone; by the end of the play the death toll reaches sixteen while the Christian

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<sup>366</sup> Robert S. Sturges, *The Circulation of Power in Medieval Biblical Drama. Theaters of Authority* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

characters are massacred by the Romans. One way of explaining this inconsistency with the source play is through the process of adaptation.

In the first part of the thesis I explored the genesis of the Dalmatian saints' plays by comparing them with Italian source plays. There, I have demonstrated that the Dalmatian saints' plays were not mere copies of the plays written in Italian, and that in the context of medieval comparative philology they should be understood through the model of adaptation. The social history of Hvar, presented in this part of the thesis, provides necessary context for further understanding of how adaptation was carried out. As no adaptation exists in a vacuum, I argue that the play was transformed so that it meets the expectations of audiences,<sup>367</sup> which explains the proliferation of martyrs. The context of early modern Hvar is significantly marked by class struggles which included high violence, slaughtering, executions, and mutilations. That experience background imagery, which in the previous section was described as the input spaces in the process of the conceptual blending, can be seen as part of performance literacy.

I introduced Stevenson's concept of performance literacy when discussing the application of cognitive theory to study of early theatre performances. I explained that central to Stevenson's approach are live, material bodies which arrive at the theatre performances prepared. Furthermore, the bodies are 'prepared' thanks to their background knowledge which they bring to the theatre so that seeing the performance activates their existing cognitive templates. This is a two-way process as, according to Stevenson, the experience of seeing a theatre performance also produces new cognitive templates. When the spectators, after seeing the performance, experience similar visual encounters outside theatre, the cognitive templates become reactivated. For instance, when the same audience sees visual devotional materials which they have seen previously in performance, attends liturgy of the Mass and participates the rites surrounding death.<sup>368</sup> The effects of theatre and non-theatre events are thus jointly organised and constitute a unique set of cognitive templates.

In the context of my analysis it is important to emphasise that the performance literacy of the dwellers of Hvar represented the signpost for the adaptation. As the adaptor wanted to make the play comprehensible to the audience, he needed to work

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<sup>367</sup> Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, p. 149.

<sup>368</sup> Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory*, p. 99.

with imagery familiar to the audience. I argue that the adaptor therefore used imagery which emerged from riots and miracles and which constituted the performance literacy of the audience. It is important to note that this imagery constituted cognitive templates even among spectators who had not witnessed the violence directly. According to Stevenson, the bodies are opened for the possibilities offered by ‘the spatial fusion of the historical content and the space of the city in which the performance took place with the content delivered with the performance.’<sup>369</sup> Imagery which emerged from the events on Hvar – transmitted through oral and written narrative accounts and the visual presentations – thus was made available even to the members who had not directly witnessed the riots, tortures and venerations. This imagery, therefore, still belonged to the performance literacy which constituted them as audience.

At the same time, it is necessary to keep in mind the conclusions from the previous section, and be wary of any concept of ‘audience’ which sees spectators as a uniform, undifferentiated mass. In the previous section I pointed out that, thanks to the particular histories, identities and traditions, people from different classes read the same performance in a different way, while the play contained conflicting voices and spoke in different tongues, to use Bakhtin’s metaphor. In the same vein, I finish this case study analysis by stressing that performance literacy always depends on particular experiences, identities, and interests, and can rarely be seen as homogeneous and a uniform. Building on the notion that medieval drama was ‘deeply implicated in community values of its makers and viewers’,<sup>370</sup> it can be assumed that the performances promoted dominant values of community, and the values are embodied in the texts and performances. However, as it is well known, medieval societies were divided, and it is highly unlikely that values promoted through the performances could comprehend the values of the whole community. If we think of the theatrical performances as the source of demonstration of power of different social groups, the situation is even more complicated. As Michel Foucault taught us ‘power is never invested entirely in a single entity, and power relations are always more complex than the representation implies’.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> Theresa Coletti, *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints Theater, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press: 2004), p.12.

<sup>371</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), p. 91.

### **Female Saints' Plays: Conduct and Resistance (transmission function)**

In the previous case study, it was demonstrated that the performances of saints' plays were an important medium for symbolical representation. The saints' plays on Hvar were used to represent power relations in the community, even though it was shown that the audience interpreted their content according to their respective conceptual baggage. In this section, I focus on another important purpose which the saints' plays fulfilled in the Hvar community: to influence conduct. This social function is therefore related not only to the aim to represent (different identities and social groups), but to transmit. In doing so, I will engage with the gender perspective, attempting to demonstrate how the genre of saints' plays was used with a purpose of transmitting idea of desirable female conduct. I will argue that the plays which dramatized the martyrdom of female virgin saints were recognized as a suitable medium for promoting desirable values in teaching conduct to the women of Hvar, this will, then, be compared to the medieval and early modern literary genre of conduct literature. Finally, as in the previous section, reception will play an important role. I will point out that there was a plurality of possible interpretations, some of which were more subversive than others.

I will start by explaining the corpus of female virgin martyr plays, the context and the possible performance conditions in which it appeared. Next, I will introduce the concept of embodied empathy with a purpose to explain why the saints' plays were suitable media for transmission of desired conduct. Finally, the alternative modes of reception will be explained.

### **Corpus, Context, and Performance Conditions**

The corpus of Dalmatian saints' plays contains altogether eleven plays, seven of which can be geographically traced to the island of Hvar. It is an interesting fact in the Hvar plays that female saints dominate the corpus, as four out of seven plays can be characterized as virgin martyr plays. These are: the *Play of the Life of Saint Margaret, the Virgin and Martyr*, the *Play of Saints Beatrice*, and the *Brothers Simplicius and Faustinus*, the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Cyprian and Justina*, and the *Play of the Life of Saint Guglielma, the Queen of Hungary*. How can we account for

the dominance of female martyrs in the corpus? I suggest that the explanation lies in the intention of the Hvar political and cultural elite to address the issue of female morality. The historical context in which the plays emerged supports this hypothesis.

Until the seventeenth century there were no convents on the island of Hvar. Given that convents were the only institutions where female members of society in early modern Dalmatia could acquire a formal education, we can conclude that the female population by this time was mostly illiterate.<sup>372</sup> The first attempt to change this came through the initiative of the commune to open the Benedictine convent for the noble daughters of Hvar in the sixteenth century, which did not get permission from the Venetian Republic.<sup>373</sup> This was due to various reasons of practical and economic nature: legal issues with ownership rights, lack of public funds, and the like.<sup>374</sup> However, in the seventeenth century, the commune was finally granted permission to open a convent. The initial proposal contained a quest for opening two convents, one for noble women and another for the common women, but only the former was built in the end.<sup>375</sup> It is important to note that Marin Gazarović, an author of saints' plays, was one of the most prominent advocates of opening the convent.<sup>376</sup>

The historical records note that Gazarović travelled to Venice personally to ask the Republic to grant permission, which in the end he did achieve.<sup>377</sup> As demonstrated in the first chapter, Dalmatian saints' plays emerged among adaptations of the Italian source plays, pertaining to a group of late-fifteenth century plays from Florence. Out of the four virgin martyr plays from Hvar, Gazarović wrote the *Play of Saints Beatrice, and the brothers Simplicius and Faustinus*, and the *Play of the life and martyrdom of Saint Cyprian and Justina* (which were inspired by the conventions of the Florentine subgenre and the genre *Tragedia Spirituale*), and the *Play of Saint Guglielma*, as an adaptation of the source plays.<sup>378</sup> Considering the time of its appearance, the *Play of*

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<sup>372</sup> See Bezić Božanić, 'Hvarke i Viške u svjetlu arhivskih izvora'.

<sup>373</sup> See Ivan Ostojić, *Benediktinci u Hrvatskoj i ostalim našim krajevima. Sv. 2, Benediktinci u Dalmaciji* [Benedictines in Croatia and in the Other our Territories] (Split: Benediktinski priorat Tkon (kod Zadra), 1964).

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.* Berić, 'Prilog biografiji pjesnika Marina Gazarovića'.

<sup>377</sup> Berić, 'Prilog biografiji pjesnika Marina Gazarovića'.

<sup>378</sup> From Nerrida Newbegin's description of this group of plays, it can be suggested that the group of plays containing female saints as protagonists can be labelled as a specific subgenre. See Nerrida Newbignin, 'Agata, Apollonia and Other Martyred

*the Life Saint Margaret the Virgin and Martyr* can be traced approximately to the same period, the first part of the seventeenth century.

I am pointing out the case of Marin Gazarović, since it provides a direct link between the building of the convent and production of the plays. On the one hand, I suggest that in the first part of the seventeenth century, when the saints' plays emerged, the social life of the commune of Hvar was marked by a high interest in education and cultivation of the women of Hvar, exemplified by attempts to build the convent. On the other hand, I find it highly indicative that the author of the saints' plays was one of the most prominent advocates of the tendency to cultivate the women of Hvar. Even though Gazarović did not live long enough to see the opening of the convent – the convent was finally built in 1664, twenty-six years after his death – I argue that both the building of the convent and the content of the plays indicates the importance given to female morality in early-seventeenth century Hvar.

Besides the biographical link which existed between saints' plays and teaching female conduct, further proof can be found in the marginalia of the manuscripts. The facsimile of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*, the version I. a. 18.,<sup>379</sup> contains two interesting marginalia. The first marginalia pertains to the lines told by Concordia in which she expresses gratitude for being baptised by Saint Lawrence and converted to Christianity: *And, you, upstanding virgins / be brides of Christ / take the veil / for him, he will betroth you.*<sup>380</sup> The notes obviously address future or current nuns ('brides of Christ') who are the intended audience of the play. The second marginalia is found twenty lines below: *Is there anything nicer in this world, / can we wish for anything more / then being his future bride / future brides and virgins at the same time / to have a betrothed and preserve virginity?*<sup>381</sup> If the marginalia were used

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Virgins: Did Florentines Really See These Plays Performed?', *European Medieval Drama*, 1 (1997), 77-100.

<sup>379</sup> At this point I am once again underlining the distinction between the versions of play 1050 and 1051, which, as I have argued in the first chapter was adapted to make it suitable for public performance in front of the large audience. Those plays were also analysed in this chapter as the first case study. In contrast to these plays, the play I. a. 18, analysed here, does not share the same features, and, with regard to performance, it has more similarities with Italian source plays.

<sup>380</sup> A vi čiste divojčice / bud'te Isusa zaručnice, / htite di[v]stvo posvetiti / ņemu, on će vas zaručiti. *The Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* [Prikazanje života svetoga Lovrinca, mučenika], HAZU, I. a. 18. In close proximity to the line 96.

<sup>381</sup> Koju lipšu stvar na sviti / mi možemo već želi[ti] / neg bit ņemu zaručnice, / zaručnice, a divice / zaručnika ņega imati, / a u di[v]stvu se uzdržati? *The Play of the*

as a supplement to the text which the performers read out on the stage, we can read the notes as a means of encouraging the nuns in their vocation.<sup>382</sup>

Although we lack historical evidence which would reveal the details of how saints' plays were performed, the invocation of nuns as the intended audience implies that the play might have been performed in a convent. This is in line with the what Elissa B. Weaver argues about the *Play of Saint Gulielama*, the source play for one of the Dalmatian female saint plays, written in Italian by Antonia Tanini (also known by her married name Pulci).<sup>383</sup> Based on the 'superiority of virginity to married life' which the play promotes through depiction of the troubles which Saint Guglielma undergoes after she gets married,<sup>384</sup> Weaver argues that Tanini's play was intended for a Florentine convent audience. The demonstrated superiority of virginity, according to the author, serves to reassure nuns that their vocation is a right one and convince young women to make that choice themselves.<sup>385</sup>

Even though the performance of plays in medieval and early modern convents has only recently become the subject of research from the performance perspective,<sup>386</sup> and thus has not been widely documented, we can identify such cases in historical records of Dalmatia. I point out the example of performance which took place in Šibenik, a town in Central Dalmatia, in the same period as saints' plays from Hvar which I am analysing in this section. The performance happened in 1615, in a Benedictine convent, when, in the course of two days, the Benedictine sisters performed the play of the Three Magi.<sup>387</sup> The event entered the records due to the riots which broke in the audience, and a fine which the chaplain needed to pay, leaving a valuable historical source as one of the rare written records of performance in a history

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*Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* [Prikazanje života svetoga Lovrinca, mučenika], HAZU, I. a. 18. In close proximity to line 115.

<sup>382</sup> Elissa B. Weaver argues only small changes in the text including addressing convent audience were sufficient to adapt the *sacra rappresentazione* for the convent performance in Florence. *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 96.

<sup>383</sup> Weaver, *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy*, 96-127.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.* p. 99.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>386</sup> Of significant importance in that sense is the project Medieval Convent Drama at University of Fribourg <http://medievalconventdrama.org>.

<sup>387</sup> The document entitled 'Processus occine cuiusdam Tragediae recitate in Monast. sti Salus was published' by Petar Kolendić in *The Sources for the History of Croatian Literature vol. 7* [Građa za povijest književnosti hrvatske VII], ed by Ivan Miletić (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1912), pp. 393-400.

of early modern Dalmatian theatre. From the testimony of different people, we learn that the performance was attended by the crowd of 30-40 viewers, consisting of the nuns, but also other noble women from Šibenik.

Alternatively, the play might have also been performed in a public space, outside of the walls of the convent. We can imagine that the Dalmatian performers followed the example from the other side of the Adriatic, where the performances took place indoors, mostly in courts, as I discussed in the first chapter;<sup>388</sup> or that the performances were held in a public theatre (in the case of Hvar, the third oldest public theatre in Europe) or in open public spaces.<sup>389</sup> In the texts of the plays we can find evidence that the performances took place in open public spaces. For instance, the *Play of Saints Beatrice, and the brothers Simplicius and Faustinus* in which the prologue is delivered by Saint Stephen, a patron Saint of the town Hvar.<sup>390</sup> The first lines of the prologue are dedicated to the direct addressing of the audience and enhancing the localization of the play: *Dear people, oh you people of Hvar / chosen for your moral purity / who have gathered in my temple.*<sup>391</sup> From these lines we learn that the performance took place in Hvar, and, more precisely, in front of the Saint Stephan's cathedral in Hvar, which stands in the play as Saint Stephen's temple. More information is given in the lines that follow: *I, Stephan will pray to God / to protect you from all evil / and you should decorate my temple / as you can see it is not finished yet.*<sup>392</sup> These lines correspond with the fact that in the early seventeenth century the cathedral was under construction, which brings us to the conclusion that this play took place on the largest square in Hvar, in front of the Saint Stephan's Cathedral.

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<sup>388</sup> If staged by nobles from Hvar it could take place in one of the villas or summer houses on Hvar or on the island of Vis. For instance, Gazarović had a famous summer house on Vis where he enjoyed spending time. See Berić, 'Prilog biografiji pjesnika Marina Gazarovića', p. 81.

<sup>389</sup> For more on the theatre see Mirjana Kolumbić Šćepanović, 'Historic Theatre of Hvar 1612' [Hvarsko povijesno kazalište - 1612] *Dani hvarskog kazališta*, 46 (2020), 7-26.

<sup>390</sup> As discussed in the first chapter, the appearance of the local saint instead of the character of Angel is a strong means of adaptation.

<sup>391</sup> *Dragi ljudi, / o Hvarani / u kripti izabrani, / ki dojdoste u tempal moj. Play of Saints Beatrice, and the brothers Simplicius and Faustinus* p. 219.

<sup>392</sup> *Ja ću Stipan molit Boga / da vas čuva zla sfakoga vi moj tempal naresite / ni dospieven, toj vidite. Play of Saints Beatrice, and the brothers Simplicius and Faustinus* p. 219.





Figure 6 The Cathedral of Saint Stephan, Hvar Source: Wikimedia Commons

### **Shaping Behaviour Through Saints Plays**

I will start the discussion on strategies of portraying female saints by using the example of the *Play of Saint Guglielma*, an adaptation of a play written in Italian by Antonia Tanini (today known by her married name Pulci) which I mentioned in the previous section.

As explained in the first chapter, Guglielma is a noble woman, a daughter of the King of England, who marries the King of Hungary after he is converted to Christianity, even though she made a vow of virginity. A converted male saint, who is the King of Hungary, and a noble daughter, who is a virgin, are two common tropes in the virgin martyr plays. While in the previous section I presented Weaver's argument that Pulci's play was intended for a Florentine convent audience, I also concluded the saints' plays might have been performed for a secular audience, either indoors (courts, summer houses, public theatres) or in open public spaces. A careful examination of the Dalmatian adaptation of the *Play of Saint Guglielma*, adds to the argument that they served the latter purpose.

Guglielma is first mentioned in the prologue. Her character is introduced in a dialogue of two Angels who present Guglielma as *a real good successor / beautiful and virtuous daughter*.<sup>393</sup> As the play develops, characters who are in the presence of Guglielma discuss women's beauty and how beauty can be achieved. For instance, when describing Guglielma, their new, much awaited queen, one of the members of the court imagines her daily courtly activities in this way: *she will bring courtiers, ladies who will nurture her complexion / who will decorate her forehead, take care of her hair*.<sup>394</sup> The motif of physical beauty is a typical trope in the genre of conduct literature.

Conduct literature is the medieval and early modern literary genre which aimed to guide people's way of acting and teach them about society. This genre flourished in the sixteenth century and often focused on women.<sup>395</sup> Physical beauty was often addressed in the conduct literature and courtesy books aimed for women,<sup>396</sup> as it was thought to reflect inner, moral beauty. In accordance with the genre, the play demonstrates an unambiguous point of view on how a young woman should behave. This is expressed in Guglielma's mother's advice after Guglielma accepts the king's marriage proposal:

*Listen to me, my daughter. Be blessed by Jesus  
always stay smart/obey your husband  
That's what every woman should do  
be wise when talking/bring honour to the excellent king*

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<sup>393</sup> *Prave dobre naslidnice/kriposnu ima i lipu kcer*. 'Skazanje žīvota svete Guljelme', pp. 281-82.

<sup>394</sup> Dvorkiĕe 'e dovest sobom taj kraljica, /s kim hoti uyrest, ke joj maste lišca/narešuju čelo i napravjaju kose. 'Skazanje žīvota svete Guljelme', p. 283.

<sup>395</sup> Nancy Armstrong Leonard Tennenhouse, 'The Literature of Conduct, the Conduct of Literature, and the Politics of Desire: an Introduction' in *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays in Literature and the History of Sexuality*, ed. by Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (New York, London: Methuen, 1987), 1-24, p. 7.

<sup>396</sup> Prose treatises or poems inculcating the etiquette of court which are a subtype of conduct literature. Roberta L. Krueger, 'Introduction: Teach Your Children Well: Medieval Conduct Guides for Youths', in *Medieval Conduct Literature: an Anthology of Vernacular Guides to Behaviour for Youths, with English Translations*, ed. by Mark D. Johnston (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. ix-xxxiii (p. xv). Krueger points out that, despite sharing the common values, the works for men and women 'diverge in tone and topic: the book for ladies includes discussion of dress, appearance, and etiquette'. 'Introduction: Teach Your Children Well', (p. xi).

*be full of grace, act lowly.*<sup>397</sup>

Guglielma's, husband addresses her in a similar manner: 'My queen, listen to me, and hear well / Suffer quietly / and rule calmly'.<sup>398</sup>

Like Guglielma, the female characters in the other plays from the corpus are given similar advice. They are also surrounded by characters whose role is to guide their behaviour. For instance, Saint Margaret is accompanied by her nurse, Saint Beatrice is guided by her brothers and her friend Lucia, and Saint Justina is accompanied by her parents and a Christian priest. The female characters are therefore depicted as not being able to make their own moral decisions, but are always in need of other, stronger characters, often in the form of parents, brothers, and priests.

The mode in which female characters react to the guidance is noteworthy. In most cases their response is the absence of talk, or a strong conformation followed by a specific type of physical gesture. For example, Saint Justina. After Cyprian is converted to Christianity, Justina looks to the sky and addresses Cyprian as the new bishop: 'This is how I want to act / I want to follow you in it / I will turn to you / and you will give me a good guidance'.<sup>399</sup> In other words, the main characters are passive and compliant. They obediently accept moral guidance of the senior figures who are shown as an undisputed authority.

The presence of female saints serves to embody the message about the desired behaviour of women. They serve to guide and to educate, serving the same purpose as the conduct literature. Can the saints' plays then be regarded as a subtype of conduct literature? This is precisely the point which Robert Clark and Kathleen Ashley argued in the edited volume on conduct literature which they published in 2001. This suggestion is especially relevant given that the conventional approach to studying conduct was to focus on conduct literature and courtesy books in the narrower meaning.<sup>400</sup> Contrary to that, Clark and Ashley seek to expand the standard definition

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<sup>397</sup> Moja hčerce, sliši glas ov,/u pameti budi ti vazda/budi mužu ponižena,/to ima činit svaka žena/razumno sfej rič tvoreći/sfitlu kralju čast noseći;/. 'Skazanje života svete Guljelme', pp. 286-87.

<sup>398</sup> kraljice, sliš' mene i čuj/podnes' tiho, mirno kraluj. 'Skazanje života svete Guljelme', p. 290.

<sup>399</sup> Tako hoću dilovati/u temu te ja slišiti-/k tebi ću se uticati/ti mi ć nauk dobar dati. *Prikazanje života i muke svetog Ciprijana i Justine*, p. 251.

<sup>400</sup> Kathleen Ashley and Robert L. A. Clark, 'Medieval Conduct. Texts, Theories, Practices', in *Medieval Conduct*, ed. by Kathleen Ashley and Robert L. A. Clark (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), ix-xx, (p. ix).

of what may qualify as ‘conduct literature’. They argue that the study of conduct must be enlarged to include texts that have not normally been construed as conduct literature, such as drama or romance, which functioned discursively as conduct literature.<sup>401</sup> In my analysis, I demonstrate that expanding conduct literature to saints’ plays, represents a fruitful approach. But why are the saints’ plays so suitable to transmit the values usually promoted through the conduct literature? In the next section I turn to this question.

### **Embodied Empathy**

In his study of reception of the saints in middle English biblical drama, Scoville argues that the saints were the ‘role models for the audience in the task of achieving moral action and sanctity in life’.<sup>402</sup> However, there are other genres which depict lives of saints, and should then be equally suitable to serve this purpose. Why are saints’ plays then so important for teaching conduct? In this section I argue that this is related to the possibility of theatrical performance to represent an action in an embodied way, in comparison to other media.

The experience of seeing and participating in performance is a full-body experience and it motivates imitation. In his book *Engaging Audiences* Bruce McConachie has argued that: the ‘facility for empathy encourages spectators to imitate the emotions and actions embodied by actor/characters. Together with the dialogue, the response of other characters, and similar information, spectators can use empathy to piece together the intentions of actor/characters’.<sup>403</sup> McConachie refers to the motor theory of social cognition by Jacob and Jeannerod and points out that the ‘mirror systems generate what Jacob and Jeannerod have called visuomotor representations of others’ intentional actions’.<sup>404</sup> The observation of motion automatically triggers in spectators ‘the formation of a motor plan to perform the observed movement.’<sup>405</sup>

Following McConachie it can be argued that, better than any other media, saints’ plays could transmit the mode of conduct because, from the stage, they offer embodied motorial bases for imitation. I demonstrate this in the case of the virgin

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> Chester Norman Scoville, *Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>403</sup> McConachie, p.72.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

martyr plays. As indicated in the analysis of the plays, the patterns of depiction of the female saint repeats in different plays. The idealised behaviour is discussed by other characters whereas the female protagonist quietly embodies and exemplifies this behaviour. The role of performers who enact the saint is thus to embody the desired behaviour, or in other words to model the conduct. This concerned both the gender and class perspective.

When considering the status of actual women of the early modern from Hvar, as proscribed in the statute books as elaborated in the introductory part of this section,<sup>406</sup> we can notice that women were legally subject first to their fathers, then to their husbands, especially with regard to inheritance and property: the wife could not freely dispose of her inherited material goods, as the dowry, once the marriage was established, became the property of her husband.<sup>407</sup> We can therefore imagine the performance of the saints' plays as transmitting the values which cement existing gender relations. In order to be desirable, the female spectators were taught to follow the assigned gender norms.

One important performance related aspect needs to be addressed at this point, and it refers to the gender of performers. As outlined in the previous sections, saints' plays in Hvar could have taken place in various contexts, some of which could significantly condition the modes in which gender was performed. The convent performance, on the one hand, could have offered an intimate and exclusive performance in which all roles – that of the male and female characters – were performed by women. In the secular performances, on the other hand, all the roles, and very importantly, female saints' roles, were performed by male performers. We do not know much more about the status of performers of saints' plays in Hvar, apart from the fact that they were in some cases recruited from the members of confraternities, as I discussed in this chapter. If this was the case with these saints plays, we can imagine that the roles of female saints were performed by the youngest members of confraternities, approximately fourteen-year-olds.

The second dimension through which we can read the instructions given to the female martyrs concerns the class dimension. Kathleen M. Ashely has emphasized the role of conduct in maintaining political order. Codes and external behaviours were

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<sup>406</sup> As analysed by Bezić Božanić in 'Hvarke i Viške u svjetlu arhivskih izvora'.

<sup>407</sup> See Bezić Božanić, 'Hvarke i Viške u svjetlu arhivskih izvora'.

an obsession for aristocrats, since they ‘promised to maintain social identities at a time of blurring boundaries between upper and the “middle” classes’.<sup>408</sup> Have the saints’ plays on Hvar served a similar function? This is difficult to tell as we do not have enough information about who was in the audience, where the plays were performed and by whom. However, from the previous sections in this chapter we do know that communities from Hvar have long been characterized by social struggles and revolts of the commoners. Even though the most intensive riots spread through the island in the period 1510-1514, the final peace agreement between commoners and noblemen was signed only in 1611, and at the expense of the noblemen. Furthermore, the period in which Marin Gazarović, himself a nobleman and an active member of the Hvar community, wrote saints’ plays and advocated opening a convent, corresponds with the weakening of the nobility’s position. This gives us a good reason to believe that gender was subsumed within the semiotics of class, and that Gazarović was offering through the plays a set of codes and external behaviours’ to the noble women in order to maintain, at least symbolically, the status of their class.

### **Embodied Resistance**

In the previous section I argued that the saints’ plays were important for teaching conduct thanks to the possibility of theatrical performance to represent an action in an embodied way, whereby the desired behaviour which the plays were intended to teach concerned both the gender and class dimension. However, in my last section I look into the question of whether the transmission of the model of conduct was successful.

While conduct literature served to modify woman’s judgment, taste, speech, manners, and appearance,<sup>409</sup> in the case of Dalmatian saints’ plays, the ideal woman was depicted as submissive, silenced, and respecting the authority of her father and husband. In the earlier sections, I have described this through the example of Saint Guglielma, Saint Margaret, and Saint Justina, who are all surrounded by authorities whose role is to guide their behaviour, as if they are not able to make their own moral decisions. I have also referred to the case of Saint Justina to demonstrate that the virgin characters obediently accept moral guidance through words (or the lack thereof) and gestures. However, the case of Saint Margaret shows that the presentation of female

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<sup>408</sup> Kathleen Ashley, ‘Medieval Courtesy Literature and Dramatic Mirrors of Female Conduct’, *The Ideology of Culture*, p. 1.

<sup>409</sup> Krueger, ‘Introduction: Teach Your Children Well’, p. xv.

characters is more complex than it can seem from the analysis presented up to this point.

As described in the first chapter, the protagonist of the *Play of the Life of Saint Margaret*, is tortured by Olibrius, the king of Antioquia, to punish her for rejecting him. Despite being attacked by the dragon and the beast, Margaret resists. She is swallowed by the dragon, but in the play she saves herself by ripping apart his interior. The beast tries to abuse her, but she fights back and struggles with it. During the fight she confronts the dragon by making the gesture of the cross, which finally defeats it. Yet her victory is not solely symbolic. She wins the battle by providing real physical resistance. And furthermore, even though the case of Margaret is exceptional for the physicality of the resistance, we can find equally strong gestures with other female saints, such as Justina, who confronts the three devils which obsess her. The main characters of the plays are in this sense strong and courageous, not docile and timid; ready to resist their oppressors, rather than only being capable for passive compliance.

This is in line with Mills's work on pictorial presentation of female martyrdom, which shows that 'hagiographic representation does not simply signify as a function of normative patriarchal power, but may also incorporate recuperative or empowering models'.<sup>410</sup> In her analysis of textual presentations of female martyrdom Sarah Key also argues that pain and violence of female saints in some representations is 'something both desired and enjoyed' rather than inconvenient for the audience.<sup>411</sup> Clark and Ashley convey a similar message that 'conduct literature can be consumed in variety of ways' and therefore 'may perform different functions socially'.<sup>412</sup> While the message transmitted can be interpreted in various ways by the receiver, the portrayal of virgin saints as both victim and victor plays an important role in this multiplication of meaning. In the case of characters who are unquestionably compliant, it is clear why it would be logical to expect compliant behaviour among the spectators. But if the (female) spectators are observing role model characters who are at the same time strong and capable of resistance, what is then the desired behaviour?

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<sup>410</sup> Milles, p. 110.

<sup>411</sup> Sarah Kay, 'The Sublime Body of the Martyr: Violence in Early Modern Saints' Lives', in *Violence in Medieval Society*, ed. Richard Kaeuper (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), 16–18.

<sup>412</sup> Ashley and Clark, p. xv.

Besides merely illustrating the ever-existing possibilities of subversive reading, I point out two aspects specific for a dramatic genre which allowed the protagonists of the saints' plays from Hvar to convey diverse and plural messages<sup>413</sup>. Both of these I have already touched upon in the previous section.

The first aspect pertains to the motor theory of social cognition, which states that the experience of seeing and participating in performance allows the spectators to imitate the emotions and actions presented by actor/characters. In her study of the engagement of the audience in the performance of *The Castle of Perseverance*, Clare Wright uses a similar concept of kinaesthetic empathy which refers to 'an embodied, instinctive simulative response to the movement of others'.<sup>414</sup> Given that the concept emerges from the studies of choreographed moving, it is useful for explaining how such strong and suggestive gestures could have affected the audience. As Wright explains the viewer can internally reenact the experience of moving when he/she perceives the movement of another.<sup>415</sup> In her analysis, Wright pays a special attention to the spatial relations, and argues that 'greater proximity between player and spectator in the place' can foster a 'kinesthetic response to the characters' activities'.<sup>416</sup> This is important in the case of Hvar as there are some indication that the performances took place indoors, in convent or private homes, which might imply greater proximity, and greater response.

The second aspect pertains to the fact that in secular performances all roles, including female saints' roles, were performed by male performers. In her study of gender and performance in medieval drama, Normington argues that cross-dressing in medieval drama 'provided a challenge for the audience members by highlighting the artifice of the dramas'.<sup>417</sup> At the same time, she argues, 'ironically, cross-dressed men provided a greater voice for women's concerns than medieval society would have

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<sup>413</sup> Katie Normington argues the same in the case of English Cycle plays. 'Thus, if the cycles are viewed as the product of a fluid rather than rigid social structure, an alternative reading of women's representation within medieval drama may be possible'. *Gender and medieval drama* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>414</sup> Clare Wright, 'Empathy With the Devil: Movement, Kinesthesia, and Affect in *The Castle of Perseverance* Theatre Survey', 60 (2019), 179-206 (196).

<sup>415</sup> Wright, 'Empathy With the Devil', pp. 196-97.

<sup>416</sup> Wright, 'Empathy With the Devil', p. 199.

<sup>417</sup> Katie, Normington, *Gender and medieval drama* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 2004) p. 56.



otherwise granted emphasising certain gender issues'.<sup>418</sup> This was so, in her view for two reasons. Firstly, because the presence of male in the female roles, only further underlined how women were restricted in the public space.<sup>419</sup> The other reason pertains to the notion that the cross-dressed men could have displayed behaviours prohibited for women by the society's decorum, which as a consequence has traversing the normal societal rules and moral codes.<sup>420</sup>

To conclude, in this section I sought to demonstrate that, for the female audience, these pluralistic layers of the play offered possibilities for alternative, sometimes even subversive, interpretations. The combination of kinesthetic empathy of watching a theatrical performance, and Normington's notion that a cross-dressed performance provided a greater voice for women's concerns than medieval society would have otherwise granted, allowed the audience (especially female audience) to embody and take with them the behaviour and gestures to which they were not normally exposed, and to take with them to the everyday life. Thereby we can say that the possibilities of subversive reading of the female saints' plays is crucially linked with the embodied nature of the depictions of the main characters' martyrdoms.

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While in the previous chapter I explained the main principles of adaptation of saints' plays in Dalmatian communities, in this chapter I provided a deeper understanding of how the adaptation was carried out in the case of historical performances of saints' plays on the island of Hvar. This was done through examination of two modes through which martyrdom narratives fulfilled social functions: the mode of representation and the mode of transmission.

In the first case-study, I analysed the performances of the *Play of Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*, demonstrating that saints' plays *represented* and promoted values of different social groups. This was achieved thanks to the 'radical dualism' of the genre and the fact that – in the context marked by social conflicts and tensions – the performances of saints' plays allowed all conflicted groups to use elements from the play to draw legitimation for their struggle. Audience from both conflicted camps, the nobility and commoners, identified with Christian characters in their righteous fight for their faith, resorting to the victimology which was written inside the genre.

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<sup>418</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid, p. 69.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

The second case study dealt with how theatrical dramatization of female saints' martyrdoms were used to *transmit* desirable values with the purpose of cementing the existing social order. These saints' plays are thereby interpreted as an extension of conduct literature: a medieval genre which taught women orderly conduct. However, here I also point out a plurality of possible interpretations, some of which were subversive. I argue that the corporeal nature of how female martyrdoms were depicted in the saints' plays, allowed the audience (especially the female audience) to transgress the patriarchal norms which the plays were supposed to teach them.

This chapter attested to an unusually powerful potential of saints' plays to act as a mechanism of mobilization and social division in urban communities of early modern Dalmatia. This can be explained thanks to several important features of the genre: their scenic spectacle (e.g. the scenes of torture) which made them appealing to the contemporary audience; medieval flatness (e.g. with respect to good and evil of the characters) which made them suitable for an educational function; dramatic character which made them physically suggestive and convincing (as opposed to other, non-dramatic forms of communication); and content-wise, the fact that the saints as main characters were easier to identify with than with divine figures (for example, such as in the genre of mystery plays).

In the next chapter, it will be shown that many of these traits made saints' plays equally appealing for the audience which inhabited the same geographic area several centuries later: the period in which Dalmatia became part of Croatian and Yugoslav nation-states. I will therefore look into a new, modern type of community-building, which will now revolve around the construction of national identity.

### Chapter 3

## SAINTS' PLAYS AND THE PERFORMANCE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

In 1837 the last performance of a saints' play took place on the island of Hvar, as a continuation of medieval tradition; however, the genre reappeared on the stages of the east Adriatic in 1968. Since then, saints' plays have continued to be staged in various forms until the present day. The reappearance and contemporary staging of saints' plays opens a number of questions for example: what motivated this reappearance of the medieval genre in modern times? Who performed the saints' plays and on which occasions? What are the modes and aesthetics of their staging? How are they received by the audience?

In my analysis I show that modern performances of the saints' plays has been tightly related to their political uses and interpretations. I demonstrate this by situating the performances in three periods in recent Croatian history when the staging of the saints' plays was most frequent. Each of these three periods reflects distinct waves of nationalism which determined the political trajectory of the Croatian nation. First, in 1968 the saints' plays reappeared during the turbulent period of the late 1960s and early 1970s, marked by two social movements: the student protests from 1968 and the 'Croatian Spring' of 1971. The second revival of interest in the saints' plays happened two decades later, corresponding with another key period of Croatian, and Yugoslav, political history – the breakup of the Yugoslav state, Croatian acquisition of national sovereignty, and the beginning of the ethnic war in the former Yugoslavia. The third wave concerns the most recent performances which have been staged since 2016 in the context of the neo-conservative backlash, rising right-wing populism across Europe, and re-traditionalization.

In this section I will analyse the performances of the saints' plays in all three phases. Each phase will be represented through one case study, and the case study analysis will be preceded by a discussion of the historical context in which it appeared. Before moving to the case study analyses, I will provide the theoretical framework of this section of the thesis, in which I indicate the main theoretical sources and explain the central concepts which will be used in the analysis.

## **Nation and Performance: from Symbolical Representation to Engaging Affects**

It could be argued that scholarship of theatre and national performance entails two main approaches: the representational approach, engaged in studying how the nation is represented through aesthetics and symbols, and the more recent affective approach, which looks at the bodily impact of performance on the audience and how the idea of the national is felt through the interaction.

The first approach has been predominant in analysing the connections between performance and nation. This has included focus on how performance *stands for a nation* by scrutinizing various visual, auditory, and kinetic elements of performance which represent the nation. The studies that follow this approach are concerned with how performance ‘captured national zeitgeist and matters of pressing national concern’.<sup>421</sup> For instance, from this perspective a performance would be characterized as national for dramatizing national history, promoting specific language features, or typical national genres. This approach is referential and often includes a semiotic model of analysis (how the performance/the signifier refers to the nation/the signified). The second approach switches the focus in studies of national performance from the iconic figural relation to the meaning achieved through the interaction of the performance forms with their audience. This approach is concerned with the role of feelings, emotions, and affects in establishing an audience’s connection with the idea of nation. It also emphasizes the fact that the relationship between the performance and the nation can also be located in the ‘shared repertoires which the performances weave’.<sup>422</sup> As a result, ‘performance may identify with nation without identifying as national’,<sup>423</sup> which allows for the performances which traditionally had not been considered as national to become understood as such.

Both these approaches are reflected in my research.<sup>424</sup> Following the representational approach, my analysis will be focused on representation of religious

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<sup>421</sup> Nadine Holdsworth, *Theatre and National Identity. Re-imagining Concepts of Nation* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2014), p.5.

<sup>422</sup> Erin Hurley, *National Performance* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 6. See also *Theatre and Feeling* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

<sup>423</sup> Hurley, *National Performance*, p. 29.

<sup>424</sup> In this I follow the work of Erin Hurley as it appears in her book *National Performance*. This approach is also applied in the collection of texts *Theatre and*

and national symbols, and the processes through which the audience identify with national community. As for the latter approach, I will look into the ‘cultural politics of emotion’, a framework developed by Sara Ahmed.<sup>425</sup> Ahmed’s research into emotions has radically challenged ‘the assumptions that emotions are a private matter,’ and ‘that they simply belong to individuals’.<sup>426</sup> According to the author, emotions can initiate socially relevant actions and political possibilities. She develops an ‘economic model of emotions’ to explain this ‘sociality of emotion’, suggesting that emotions are not simply something ‘I’ or ‘we’ have.<sup>427</sup> Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made. The ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others. This is possible thanks to the understanding that the ‘feelings do not reside in subjects or objects but are produced as effects of circulation’.<sup>428</sup>

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*National Identity* which is, according to the editor Holdsworth, ‘concerned with the idea of national repertoires as both representational and deeply felt’ (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 4, as well as in Nadine Holdsworth, *Theatre and Nation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 4.

<sup>425</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

<sup>426</sup> Sara Ahmed, ‘Affective Economies’, *Social Text* 22 (2004), 117-39 (p.17).

<sup>427</sup> Ahmed, ‘Affective Economies’.

<sup>428</sup> Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 4.

## **The First Wave: Performing the Religious Genre in Socialist Yugoslavia**

### **Yugoslavia from Modernization to Unrest 1967 – 1971**

The Social Federalist Republic of Yugoslavia was founded during, and in the aftermath of, World War Two. The state was formed through the guerrilla liberation war when anti-fascist forces, under the leadership of the Communist Party, defeated the Axis powers. The newly created state consisted of six republics, whereby all Croatian lands were integrated for the first time under the same government.<sup>429</sup>

Even though, during the early years of its existence, Yugoslavia was aligned with the Eastern Bloc and followed a Soviet political and economic model, the situation changed drastically after the Tito-Stalin split in 1948.<sup>430</sup> As a part of the de-Sovietising reforms in 1950 the state rejected central economic planning and introduced a workers' self-management system, which was followed by rapid modernisation, high rates of economic growth, and an improved standard of living.<sup>431</sup> At the same time the external political orientation towards the developing countries (the future members of the Non-Aligned Movement) only enforced the economic development and political stability.<sup>432</sup> From the mid-sixties and the beginning of the new economic reforms, the state turned towards market-oriented self-management, which created the basis for the development of consumer culture.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century, after the Venetian Republic lost Istria and Dalmatia, these two lands were joined with Austria-Hungary, as well the territory of the ex-Republic of Dubrovnik. At that point nearly all Croatian lands were a part of the monarchy. Each of the lands formed a part of different provinces, and had a different administrative status.

<sup>430</sup> On the split see Leonid Gibianski, 'The Soviet-Yugoslav Split', in *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe: Challenges to Communist Rule*, ed. by Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2006), pp. 17-36.

<sup>431</sup> Isabel Ströhle, 'Of social inequalities in a socialist society: the creation of a rural underclass in Yugoslav Kosovo', in *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*, ed. by Rory Archer, Igor Duda and Paul Stubbs (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 112-32 (p. 112).

<sup>432</sup> Boris Kanzleiter, 'Yugoslavia', in *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956–1977*, ed. by Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2008), pp. 219-28. (p. 220), Leonid Gibianski, 'The Soviet-Yugoslav Split', pp. 17-36, see also Hrvoje Klasić, *Jugoslavia i svijet 1968 [Yugoslavia and the World 1968]* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2012), p. 19.

<sup>433</sup> Igor Duda, 'When capitalism and socialism get along best: tourism, consumer culture and the idea of progress in Malo misto', in *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*, ed. by Rory Archer, Igor Duda and Paul Stubbs (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 173-92 (p. 173).

Yugoslav consumerism was not limited to tangible goods, but, as Branislav Jakovljević warns, it also included cultural consumption: ‘It was the golden age of festivals, which ranged from alternative theatre to film and classical music; of World War II film spectacles; and of pop culture that easily flowed into socialist culture’.<sup>434</sup> During the sixties, new progressive theatrical festivals were established including The Festival of Small and Experimental Stages of Yugoslavia in Sarajevo (1960) and Belgrade International Theatre Festival (1967), while the ‘old festivals’ were modernized and internationalized. The new trends can be best described with the list of artists and companies who were the guests at those festivals coming from the West and the East, including Living Theatre, Ellen Stewart from La MaMa, Alvin Nikolai’s Company, Jerzy Grotowski, Tadeusz Kantor. The state authorities recognized that festivals could be a useful tool for promotion of Yugoslavian international political position, displaying the openness of the state to the rest of the world (in contrast to the other socialist countries).<sup>435</sup>

By the end of the 1960s, the long period of stability was interrupted by several turbulent events. The first turmoil ensued in 1967 with a debate between Serbian and Croatian intellectuals over ‘The Declaration on the Name and Position of the Croatian Literary Language’. If the events related to ‘The Declaration’ could be classified only as an academic debate, the events which soon followed had more serious, even violent repercussions. This refers to the student protests from 1968. Finally, the period of turmoil came to an end in 1971, after the Croatian national movement (‘Croatian Spring’) was shut down, marking the beginning of a new period of standstill. The period between the 1967 and the end of 1971 provides a precise timeframe for the first wave of reappearance of the saints’ plays. In the next three subsections I will elaborate

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Igor Duda, ‘When capitalism and socialism get along best: tourism, consumer culture and the idea of progress in Malo misto’, in *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism* in *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*, ed. by Rory Archer, Igor Duda and Paul Stubbs (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 173-192, (p. 173).

<sup>434</sup> Branislav Jakovljević, *Alienation Effects: performance and self-management in Yugoslavia, 1945-91* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), p. 202.

<sup>435</sup> Radina Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam. Amerikanizacija jugoslovenske popularne kulture šezdesetih godina XX veka* [Coca-Cola Socialism. Americanization of Yugoslav Popular Culture in 1960s] (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2012), p. 280.

on the three events which marked the period, and which consequently affected the reception of the saints' plays.

### *The Declaration*

The roots of the language-related issues in Yugoslavia can be traced back into the mid-nineteenth century when Croatian national identity was constructed for the first time in the modern sense within the political frame of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This happened thanks to the activities of Croatian intellectual elites involved in the Illyrian movement and, under the influence of other national movements in Western Europe.<sup>436</sup> The movement sought to achieve three main goals: the integration of Croatian lands (which were historically separated since the twelfth century); their independence from Austro-Hungarian rule; and the creation of the new union with the other culturally and linguistically similar South Slavs,<sup>437</sup> who are today identified as Slovenes, Croats, Bosnians, Bosniacs (Muslims of Bosnia), Serbs, Montenegrins, and Macedonians.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> The Illyrian movement holds an ambiguous position in Croatian historiography. On the one hand, Croatian national identity was formulated, for the first time in the modern sense, in the context of the movement. This fact has assured it an undeniable place in Croatian national history. On the other hand, what tends to be neglected in contemporary Croatian nationalistic discourse is the relation of the Illyrian movement to the genesis of the political idea of Yugoslavism, the idea which was later implemented in the form of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918-1941), founded as the product of the Treaty of Versailles, and through the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was founded in the period during and after World War Two. The work of Štiks is rather exceptional in the sense that he recognizes the members of Illyrian movement as “Yugoslav” agitators’. Štiks, *Nations and Citizens*, pp. 26-30.

<sup>437</sup> Davor Dukić, ‘An Overview of Important Events in Croatian History’, in *Fear, Death and Resistance: an Ethnography of War: Croatia 1991-1992*, ed. by Lada Čale Feldman, Ines Prica, Reana Senjković (Zagreb: Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Research, 1993), pp. 241-54 (p. 246). According to Igor Štiks, ‘the guiding idea of the ‘Illyrianists’ who falsely believed that South Slavs were the descendants of an eponymous ancient Balkan people – that idea was also present earlier in Napoleon’s short-lived *Provinces Illyriennes* – was in harmony with the unquestioned principle of ethnic and linguistic nationalism: various groups speaking the same language and which manifested similar ethnic characteristics most probably constitute a people that should be united, culturally and politically, and, eventually, govern itself’. *Nations and Citizens in Yugoslavia and the Post-Yugoslav States. One Hundred Years of Citizenship* (New York, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.26.

<sup>438</sup> Greenberg, Marc L., ‘The Illyrian Movement: A Croatian Vision of South Slavic Unity’, in *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity: The Success-Failure*



The central idea of the Movement was that South Slavs, being of the same origin, are entitled by natural right to a national state.<sup>439</sup> However, despite being linguistically similar, the speakers of south Slavic languages lacked a standard language which would serve as lingua franca. Based on the understanding of national community as language community, with the national language as a bond which unites individuals in the ‘linguistic nation’,<sup>440</sup> the ‘Illyrianists’ believed that the promotion of a common literary language is the central tool of advancement of Illyrian ideology.<sup>441</sup> Yet, the process of replacement of the linguistic pluralism with a singular, standard language did not take place as expected. The proposal for the štokavian dialect as a singular standard was unacceptable for Slovenians, while the Serbs objected the name Illyrian, which they felt not only referred to an ancient language, but also neglected their own identity as Serbs.<sup>442</sup> As a result, the movement was reduced to the Croatian proponents of the idea solely and the first South-Slavic-binding project failed.

Language remained a contentious issue, even one century later when the South Slavs became united within the borders of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavian citizenship assumed ‘both a commitment to the idea of a South-Slavic state and the acknowledgement that its brotherly nations should develop fully and independently in the direction of a higher socialist unity’.<sup>443</sup> Instead of the nationalisms, and ethnic conflicts, the official policy of ethnic cohabitation brought to the fore a new communal and cultural concept of ‘brotherhood and unity’, a concept which represented ‘an attempt to forge a new sense of community that would overcome traditional ethno-national differences’.<sup>444</sup> The emphasis in the process of creation of the new Yugoslav identity was on the synergy of South Slavic cultural identity, whereby all languages were supposed to have an equal status, while the literary traditions of all the nations

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*Continuum in Language Identity Efforts*, vol. 2, ed. by Joshua A. Fishman and Ofelia García (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011), pp. 364-80.

<sup>439</sup> Dejan Djokic, *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918-1992* (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2003), p.12.

<sup>440</sup> Harald Haarmann, ‘History’, in *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity*, p. 64.

<sup>441</sup> Marc L Greenberg, ‘The Illyrian Movement: a Croatian Vision of South Slavic Unity’, *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity*, pp. 364-80.

<sup>442</sup> Greenberg, p.10.

<sup>443</sup> Štiks, *Nations and Citizens*, p. 19.

<sup>444</sup> Jasna Dragović-Soso, *Saviours of the Nation: Serbia’s Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), p. 29.

were equally representative. Nevertheless, ethnic tensions remained present in the new state and kept on perpetuating the language issue. The scandal related to ‘The Declaration About the National Language’ in 1967 was the one with the strongest repercussions.

The first debate which shook the stability of the state in the late sixties revolved around the dissatisfaction of Croatian intellectuals with the status of the Croatian language. The root of the conflict can be traced back to 1954, when major Croatian and Serbian intellectuals signed the Novi Sad agreement on the single language of Serbs, Croats and Montenegrins (named Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian). As Ronelle Alexander explains, the Agreement stated that ‘the language of Serbs, Croats and Montenegrins was a single language [...] and that the literary language that had developed on the basis (of that common code) around the two major centres, Belgrade and Zagreb, was uniform [...] with two pronunciations, ekavian and ijekavian. Furthermore, the agreement stated that both components of the language’s name must always be used, that both alphabets had equal rights [...] and should be learned equally by both Serbs and Croats, and that both pronunciations had equal rights.’<sup>445</sup> Even though the original purpose of the Agreement was to ensure the equal status for the Serbian and Croatian languages, during the following decade it created dissatisfaction among the members of Croatian cultural elites who saw the implementation of the Novi Sad Agreement only as a mean of further perpetuation of the inequality of the status of Serbian and Croatian language.

In 1967 more than one hundred Croatian intellectuals, most of whom were prominent members of the Communist Party, with the support of *Matica hrvatska*, the central Croatian cultural organization, signed The Declaration which called for the equality of the Croatian language within the Yugoslav Federation. According to the signatories, the Agreement promoted the privileged status of the Serbian language, while Croatian was disregarded and reduced to the status of a local dialect. The declaration therefore demanded ‘further development of the Croatian language which

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<sup>445</sup> Ronelle Alexander, ‘Language and Identity: the Faith of Serbo-Croatian’, in *Entangled Histories of the Balkans - Volume One: National Ideologies and Language Policies*, ed. by Roumen Dontchev Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 341-418 (p. 384).

would respect Croatian tradition’, and ‘a full affirmation of Croatian language in all spheres of life’.<sup>446</sup>

The Croatian demands for greater cultural autonomy, which were expressed in the Declaration, provoked an immediate reaction from the Serbian intellectuals who published the document entitled the ‘Proposal for Consideration’, demanding equal rights for the Serbian language. While the Croatian intellectuals demanded rights for the Croatian-language speakers in the Croatian federal territory, the Serbian intellectuals claimed the same rights for Serbians everywhere, including the large Serbian minority within Croatia. According to the Croatian public, this concealed the plans of Serbian intellectuals to strengthen the links of the Serbian minority in Croatia with the homeland in Serbia.<sup>447</sup>

Even though the debate between the two groups of intellectuals was soon put aside, with Tito condemning both sides for their nationalistic tendencies, it turned out to have long-term consequences with regard to the interethnic relations within the federal state. It sparked a spectre of nationalism which continued to appear on both sides. To name some examples, from the Croatian side, this included the founding of new Croatian pronationalist magazines like *Kritika* and *Hrvatski književni list*. The latter was banned by Tito’s directive soon after it was published. From the Serbian side, this refers to the scandal when the members of the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade included the authors of the ancient literature originating from Dubrovnik into the Serbian literary canon. The fact that the respective works of literature were classified within the Serbian canon led, as a consequence, to a questioning of the Croatianness of canonical Croatian literary works.<sup>448</sup>

The mentioned disputes did not resonate more significantly in the public sphere, at least not as significantly as The Declaration did. Contemporaries could probably perceive the disputes as a squabble between linguists and philologists. Nevertheless, as according to Štiks, the significance of the Declaration was much

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<sup>446</sup> ‘Declaration on the Name and Position of the Croatian Literary Language’ [‘Deklaracija o nazivu i položaju hrvatskoga književnog jezika’] in *Croatian Encyclopaedia. Electronic Version* [*Hrvatska enciklopedija. Mrežno izdanje*] <<http://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?ID=14285#start>> [accessed 19 September 2018].

<sup>447</sup> Alexander, p. 389.

<sup>448</sup> For a more detail account of these scandals see Hrvoje Klasić, *Jugoslavia i svijet 1968* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2012), pp. 405-9.

larger since it ‘signalled the abandonment of cultural Yugoslavism by the Croatian cultural elite, the very elite that originally formulated and gave substance to the Yugoslav movement and provided it with numerous high-profile partisans since its nineteenth-century beginnings’.<sup>449</sup> Moreover, this series of small scandals had a long-lasting impact on the relations between the Croatian and Serbian cultural elites. The events slowly undermined the principles of ‘brotherhood and unity’ putting the rights of one nation above the interest of the Yugoslav collective.<sup>450</sup> The consequences of the scandals motivated further ethnonational fragmentation which consequently led to the breakup of the state. In a temporally much closer perspective, the events had noticeable consequences on the reception of the saints’ plays, especially given that one of the genre’s most distinctive qualities is the promotion of the plurality and richness of the Croatian linguistic heritage through the performance of the ancient čakavian dialect.

#### *The Students Protests in 68*

The student protests, which took place in the capital cities of the Federal State of Yugoslavia in June 1968, were the second important series of events which caused social turmoil. The protest activities were initially motivated by the international power relations; the roots of student unrest can be found in protests against the US invasion of Vietnam from 1966, which were orchestrated by the leadership of the University Committee of the League of Communists.<sup>451</sup> Similar activities of Yugoslav students included the writing of a letter of support to students and professors in Warsaw in 1967, and a letter of critique to the rector of the Sorbonne during the student demonstrations in France in May 1968. For Yugoslav students especially influential was a group of Marxist philosophy lecturers and professors mostly based at the universities in Zagreb and Belgrade. The group was named *Praxis* after the philosophical journal which they were publishing. Apart from publishing the journal, one of their central activities was organizing the annual seminars on the island of Korčula (the ‘Korčula Summer School’), which gathered Marxist scholars of significant reputation from Europe and beyond. The core idea of this philosophical collective was, as explained by Gajo Petrović, one of the founders of the collective, in the first issue of the journal, that philosophy should be ‘relentless critique of all

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<sup>449</sup> Štiks, pp. 92-93.

<sup>450</sup> Alexander, p. 391.

<sup>451</sup> Bacevic, p. 83.

existing conditions'.<sup>452</sup> Through their work they also put emphasis on the importance of the creative process of individuals over the collective, all of which can be seen to contest the dominant ideology of the ruling communist regime.<sup>453</sup>

In June 1968, the Yugoslav student protests took place in all the capital cities of Yugoslavia. According to Jana Baćević, the earlier activities 'contributed to the students' increasingly critical attitude towards all hierarchical structures, including the state, the police and the university itself', and determined how the protests were framed.<sup>454</sup> The protests can be understood as a part of the broader wave of such events that took place in Western Central and Eastern Europe throughout the early summer of 1968, not only because they took place at the same time, but also due to the means by which the protests manifested – street demonstrations, campus occupations, sit-in protests and appeals to anti-authoritarianism.

Despite the initial international motivation, student protest became increasingly driven by domestic politics and social conditions.<sup>455</sup> The Yugoslav students did not challenge the fundamentals of the Yugoslav political system, neither did they seek to overthrow the regime.<sup>456</sup> They demanded action on growing social inequality, unemployment, freedom of public opinion and expression in Yugoslavia, while being especially critical towards to the 'New Class' of party and state bureaucrats. Finally, the students strongly suggested that the wartime generation had lost their revolutionary drive and that new voices were needed in the political arena.<sup>457</sup>

The central protests in Belgrade ended with Tito's intervention in a form of public speech in which he agreed with student demonstrators and promised to commit

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<sup>452</sup> See Žiga Vodovnik, 'Democracy as a Verb: New Meditations on the Yugoslav Praxis Philosophy', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 14 (2012), 433-52 (433).

<sup>453</sup> See Kenneth Morrison, "'June Events": The 1968 Student Protests in Yugoslavia', in *Eastern Europe in 1968: Responses to the Prague Spring and Warsaw Pact Invasion*, ed. by Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 215-34 (p. 219).

<sup>454</sup> Bacevic, p. 84

<sup>455</sup> Morrison, p. 215.

<sup>456</sup> Morrison, p. 224, Jana Bacevic, 'Education, Conflict, and Class Reproduction in Socialist Yugoslavia', in *Social Inequalities and Discontent in Yugoslav Socialism*, ed. by Rory Archer, Igor Duda and Paul Stubbs (London: Routledge, 2016), 77-93 (p.84).

<sup>457</sup> Madigan Fichter, 'Yugoslav Protest: Student Rebellion in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo in 1968', *Slavic Review* 75 (2016), 99-121 (113).

himself to solve their problems. Interestingly, he rejected any notion of connection of the protests to the wider New Left demonstrations, and he strongly emphasized that the problems could be solved domestically. By doing this, he calmed any public fears over outside intervention, such as the subsequent Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, which he *post factum* publicly opposed.<sup>458</sup>

Even though the protests were short in their duration, they were the first organized and significant expression of disagreement with the regime after World War Two, and at that moment they represented the most radical critique against the communist regime in Yugoslavia.<sup>459</sup> Given the nature of the issues which the protests addressed in all the capital cities, it can be said that they represented not only an unwelcomed and certainly problematic expression of dissent in a supposedly well-functioning society, but also a direct threat to the supremacy of the regime. The protests inspired different modes of criticizing the ruling regime. However, on the other side, the same ruling regime became less tolerant of the critique and viewed it as a keener reason to resort to censorship.

#### *Croatian National Movement in 1971*

Many parallels can be established between the years 1968 and 1971. Both years were marked by student protests intended to subvert the regime, and both protests were manifestations of the frustration caused by economic issues.<sup>460</sup> Nevertheless, there were many differences between those two protests, mostly pertaining to their ideological background. The third political crisis which interrupted the long period of social stability happened in 1971 in several cities of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, under the umbrella name ‘Croatian Spring’.<sup>461</sup> The movement fought for greater economic and cultural autonomy of the Croatian Republic within the federation. As

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<sup>458</sup> Bacevic, pp. 77-93, Morrison, p. 227.

<sup>459</sup> Morrison, pp. 215-23, Hrvoje Klasić, *Jugoslavia i svijet 1968* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2012), pp. 77-274.

<sup>460</sup> See Darko Suvin, ‘Communism Can Only Be Radical Plebeian Democracy: Remarks on the Experience of S. F. R. Yugoslavia and on Civil Society’, *International Critical Thought*, 6 (2016), 165-89 (172-76).

<sup>461</sup> Marko Zubak warns that the actual metaphor itself – the Croatian Spring – unmistakably alludes to the resemblances to the reform and democratic achievements of the Prague Spring. A detailed comparative analysis of the Croatian Spring has, however, not yet been conducted. ‘The Croatian Spring: Interpreting the Communist Heritage in Post-Communist Croatia’, *East Central Europe/L’Europe du Centre-Est* 32 (2005), 191-225 (193).

mentioned above, the cause of discontent was of an economic nature, and it can be traced back to the mid-1960s and the Yugoslav economic reform – the transition to ‘market socialism’. According to Darko Suvin, ‘the absence of central planning, a slide towards a market without democratic control and swayed by international centres of financial capital plus the six or seven regional centres of power in the “federal republics”’, inevitably led to the nationalism of democratization.<sup>462</sup> In Croatian terms, this was formulated through the movement called the ‘Croatian Spring’. The movement emerged in the mid-1960s, corresponding with the economic reforms, and through the years it gained huge public support, which is why it was also called *Maspok* (from *Masovni pokret* – Mass Movement).<sup>463</sup> There were two dominant streams within the movement. One group of Croatian communists involved in the movement displayed dissatisfaction with issues related to the fiscalization system and the economy. For them, one of the focal issues was the economic exploitation of Croatia through the high payment of the revenues which the state was giving to the central government. More precisely, this concerned the issue of redistribution of foreign currency between the republics of the Yugoslav federation, since ‘massive revenues from tourism made Croatia the biggest attractor of foreign currency in Yugoslavia but the closed foreign currency market forced it to trade these revenues with other republics at a rate that was not particularly favourable’.<sup>464</sup>

The discontent of the other part of the movement was motivated by reasons related to the cultural issues. In addition to the focus on the economic repression, the other group of the liberal members of the League of Croatian Communists addressed the Croats’ grievances related to the cultural questions. They found the promotion of Croatian culture, language, and history crucial for a awareness-raising process, and consequently for the achievement of Croatian statehood.<sup>465</sup> In this sense, the cultural organization *Matica hrvatska* was of crucial importance due to its sponsoring of numerous celebrations of historical events and figures, many of which were of a

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<sup>462</sup> Suvin, p. 165.

<sup>463</sup> Zubak, p. 191.

<sup>464</sup> Bačević, p. 85.

<sup>465</sup> According to Jill Irvine, by arguing for the reformed educational plan for elementary and middle schools (under this plan, 75 percent of instruction in history and literature would be required to treat Croatian topics), the aim was to conduct the ‘Croatinization’ of educational system. In *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe. New Perspectives on Yugoslavia’s Disintegration*, ed. by Lenard Cohen and Jasna Dragović Soso (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008), pp. 149-78 (p. 150).

revisionist nature.<sup>466</sup> Eventually *Matica hrvatska* started functioning as ‘an alternative political nucleus, parallel to the communist party and served as a surrogate for the non-existent multi-party system’.<sup>467</sup>

Even though different institutions were involved in the movement, the universities again were to be the most powerful ‘sites of social dissent’.<sup>468</sup> The student movement started in December 1970 after the elections for student vice-rector were won by a non-Party candidate, a vocal patriot, and a supporter of Croatian Spring.<sup>469</sup> Throughout summer 1971 the social climate remained dynamic and tense as the leaders of Croatian students went into conflict with the other student unions in Yugoslavia. The movement culminated in November 1971, when the student strike at Zagreb University broke, openly endorsing a nationalist agenda.<sup>470</sup> Early in December, Tito put down the strike ‘fairly brutally’,<sup>471</sup> arresting the student leaders. The student strike was an excuse for the leaders of the Communist Party to react against the most prominent Croatian liberal reformist and to shut down the whole movement forcing the Croatian leaders of the communist party to resign. It was argued that suppression of the movement created ‘a political vacuum which allowed the Croatian Catholic Church to undertake programs of ethno-religious mobilization in the republic’, which was crucial for the dissolution of Yugoslavia.<sup>472</sup> In the long perspective the movement was also important for articulation of the Croatian political resistance, and the establishment of the political personalities who in a less than twenty-year-long frame became the winners of the prime multi-party elections in 1990.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Irvine mentions that *Matica hrvatska*, with the support of LCC liberals, sponsored numerous celebrations of historical events and figures, many of which, like Ban Jelačić who, had been condemned as traitors in Communist historiography, p. 158.

<sup>467</sup> Zubak, p. 192.

<sup>468</sup> Bacevic, p. 87.

<sup>469</sup> Bacevic, p. 87.

<sup>470</sup> Bacevic, p. 87.

<sup>471</sup> According to Nick Miller, the term brutal refers to the Yugoslavian standards. ‘Return Engagement: Intellectuals and Nationalism in Tito’s Yugoslavia’, in *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe*, pp. 179-200.

<sup>472</sup> Lenard J. Cohen and Jasna Dragović-Soso, ‘Preface’, in *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe*, pp. xi-xxii (p. xvii).

<sup>473</sup> See Irvine, pp. 168-74.



## **CASE STUDY ONE: Intersecting Ideologies in the Performance of the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* in 1968**

In the summer of 1968, in less than two weeks, two saints' plays were performed on the stages of two summer festivals in the former Yugoslavia. The *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* was staged at the Split Summer Festival, whereas the performance of the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* took place at the Dubrovnik Summer Festival. Even though both plays were well received among the audience and achieved critical acclaim, their trajectories were significantly different.<sup>474</sup> While the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* continued to be a part of the festival's repertoire for the next three years, and also became a part of the yearly programme of the Croatian National Theatre in Split,<sup>475</sup> the board of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival decided to exclude *The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* from the next year's repertoire without providing a detailed explanation.<sup>476</sup> Normally, every play which was produced by the festival's ensemble would form a part of the festival's repertoire for the next couple of years. The exclusion from the repertoire is even more surprising when we take into account the fact that the *Play of the life and martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* was the festival's only dramatic premier in 1968.<sup>477</sup>

Two features of the contemporary staging of saints' plays made these plays problematic in the context of the social and political upheavals described above. Firstly, their religious content, which could have seemed provocative for the communist authorities; and secondly, the fact that the plays belonged to the Croatian literary canon, which in the context of the heated debates over the status of the Croatian literary language might have appeared as a diverging rather than converging aspect. Yet, despite these provocative aspects, only one of the plays was marked as subversive whereas the other continued to be performed. I will offer three

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<sup>474</sup> For the audience reception and summary of critical reception see Ivan Bošković, 'O prikazanjima i oko njih. Uz splitsku i dubrovačku izvedbu starohrvatskih crkvenih prikazanja', *Dubrovnik*, 3 (1969), 20-29.

<sup>475</sup> Bošković, 'O prikazanjima', p. 21.

<sup>476</sup> The Daily *Vjesnik* reported about removing the play from the repertoire due to austerity measures. Jozo Puljizević, 'Pogled u baštinu i suvremenost' [An Insight into the Heritage and Modernity], *Vjesnik*.

<sup>477</sup> M. Konjevod, 'Ponovno u znaku visoke kvalitete' [Again in the High Quality Label].

complementary explanations of this research puzzle. The internal argument concerns different modes of staging these two performances, while the external argument is concerned with context, including the political tensions and the status of the festival on which the performance took place. The third argument switches the focus from textual and contextual aspects to the audience, and analyses a complex set of affects which the performances generated. In what follows, I will try to answer the question of why only one of the plays was removed from the repertoire, and, more generally, what made some plays subversive in the view of the communist authorities.

### **Internal Argument**

In the majority of the saints' plays dramatizing the martyrdom of Christian saints, the dramatic tension revolves around a martyr saint or saints who defends her or his unshakable faith against a supreme pagan ruler. The culmination of the play comes with the death of the saint, an apparent defeat, which however represents the victory of Christian values. In the booklet of the Split Summer Festival, Marko Fotez, one of the most respected directors in Yugoslavia at the time, and the director of *The Play of Saint Lawrence*, explained his interpretation of this basic plot of the saints' play and the message which the play is supposed to transmit. In his view, the play demonstrates that 'tyranny is not invincible, that the world is turning to the new ideas, and that the old ideas are dying, while the youth is heading towards future prosperity'.<sup>478</sup> *The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* in Dubrovnik was staged by Božidar Violić, a director belonging to the younger generation of directors, but, by that moment, already a well-established director. He follows the same line of thought as Fotez when he explains his motivation for staging the saints' play by emphasizing his interest in depicting a human 'as a personality, not as an instrument of one idea, ideology or hypothesis'.<sup>479</sup> Both directors therefore saw the saints' plays as a tool which allowed them to confront ideologies and express the primacy of individuals over collectivises. Both called for the shift of power to the younger generation,

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<sup>478</sup> ["...da tiranija ne može zadržati pobjedu, da svijet ide za novim idejama, da staro umire, a mladost vodi napretku i budućnosti"].

<sup>479</sup> 'Crno-bijelo prikazanje' [Black & White Play], interview led by Feđa Šehović, in *Božidar Violić. Lica i sjene. Razgovori i portreti* [Božidar Violić. Face and Shadows. Interviews and Portraits], ed. by Nives Tomašević (Zagreb, Naklada Ljevak, 2004), pp. 22-28 (p. 25). ["...čovjek i njegova sudbina, čovjek kao ličnost, a ne čovjek kao instrument jedne ideje, ideologije, ili teze"].

reflecting the most prominent ideas of the student protests which shook European societies, including Yugoslavia. The plays thus not only developed a similar set of motifs and ideas (the clash of the good and evil, the opposition of the strong individual(s) against the merciless pagan) but shared a common artistic vision of the messages which the contemporary staging of the saints' plays was supposed to convey. One way to account for the fact that one production was prohibited, whereas the other was not, is through the different modes of staging. I argue that the different modes of staging affected their different manifestation and, consequently, contributed to the different reception.

### *Distancing from the Content through Metatheater*

One of the most significant features of Fotez's staging<sup>480</sup> of the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* in Split was its usage of metatheatrical elements – interventions which 'violate[d the] illusionistic expectations' of the audience and raised their awareness of the nature of the relation between the theatrical fiction and reality.<sup>481</sup> Metatheatricality in Fotez' staging was manifested in several ways. The most obvious aspect referred to the fact that the actors on stage pronounced aloud the stage directions of the original historical play, offering to the audience not only the fictional dimension of the play, but also insight into the 'secondary text',<sup>482</sup> thus demonstrating the high level of self-consciousness.

The other notable aspect refers to what can be characterized, according to Richard Horbyn's structuralist categories, as 'roleplaying within the role'.<sup>483</sup> For instance, the actors on stage sporadically interrupted their roleplaying by performing the act of falling asleep on stage, or by yawning. If we remember the status of the performers who performed Dalmatian saints' plays in the past – non-professional

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<sup>480</sup> The performance analysis is based on the official photographic records of the festival, as well as upon the critical analysis published in the daily newspapers.

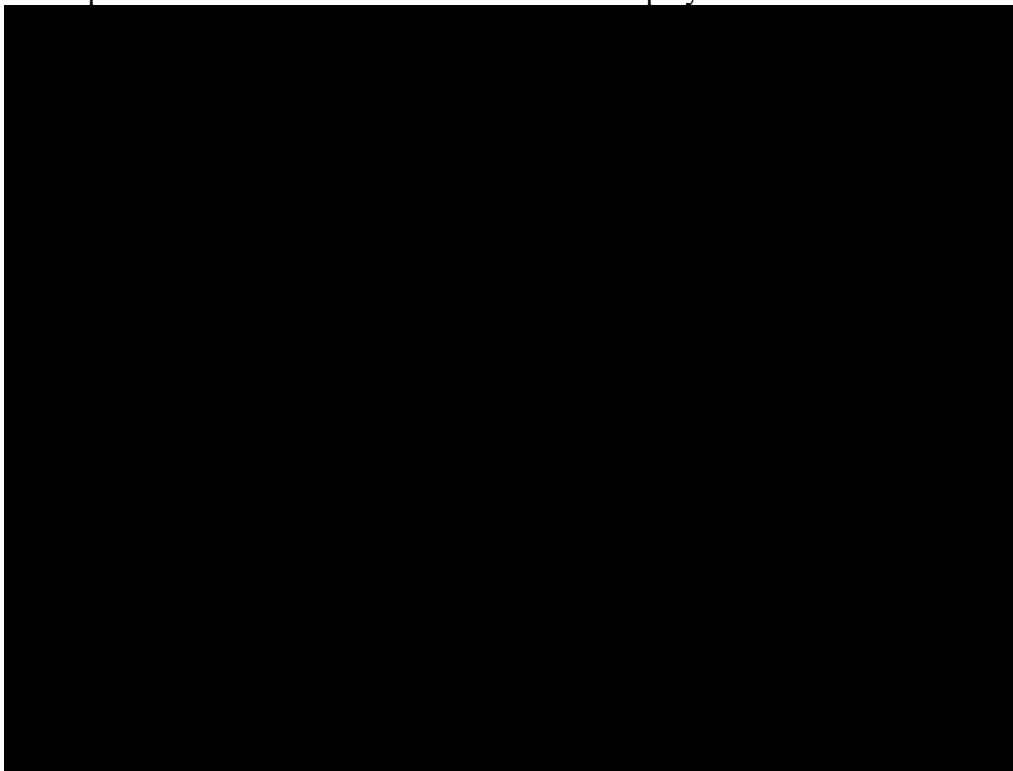
<sup>481</sup> According to Niall W. Slater's definition in *Spectator Politics: Metatheatre and Performance in Aristophanes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 3.

<sup>482</sup> Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, trans. by John Halliday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 69-71.

<sup>483</sup> Even though the definitions of metatheatre vary widely, I refer to the approach by Richard Hornby who switched the focus from discussing metatheatre as a genre, which was the approach of Lionel Abel the author who coined the term, to the structural analysis of particular elements of metatheatre.

actors, for whom acting would be seen as an additional activity to their daily work in a field or in a craft-workshop – we can interpret the acts of tiredness as a behaviour inherent to the imagined historical player. Thus, it can be said that the actors provided a double embodiment, first of the fictional character of the saint play, and second of the imagined historical player who performed it once in the past.

The last metatheatrical aspect refers to the inconsistent attribution of the costumes. The costume of the villain emperor was particularly interesting in this sense given that, instead of being dressed as a Roman ruler, he was presented as the Ottoman Sultan. Back in late-medieval, and early modern Dalmatia, when the region was under the threat of Ottomans, Sultan represented the greatest enemy of the community. This anachronistic way of depicting the pagan character, by attributing him the features greatest enemy, was a common thing in the late-medieval and early-modern artistic presentations. It therefore corresponds with the idea of how a Roman ruler might have been presented in the historical Dalmatian saint' play.



*Figure 7 The performance of The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence from Split. July, 1968.*

The function of metatheatrical elements in Fotez's staging went beyond destabilizing the sense of realism and achieving comic effect. It put forward its reflection on the nature of theatre, in particular on the nature of the early staging of the saints' plays. It not only offered to members of the audience the impression of watching the early

martyrdom of early Christian saints, but also of seeing Dalmatian people staging the martyrdom of the patron saint during the past centuries. By distancing from the content, the director emphasised the didactical aspect of the performance, and added an interpretative layer of the performance of teaching about the theatrical history.

### *Confronting the System through Total Theatre*

In the staging of *The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* in Dubrovnik, the director Božidar Violić used a different approach from the one used by Fotez. This referred to three aspects of performance. Firstly, in contrast to the simplicity characteristic of Fotez's staging, Violić used a complex set of staging methods to create a synesthetic, rich experience of 'total theatre'. The *Play of the Saints Cyprian and Justina* included around 90 performers including two choirs (a friars' choir, and a children's choir of angels), and a group of dancers. All of them were dressed in elaborated historical costumes designed by Zlatko Bourek, a famous artist and filmmaker. The staging included the use of pyrotechnics and the scenography played an important role given that the performance took place on the square in front of the impressive eighteenth-century Jesuit Church of St Ignatius. The scenographer used (today's) Gundulić Square to build a 'contemporary version of the folk medieval mansion stage'.<sup>484</sup> The scenographer utilized the lights coming from the church, and a monumental Baroque staircase (leading to the Poljana Ruđera Boškovića), as a functional part of the 'stage', creating a solemn ambience.



Figure 8 Gundulić's square today. Source: Flickr.

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<sup>484</sup> Božidar Violić, *Isprika* [Apology] (Zagreb, Naklada Ljevak), p. 133.

In this contemporary vision of a medieval setting, apart from the expected horizontal division of the stage, vertically-positioned mansions were also added.<sup>485</sup> That way, the audience did not have to move from mansion to mansion to get the full insight into the action of a scene, but had a simultaneous insight into all the mansions, within which the action interchangeably took place.



*Figure 9 The performance of The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina in Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik, August, 1968. The central part of the stage is divided between the space for the Children's choir and Friars' choir. Official photographic records of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival. Photographer unknown. Croatian Academy of Science and Arts. Institute for the History of Croatian Literature, Theatre and Music Archive.*

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<sup>485</sup> The critic Selem compared it to the staging of religious plays by Paul Claudel in 'Prikazanje života i muke svetih Ciprijana i Justine' ['The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina'], *Telegram*, 23/8/1968.

The second distinctive feature refers to the relationship with history and the fact that, through his staging, Fotez attempted to reconstruct the historical performance. Fotez's staging primarily spoke about the past, whereas this was not the case with Violić's staging of the play. On the one hand, this was reflected through theatrical elements which Violić added (choirs, mansion stage – as discussed in the second section of the thesis; there are no indications that the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* took place on a stage which was divided by mansions). On the other hand, this was done through intervention into the text. The most significant intervention into the original text concerned the presence of the diabolic characters. Tonko Marojević, the dramaturg of the play, expanded the roles of the devils significantly. The presence of the diabolic characters on stage (one whole mansion was dedicated to the devils) was predominantly related to the presence of the female saint protagonist Justina, whose sanctity was portrayed through resistance to their lascivious persuasion. The appearance of devils was also interesting from the perspective of the production's aesthetics, given that they were portrayed through rhythmic dancing which resembled ancient spiritual rituals and the ritualistic patterning characteristic for the contemporary avant-garde theatre of the sixties.<sup>486</sup> The incorporation of the elements from avant-garde ritual drama in the conventional theatrical play was another mean through which the director established a relation with contemporaneity in contrast to establishing links with the past.

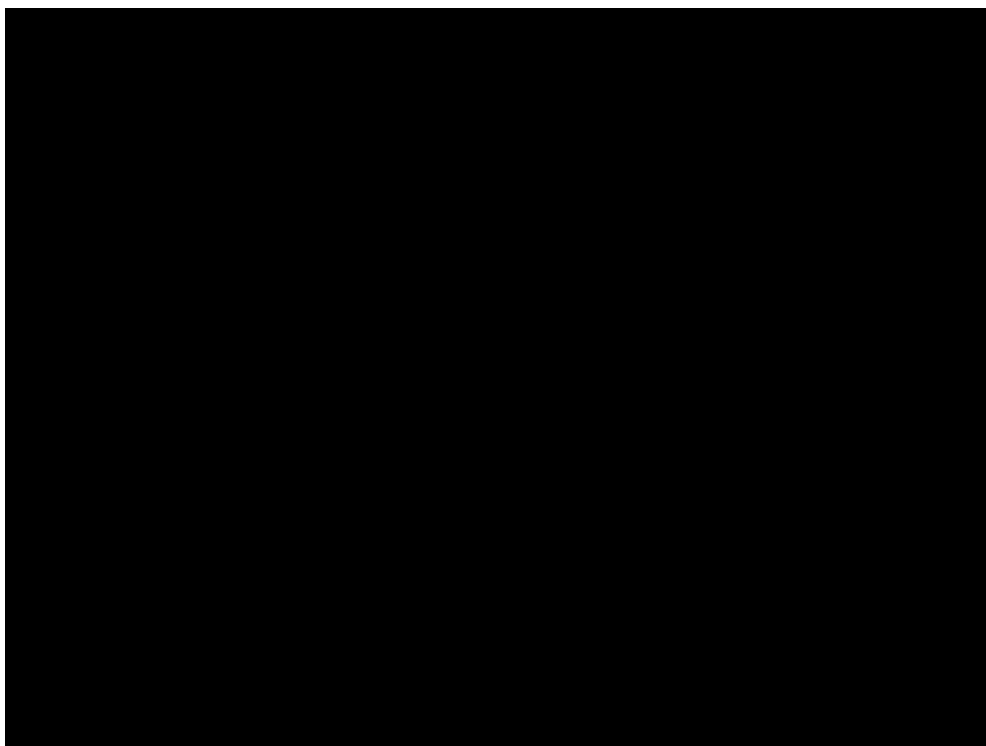
The third aspect refers to the didactical function of performances. By focusing on staging *how* the medieval content was delivered on stage Fotez established didactical relations with the past, whereby metatheatrical self-reflexivity allowed for distancing from the content of the play. In contrast to this, the focus of the staging in Dubrovnik was on *what* was delivered. Rather than being invited to engage with the theatrical past, the spectators of the performance from Dubrovnik were invited to engage with the content of the play, hence to establish links to the social and political context (the 'reality') in which the play was staged.<sup>487</sup> Without offering an ironical distance from the content of the play, this vision of an old text which the director

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<sup>486</sup> See Christopher Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre: 1892-1992* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 2-3.

<sup>487</sup> See Božidar Violić, 'Razmišljanja o hrvatskoj dramskoj baštini' ['Thoughts about the Croatian Dramatic Heritage'] *Dubrovnik*, 3 (1969), 11-16, and Violić, 'Crno-bijelo prikazanja', pp. 22-28.

offered became the subject of interpretation, some of which could have had a negative influence on the reception of the performance. Most significantly this refers to the fact that the theatrical associations to the broader social and political context threatened to develop subversive readings of the play, as the conflict on the scene could be read as a metaphor for the struggle of the individuals or groups who oppose the regime.



*Figure 10 Performance of The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina in Dubrovnik., August, 1968. Official photographic records of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival. Photographer unknown. Croatian Academy of Science and Arts. Institute for the History of Croatian Literature, Theatre and Music Archive.*

The critical reviews of that time support this way of thinking about the performance. Feđa Šehović, a writer and journalist from Dubrovnik, commented that the intention of the director was to ‘activate the associations to the present time, the time in which, unfortunately, man can be subjected to dogmata in a way which might be even worse to the one in the Middle Ages’.<sup>488</sup> The question which raises after Šehović’s observation is the subsequent: to which contemporary dogmata does he refer. The other critic, Petar Selem, is even more suggestive in establishing the

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<sup>488</sup> Feđa Šehovićev, ‘Daleko današnje vrijeme’ [The Distanced Contemporaneity], *Vjesnik*, 28/08/1968.



parallels. According to Selem, the play ‘depicts one of the most horrifying experiences of humankind: when a man puts on trial/tortures another man because of different *way of thinking* [em], different beliefs, and a different religion’.<sup>489</sup> Both these critics did not go into details in explaining the parallels with the contemporary dogmata and tortures, neither would it have been realistic to expect them to do so in the context of Tito’s authoritarian regime in the 1960s. Therefore, it can only be speculated if what they had in mind were the communist dogmata and the torture by the state’s secret services. Nevertheless, in the context of this discussion, there are good reasons to believe that Violić’s show was understood to have been engaging with contemporary topics, despite the director’s intention.

### **External Argument**

In the previous subsection I have argued that one of the reasons why the productions from Split and Dubrovnik had different trajectories lay in their different modes of staging. The former used metatheatrical elements which resulted in a didactical and playful staging, while the latter incorporated elements of contemporary avant-garde theatre, creating a rich synthetic experience of ‘total theatre’ without putting special emphasis on the didactical aspects. In this subsection I argue that the explanation can also be found in the historical and geographical context of the performances. In my analysis, this is primarily related to the status of the festivals in which the performances took place, and two axes along which the performances were assessed: Croatian vs. Yugoslav, and traditional vs. modern.

#### *The Saints’ Plays as a Nationalistic Deviance*

The genre of saints’ plays was regarded as a typical Croatian genre in the context of Yugoslavian culture, firstly because the medieval dramatic forms were performed only on the territory of today’s Croatia<sup>490</sup> and, secondly, because čakavian dialect in which the saints’ plays were written and performed belongs only to the Croatian ethnolinguistic community.<sup>491</sup> This was not insignificant in the atmosphere marked by

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<sup>489</sup> Petar Selem, ‘Prikazanje života i muke svetih Ciprijana i Justine’.

<sup>490</sup> The first records from what is today’s Serbian and Slovenian territory date to the eighteenth century. See, Francesco Saverio Perillo, *Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja* [Croatian Church Plays] (Split: Mogućnosti, 1978).

<sup>491</sup> ‘Čakavian is spoken mostly in coastal areas and was the primary prestige written norm in Dalmatia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (except for

the events related to ‘The Declaration on the Name and Position of the Croatian Literary Language’. Even though the concept of the Yugoslavian cultural identity was founded on the synergy of South Slavic cultural identities, and valued equally all languages and literary traditions, the Yugoslav cultural public sphere was shaken by the conflict between the Serbian and Croatian intellectuals, challenging the idea of Yugoslavian national identity.

It is likely that the series of scandals which were triggered by that debate shaped the reception of the saints’ plays, as the debate on the appropriateness of performance of the genre threatened to be understood as another nationalistic scandal.<sup>492</sup> Even though it is generally perceived that the plays from the corpus of the saints’ plays are characterized by inconsistent poetics and style, the performances of the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* from Split, and the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* in 1968 were well received by the audience and the critics. The critics addressed the revival of the ‘vivid old Croatian dialect’ and praised the fact that the audience had a chance to see the performance of the ‘cradle of theatrical activities in this region.’<sup>493</sup> In a different context, the discussion related to the performance of the saints’ plays would revolve dominantly around the aesthetical criteria; however, in the new political context the performance of the typically Croatian genre acted as trigger for nationalistically motivated debate.

To illustrate this, I will mention the debate between two relevant thinkers of that time, Božidar Božović and Igor Mandić. Božović was a radio correspondent and a writer from Belgrade who was also one of the editors of *Književne novine*, a Serbian journal for literature and culture in which he published commentaries on social and cultural matters. In one of his texts in *Književne novine*, Božović tackled the issue of the appropriateness of the staging of the saints’ plays in the context of contemporary

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Dubrovnik [Ragusa], whose native speech was and is štokavian)’. Ronelle Alexander, ‘Language and Identity: the Faith of Serbo-Croatian’, in *Entangled Histories of the Balkans – Volume One: National Ideologies and Language Policies*, ed. by Roumen Dontchev Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 341-418 (p. 347). The plays performed during the Festival’s first years almost exclusively belonged to Dubrovnik štokavian dialect which is related also to the fact that the literary tradition from Dubrovnik is štokavian.

<sup>492</sup> Alexander, p. 391. For the sequence of controversies and conflicts between Serbian and Croatian intellectuals see Klasić, pp. 300-311.

<sup>493</sup> I have analysed the media coverage of the festivals from 1967 to 1971 in the regional dailies such as *Borba*, *Telegram*, *Večernji list*, *Vjesnik* which are available in the Institute for History of Theatre in Zagreb.

Yugoslavia. Convinced that the medieval genres should be valued only as a historical fact, hence kept in archives and not performed on stages, he defended his opinion with the following words: ‘There is not a single, I believe, not even a farfetched argument which could convince me that those plays belong to *our national folk* [my emphasis] cultural heritage [...] despite the fact that, back in time, the Church used to show them, for their own reasons, to our people, and despite the fact that our people contributed to their creation’.<sup>494</sup> His position is criticized by Igor Mandić, a writer and critic from Zagreb, and a prominent Croatian intellectual. According to Mandić, ‘it seems that Božović dismisses to mention the core of the issue’, which is the fact that the genre ‘first and foremost [is a part of] the Croatian national literary tradition, and that is neither a small, nor a farfetched argument. The plays, no matter how eclectic and dry-as-dust, dogmatic and rhetorical, unconvincing, and literary weak, are certainly an important part of the history of Croatian literature (...) and represent an important string in the development of the Croatian language’.<sup>495</sup>

Nevertheless, if, in the context of the post-1967 social turmoil, the staging of saints’ plays was interpreted in the nationalist key, it is difficult to explain why the play from Split was not removed from the repertoire. I argue that the contextual features pertaining to the issue of institutions within which the plays were staged help to explain this puzzle. This concerns the status of the festivals in which the performances took place which played an important role in their future reception. I argue that the key difference lies in the fact that the production which was removed from the repertoire was staged at the nationally representative Dubrovnik Summer Festival. To address this issue, it is important to elaborate on the status of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival in the Yugoslav culture and society of that period.

The Dubrovnik Summer Festival was founded in 1949, not long after the first festivals were founded around Europe in the aftermath of World War Two, including the festivals in Edinburgh, Avignon, and Santander. Since the early years the festival was oriented towards the staging the ‘local and international classics’ with a special emphasis on the use of the city sites as scenography, in a creation of ‘environmental theatre’ experiences.<sup>496</sup> In 1954 the festival was awarded with the status of high

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<sup>494</sup> Cited in Bošković.

<sup>495</sup> Cited in Bošković.

<sup>496</sup> Hrvoje Ivanković, 'Dubrovnik Summer Festival' ['Dubrovačke ljetne igre'], in *Lexicon of Marin Držić. Electronic Version* [*Leksikon Marina Držića. Mrežno*

patronage of the president Tito, which granted both cultural prestige and financial stability in the early years of festival's existence.<sup>497</sup> With the status of the 'national showplace',<sup>498</sup> the festival served two functions; it defined and disseminated Yugoslavian cultural identity for the national audience, and it displayed the Yugoslavian culture to an international audience.<sup>499</sup>

In the light of the post-1967 events the former aspect became increasingly important. One of the most important media issues revolved around the question of whether the repertoire reflected the Yugoslav or Croatian identity.<sup>500</sup> Most obviously this was addressed in two interviews with the festivals' directors, Fani Muhoberac and Kosta Spajić. In the interviews both were asked to explain which identity was represented through the festival, Croatian or Yugoslavian, as well as why the Serbian artists and theatres were under-represented in the festival. Muhoberac claimed no nationalistic background for the festival and tried to avoid any political connotations by emphasizing only aesthetic criteria in answering: 'if the festival is of a high quality, then it equally belongs to Dubrovnik, to Croatia, and to Yugoslavia'.<sup>501</sup> Spajić engaged with this nationalistic issue more directly. He emphasized that the festival ensemble was composed of the most prominent *Yugoslav* [my emphasis] artists, listing the names of the Serbian authors whose works were staged in the most recent year in the

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izdanje]< <https://leksikon.muzej-marindrzic.eu/dubrovacke-ljetne-igre/> accessed 3 April 2019. I use the term 'environmental theatre' because, according to Ivanković that was the term used to describe the relationship with the space characteristic for the staging plays in the Dubrovnik Summer Festival.

<sup>497</sup> Hrvoje Ivanković, 'Dubrovnik Summer Festival' [Dubrovačke ljetne igre], in *Lexicon of Marin Držić. Electronic Version [Leksikon Marina Držića. Mrežno izdanje]*< <https://leksikon.muzej-marindrzic.eu/dubrovacke-ljetne-igre/> accessed 3 April 2019.

<sup>498</sup> Ric Knowles in 'The Edinburgh Festival and Fringe: Lessons for Canada', *Canadian Theatre Review*, 102 (2000), 88-96.

<sup>499</sup> Radina Vučetić, *Kola kola socijalizam. Amerikanizacija jugoslovenske popularne kulture šezdesetih godina XX veka* [Coca Cola Socialism. Americanization of Yugoslav Culture in the Sixties] (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2012), pp. 279-80.

<sup>500</sup> Stevan Stanić, 'Interview with Fani Muhoberac. *Čaršija* and the Summer Festival'.

<sup>501</sup> Stevan Stanić, 'Interview with Fani Muhoberac. *Čaršija* and the Summer Festival'.

festival, including Dobrica Ćosić, the Serbian author and dissident who in 1968 left the communist party, and started publicly expressing nationalistic attitudes.<sup>502</sup>

Considering the responsibility of the board of the festival to deliver a programme which would be interpreted as univocally Yugoslav (rather than Croatian), it is not difficult to see why the 1968-staging of *The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* was not seen as an appropriate choice for the next year's edition of the festival, especially given the fact that in 1969 Tito personally visited the Dubrovnik Summer Festival.<sup>503</sup> The Split Summer Festival faced similar issues but only to a lesser extent. Even though the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* was staged in the similarly unfavourable historical setting, which, due to its religious and national background, made the play potentially contentious, Split Summer Festival at that time still had not gained the status of an eminent festival. Hence, it was less expected that its repertoire should fulfil the function of a Yugoslavian culturally-representative event. Accordingly, the saint's play simply managed to slip under the radar.

#### *Local Tradition vs. Modernization*

The second main point of controversy of staging the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* at the Dubrovnik Summer Festival concerned the allegedly obscene content which the performance displayed. This had to do with two features of the production: first, the decision to include sexual elements in the play, and second with the Festival tradition of staging plays in open urban spaces.

Earlier I explained that one of the major interventions which the director and dramaturg carried out while adapting the play concerned the characters of devils. These were portrayed as partly naked and performing rhythmic dancing. Furthermore, the naked characters were physically grouped around the female protagonist Justine in a simulation of a mass rape. Secondly, given the religious background of the play, and respecting a long European and Dalmatian tradition of performing medieval genres, *The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* was supposed to

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<sup>502</sup> Each year, for the purpose of the festival a new festival ensemble is created composed of the most prominent artists from the state.

<sup>503</sup> The interview with general and artistic directors of the Festival, Fani Muhoberac and Kosta Spajić, which revolved around the question of whether the selection of shows in the festivals reflects Yugoslavian or Croatian identity. *Borba*, 10/07/1969.

be staged in front of a church. In this case, a large lea in front of the Jesuit church of Saint Ignatius was seen as the most suitable choice for a performance's venue. These two aspects of staging prompted the negative reaction from the Church authorities, since they saw the staging of the lascivious elements performed in front of the church as a provocation.

Ten days after the rehearsing started, the festival's board received a letter of complaint from the Jesuit order who protested the show's alleged lasciviousness in tackling religious themes. They were especially offended by 'the lascivious assaulting approach of the devils towards the protagonist Justina' and threatened to prohibit the performance in front of their Church.<sup>504</sup> Given that the preparation of the production was in an advanced stage, and that it was the only festival premiere for that year, this caused serious concerns among the members of the board of the festival. If we take into consideration that the performance was not supposed to take place within the walls of the church but on the public property in front of the Church, it is difficult to say whether the Church had the legal means to prohibit the performance. Nevertheless, the Church was successful in imposing pressure on the board of the festival, and they agreed to organize a special rehearsal for the representatives of the church orders in the city, after which long and tedious negotiations with Church representatives took place.<sup>505</sup>

In the given situation two questions can be posed. Firstly, why the festival's board was concerned about the complaints from the Church representatives, and secondly, how to account for the fact that the lascivious elements represented an issue in the context of the Yugoslav theatrical and arts scene which was familiar with and adapted to representation of sexuality. In what follows I attempt to answer those questions.

The described issue related to the Church's reaction would normally have been seen as surprising in the context of an atheistic state such as Yugoslavia. Indeed, since the establishment of Yugoslavia, the relationship between the Church and the state was marked by tensions and distrust.<sup>506</sup> However, during the 1960s this relationship

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<sup>504</sup> This is how Violić paraphrased the content of the letter. 'Crno i bijelo prikazanje', p. 32.

<sup>505</sup> For discussion see Violić, 'Crno i bijelo prikazanje'.

<sup>506</sup> Siniša Zrinščak, 'Generations and Atheism: Patterns of Response to Communist Rule Among Different Generations and Countries', *Social compass*, 51 (2004), 221-34.

became normalized due to both internal and external political reasons. Internally, the state became increasingly more aware of the influence which the Church had among the citizens in the traditionally Catholic parts of the country.<sup>507</sup> Instead of engaging in conflicts with the rival religious authority, the Communist Party resolved the conflicted situation by choosing a different strategy, the strategy of collaboration. As for the external political relations, the normalization of the relationship with the Church was also affected by the Yugoslav newly-established position in the non-allied movement, which included its political position 'in between' the East and the West, instead being positioned within the communist bloc. In the given setting, the Yugoslav regime recognized the opportunity of concluding the alliance with the small but diplomatically powerful Vatican. Pope Pius XII supported Tito's initiative for the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement,<sup>508</sup> and Tito's payment of the political price for the support assumed a more tolerant relationship towards the Church in the state.

All of this helps to explain why the authorities were sensitive to complaints from the Church. Consequently, even though in the end the performance took place in front of the Jesuit church with permission of all the orders in Dubrovnik, the controversy which preceded the permission contributed to the already problematic status of *The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina*. It also has to be said that none of this was the case in Split. The production of the saint play did not incorporate any potentially problematic content, such as sexually explicit elements, but was focused on recreating the historical event in a more 'authentic' mode. The attempt to offer an 'authentic' presentation, thus included the usage of a doll prop for the scenes of torments instead of the actors' real incarnated (and naked) actors' bodies. When it comes to the place of the performance, the performance from Split did not take place in front of the Church but in the city park, once a cemetery, in the outskirts of the 'old city'. In the described context it becomes evident why the reaction from the Church representatives in Split was missing.

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<sup>507</sup> Zrinščak, pp. 224-25.

<sup>508</sup> Klasić, p. 391.

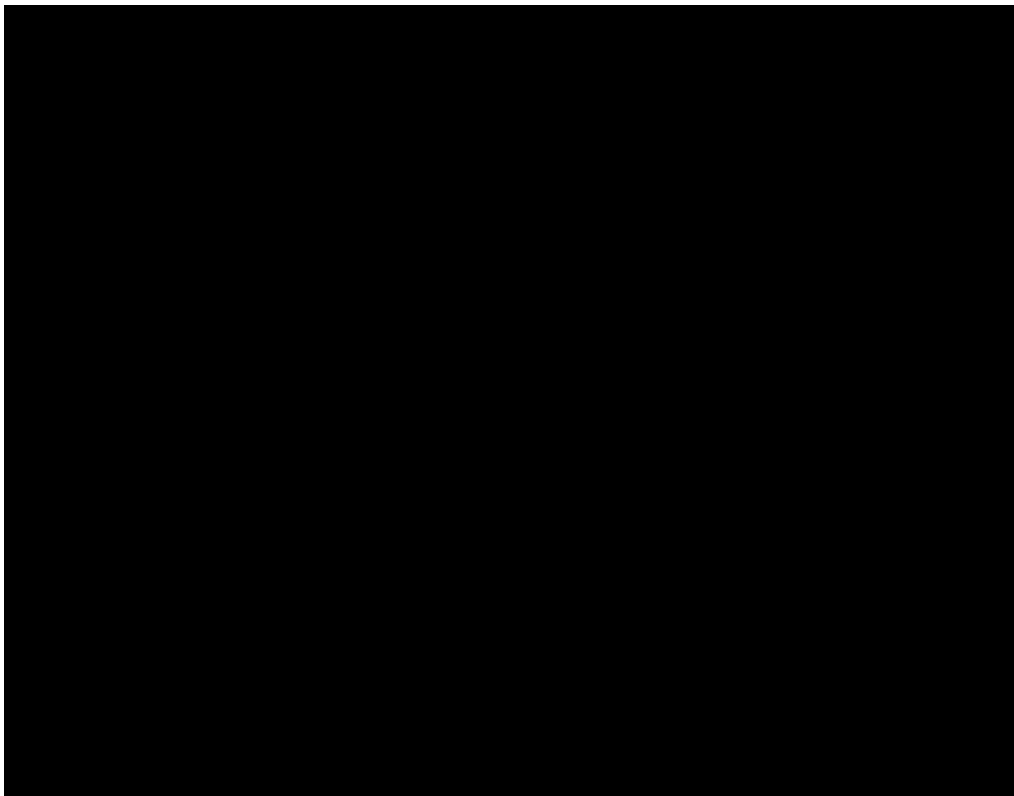


Figure 11 Performance of *The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* in Dubrovnik. Interestingly, this photograph appeared in the daily Telegram (28/08/1968) but it did not make it into the official festival's material related to the performance.

The second question is why the scenes of sexuality represented in the production were an issue even though sexually-provocative content and nudity on theatrical stages in Yugoslavia were not uncommon in the late 1960s. For instance, the international avant-garde performances in the context the festival BITEF included performances of the American theatre company, Living Theatre, in 1967, which was 'notorious for its promotion of anarchism, pacifism, and sexual and emotional liberation',<sup>509</sup> and the 1969 performance of *Dionysus in 69* (Richard Schechner's Performance Group) was dominated by an 'orgiastic emphasis on nudity and dancing'.<sup>510</sup> The performance of *Dionysus in 69* was not even the first time that the audience in Yugoslavia was exposed to full-frontal nudity. This happened on the occasion of the staging of the musical *Hair* in Belgrade theatre, Atelje 212, by Zoran Ratković.<sup>511</sup> Another staging worth mentioning in this sense refers to the performance of the play, *The First Door on the Left* (*Prva vrata levo*), directed by Bogdan Jerković, in the context of the Student Experimental Theatre in Zagreb, which not only displayed

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<sup>509</sup> Helene P. Foley, *Reimagining Greek Tragedy on the American Stage*, p. 134.

<sup>510</sup> *Avant-garde Theatre*, p. 173.

<sup>511</sup> Vučetić, pp. 268-75.



nudity, but engaged with the topic of sexuality and shame in the Yugoslav political context.<sup>512</sup> Hence, sexuality was a fairly common topic in the Yugoslav theatre, which makes it difficult to explain the issue as it related to Violić's staging of *The Plays of Saints Cyprian and Justina*. I argue that the reason can be found in the local traditional setting in which the festival took place.

The progressive theatrical festivals and theatre companies could be found in Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Zagreb – the cities with a population which can be measured in millions. By the beginning of the 1960s, for those cities, it was a characteristic to develop an avant-garde art scene (including the collective artistic practices of the groups such as EXAT 51 and Gorgona Group),<sup>513</sup> as well as a rock subculture which incorporated the element of sexual revolution.<sup>514</sup> The audience from the large cities adopted liberal values and shared the belief of the artists who advocated the autonomy of art.<sup>515</sup> In the secular environment of the communist regime which largely promoted progressive artistic forms as well as the freedom and self-reflexivity of the arts,<sup>516</sup> an artistic space was created in which the representation of sexuality was not problematic. However, the content acceptable in Yugoslavian capitals, including the avant-garde elements such as nudity and subliminal tribal dancing embodied in the characters of devils in the performance of *The Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina*, was less acceptable for the local, peripheral, and regional environment of Dubrovnik. Despite the international orientation and nominal openness to the experimental forms,<sup>517</sup> the festival was deeply embedded into the local culture of the city and determined by its dynamics.

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<sup>512</sup> Miro Međimorec, Studentsko kazalište 'Student theatre', *Kazlište*, 35/36 (2009), 131-49.

<sup>513</sup> Jesa Denegri, 'Gorgona – Nekad i Danas' [Gorgona – Then and Today] <[https://post.at.moma.org/content\\_items/261-gorgona-nekad-i-danas](https://post.at.moma.org/content_items/261-gorgona-nekad-i-danas)> [accessed 2/10/2019].

<sup>514</sup> Vučetić, pp. 218-23.

<sup>515</sup> Jesa Denegri, 'Gorgona – Nekad i Danas' [Gorgona – Then and Today] <[https://post.at.moma.org/content\\_items/261-gorgona-nekad-i-danas](https://post.at.moma.org/content_items/261-gorgona-nekad-i-danas)> [accessed 2/10/2019].

<sup>516</sup> See Karla Lebhaf, 'Benigna subverzija: umjetnost i ideologija u visokom modernizmu' [Benign Subversion: Art and Ideology in High Modernism], *Sic*, 3 (2012), 1-15.

<sup>517</sup> Which is proved by the programme which included performance of *Orlando Furioso* by Luca Roconi, Old Vic Theatre Company, Glen Tetley and Alvin Aile and Duke Ellington in the late sixties.

This does not only account for the huge influence of the Church in the city, but potentially to the broad social milieu including the local audience, political elites (the conservative part of the Communist Party), and even to some extent on the cultural workers. In sum, it could be argued that apart from tensions revolving around Croatian and Yugoslavian identity, another set of contextual explanations help explain the controversy of the performance. This set of explanation pertains to the struggle between the local traditions and modernization, closely related to the sense of public moral and sense of artistic freedom.

### **The Argument on Affects**

The discussion of the internal and external arguments has indicated several reasons which determined the reception of the *Play of St Lawrence* in the Split Festival and the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* at the Dubrovnik Festival, and consequently the removal of the latter from the festival's repertoire. On the one hand, the discussion of the textual aspects and the modes of staging has indicated that the Dubrovnik performance established links to the contemporary social and political issues which may have been understood as a critique of the ruling regime. On the other hand, the analysis of the contextual aspects has pointed out to the various components, which could have made the performance in the Dubrovnik Summer Festival problematic, including the nationalist tensions, and discrepancy between the modernist elements which the performances incorporated. Both arguments belong to the domain of the production of the performance. However, the performance can only be fully regarded if the reception is taken into consideration.<sup>518</sup> Therefore, in this section, I turn to the analysis of the audience response through the examination of the affects which were triggered during the performance.

The genre of medieval saints' plays is marked by acts of violence, feelings of penitence, and religious miracles. These features make the saints' plays a potently highly affective genre. Among the affective responses which were recorded in reviews of the performances in Split and Dubrovnik, and later in the scholarly texts, two responses appear to be especially remarkable, and I ground my argument in the comparative analysis of their manifestations. The first one refers to the performance in Split. One critic noted that, during the performance of the *Play of Saint Lawrence*,

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<sup>518</sup> Bennett, p. 177.

a couple of members of the audiences *screamed*.<sup>519</sup> Equally interesting is a remark related to the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* in Dubrovnik which mentions that members of the audience *fainted* during the performance.<sup>520</sup>

Both responses, the screaming and fainting, are manifestations of the condition of shock, and can be categorized under the same group of affects which, as Hurley claims, are unruly, autonomic and happen against the will.<sup>521</sup> Hurly further argues that affect is as ‘an immediate, skin level registration [and] gives us an immediate sense for what matters to us, for what moves us, and indeed for what affects us’.<sup>522</sup> Even though at first glance it seems that the same set of stimuli, inherent to the genre, provoked these similar responses, I argue that each production provoked emotional responses of different nature. Consequently, this affected different trajectories of the productions.

To unpack the affective experience, I will first provide a detailed account of the records of those reactions. I quote one of the mentions related to the performance of the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* in the daily *Telegram*:

...while the decapitations of Christian martyrs were in all cases only indicated with the light move of the executioner’s axe, after which “the killed ones” would just leave the stage, in one case the director used the prop-doll, the head of which actually rolled, provoking a couple of screams from the audience.<sup>523</sup>

As indicated in the review, the strong reactions of some members of the audience can be explained by unexpected contact with the content of the play. Through the act of the ‘head’ dropping and rolling into the space of the audience they were unexpectedly immersed into the one aspect of the play, the act of decapitation. This interaction can be described in terms of ‘aesthetics of shock’ which Josette Feral defines in the following words:

The stage suddenly loses the play of illusion, of the pretend, the as if, and the spectators find themselves face to face with a reality that has emerged where

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<sup>519</sup> Selem, *Telegram*.

<sup>520</sup> Ivica Kunčević, *Ambijentalnost na dubrovačku* [Ambience in a Dubrovnik Way] (Zagreb: Hrvatski centar ITI, 2012), pp. 55-56.

<sup>521</sup> *Theatre and Feeling* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 11-18.

<sup>522</sup> Hurley, *National Performance*, p. 147

<sup>523</sup> Selem, *Telegram*.

they least expected it, a reality that modifies their initial contract, once implicit surrounding the representation.<sup>524</sup>

According to Feral, the moment of surprise causes the real to emerge on stage outside of any process of representation, illusion, or stage fiction. If we remember from the 'internal argument' that this performance's mode of staging of was characterized as playful and didactic, it becomes clear that this sudden switch of performance registers emphasized even more the state of shock distributed among the members of the audience.

The case of the affective reaction related to the performance of the *Saints Cyprian and Justina* was provided by a director, Ivica Kunčević, in the following words: 'The appearance of Jesus Christ was so convincing in that environment, that some believers-spectators fainted'.<sup>525</sup> In contrast to the case from Split in which the reaction was caused due to the combination of the violent content and the interaction of the fiction with the 'reality', the affective response in case of Dubrovnik happened thanks to the suggestiveness of the presentation of the supernatural, that is the figure of Jesus Christ. Obviously, different emotional labour was at work in the first and the second case. Violić's spectacular staging of this play provoked a powerful affective experience which drove the members of the audience into the state of *awe*. The *awe* is defined as 'an emotional response to perceptually vast stimuli that overwhelm current mental structures, yet facilitate attempts at accommodation.'<sup>526</sup> Accordingly, it can be experienced when encountering the powerful individuals, nature, or art, and also it is in the nature of the awe to create a profound change within the individual person and/or a collective who experience the awe.<sup>527</sup> Different elements of Violić's staging could be understood as the 'awe electors' due to its form (the mode and aesthetics of staging) and content (charismatic characters embodied on stage).

Given the social setting in which this performance took place, the religious background of this affective could seem as threatening to the communist authorities. The extent of the awe affect emphasized this threat even more. As Brian Massumi

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<sup>524</sup> 'From Event to Extreme Reality. The Aesthetic of Shock', *The Drama Review*, 55 (2011), 51-56.

<sup>525</sup> Kunčević, *Ambijentalnost na dubrovačku*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>526</sup> Michelle N. Shiota, Dacher Keltner, Amanda Mossman, 'The Nature of Awe: Elicitors, Appraisals, and Effects on Self-Concept', *Emotion and Cognition*, 21 (2007), 944-63 (944).

<sup>527</sup> 'The Nature of Awe', p. 946.

explains, even in the case of ‘collective events’ (such is a theatrical performance) when the shock is ‘distributed across those bodies there is no guarantee that they will act in unison because each body carries a different set of tendencies and capacities’.<sup>528</sup> Nevertheless, in the performances from Dubrovnik the affective experience was presented not as a singular but as a general case, as Kunčević’s observation indicates that more than one person fainted during the performance. This fact, despite being in conflict with Violić’s account of the performance (his testimony clearly indicates that it was only one person who fainted), points out to the problematic reception of the play. As Violić explained further, soon after that rehearsal ‘everyone was talking about the performance, to the extent that the priests were preaching about the play from the altars and encouraged the people to see the performance’.<sup>529</sup> I suggest that the strong affective response created an atmosphere close to mass hysteria, despite the fact that the majority of the audience would most likely have been secular.

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On first glance, the reasons for the censorship of religious drama seemed simple, on the one hand, there was the fact that the performance took place in the context of the atheistic regime and, on the other hand, the fact that the play was nationalistically tuned. In my analysis I have tried to depict a much more complex picture. As it can be seen, the Yugoslavian communist regime did not remain unambiguous in their relation towards religiosity. Contrary to the image of total denial of the religious orders, the relations with the Vatican were especially positive during the late sixties, when the unrest in Yugoslavia started. As has been demonstrated, the interethnic relations were complex as well. In fact, none of these was problematic when regarded as an isolated case. What made a certain performance problematic was a matter of how it was articulated, the power relations, and the broader geopolitical reality.

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<sup>528</sup> Brian Massumi, *The Politics of Affect* (Cambridge, Malden: Polity, 2015), p. 56.

<sup>529</sup> ‘Crno-bijelo prikazanje’, p. 25.

## **The Second Wave: Saints' Plays and the Formation of the New National Identity**

### **Social and Political Context: The Breakup of Yugoslavia and the Croatian War for Independence**

The second wave of interest for the medieval dramatic genres, including the saints' plays, coincided with another extremely turbulent period in Yugoslavian and Croatian history. That period started in 1989, the year of great changes for Europe and Yugoslavia, and ended in the mid-1990s, corresponding with the end of war on Croatian territory in 1995. As in the first empirical case, I begin the analysis with providing the social and political context within which the second wave of saints' plays developed. In what follows I will tackle different events and processes which took place in the last two decades of the state, which contributed to its dissolution. For this, it will be necessary to go back to the aftermath of the Croatian Spring, continuing from where the previous case study left off. Then I move to the consequences of the dissolution and events which followed the Croatian Declaration of Independence, which will conclude this short historical summary.

#### *Legacy of the 'Croatian Spring' and the New Constitution*

There are different explanations of the events which caused the collapse of the Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.<sup>530</sup> Some authors saw the collapse as destined, emphasizing 'ancient hatreds', and 'civilization differences' between different ethnicities which lived in the federative republic.<sup>531</sup> Other explanations included a stronger emphasis on the institutional approach, interpreting the state collapse as a consequence of the errors and shortcomings in the way the first and second Yugoslavia were established politically and organisationally.<sup>532</sup> The debate on the dissolution is still ongoing, and it is out of the scope of this thesis to offer a definite answer to this

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<sup>530</sup> Jasna Dragičević-Soso provided an overview of the existing explanations in 'Why did Yugoslavia Disintegrate?', in *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Yugoslavia's Disintegration*, ed. by Lenard J. Cohen and Jasna Dragović-Soso (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008), pp. 1-42. For a more recent but more narrowly focused overview, see also Nebojša Vladislavljević 'Does Scholarly Literature on the Breakup of Yugoslavia Travel Well?', in *Debating the End of Yugoslavia*, ed. by Florian Bieber and Armina Galijas (Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 67-80.

<sup>531</sup> Dragović Soso, pp. 2-5.

<sup>532</sup> Dragović Soso, pp. 5-23.

question. However, for now, it suffices to say that most commentators agree that the events from 1967 to 1971 showed the first serious ruptures in the regime's image.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the end of 1971 was marked by the suppression of the Croatian Spring, the popular movement which fought for Croatian autonomy within the state. The movement was put down 'fairly brutally',<sup>533</sup> with jail sentences for the leaders of the movement and numerous repressive measures against media and institutions which were perceived as supportive of the movement goals. The repressive measures comprised the prohibition of Croatian cultural journals, including *Kritika*, *Kolo*, and *Hrvatski tjednik*, while *Matica hrvatska*, the central Croatian cultural institution which had a crucial role in articulating the cultural and national identity related aspects of the movement, was shut down.<sup>534</sup> Dozens of prominent Croatian intellectuals involved in the movement were forcibly displaced from public functions and some were even expatriated. Finally, the leaders of the movement were convicted and given prison sentences. This included Dražen Budiša, a student leader, and Marko Veselica, a prominent Croatian economist and a highly ranked communist party member.

Even today there are no precise figures regarding the number of people affected by the purge. The number of members who were expelled from the Communist party in the records varies from 731 to 20,000, while the leaders of the movement, Miko Tripalo and Savka Dabčević Kučar, mention in their respective memoirs that from 50,000 to 70,000 people were affected by the purge.<sup>535</sup> Finally, the number of trials

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<sup>533</sup> According to Nick Miller, the term 'brutal' refers to the Yugoslavian standards which were less strict than, for instance, those of the USSR. 'Return Engagement: Intellectuals and Nationalism in Tito's Yugoslavia', in *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Yugoslavia's Disintegration*, ed. by Lenard J. Cohen and Jasna Dragovic-Soso (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008), pp. 179-200.

<sup>534</sup> Suzana Coha, 'Pisanje/čitanje hrvatskog proljeća – između mita i traume' [Writing/Reading of the 'Croatian Spring – Between the Myth and Trauma'], in *Hrvatsko proljeće 40 godina poslije* [Croatian Spring Forty Years After], ed. by Tvrtko Jakovina (Zagreb, Centar za demokraciju i pravo Miko Tripalo, Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu Fakultet političkih znanosti Sveučilišta u Zagrebu Pravni fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2012), pp. 291-308 (p. 301).

<sup>535</sup> Antun Vujić, 'Političke osnove nekih interpretacija hrvatskog proljeća' [Political Foundations for Interpretations of Croatian Spring], in *Hrvatsko proljeće 40 godina poslije*, pp. 17-42 (p. 36).

in Yugoslavia in 1972 increased by 2000, from the previous year, indicating that the purge was of a considerable proportion.<sup>536</sup>

One possible explanation for the relatively large proportions of the purge is that the movement ‘stirred up the Federation’s hornet's nest’ by questioning the principles of ‘brotherhood and unity’ of the federal republics. Even though the alleged reasons for mobilization were of an economic nature, the movement leaders often exploited the themes related to the supposed injustice of the Croatian position within the federal state, especially in contrast to the privileged Serbian position. This was highly problematic due to the history of ethnic tensions between Croats and Serbs. The conflict between these two nations dominated the first Yugoslavia (1918-1941), which included numerous political assassinations. The conflicts further escalated during World War Two with the crimes committed by the Croatian fascist military forces Ustaša, and by the Serbian paramilitary Četniks, who also collaborated with the Axis forces. Both groups were defeated by the antifascist forces gathered in the National Liberation Army and led by the Yugoslav communists, called the partisans. By the end of the war the partisan forces founded Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the supra-national state based on the principles of universalism and communist internationalism, which were incompatible with ethnic hatred. Paradoxically, even though the ‘Croatian Spring’ was shut down by the repressive apparatus, the actions of the protestors were successful, as the authorities realized that the dissatisfaction caused by unitarianism and centralism in the long run can be a destabilising factor. In 1974, not long after the Croatian Spring was turned down, the ruling communist authorities accepted a new Constitution which adopted a loose federal model, guaranteeing a greater autonomy to the federal republics and autonomous provinces, and concentrating the power in republics rather than in central institutions.<sup>537</sup>

The new constitution had an important impact on several levels. Firstly, the new federalist model had unintended consequences for the degree of autonomy which the federal republics would have. According to Štiks, ‘the centrifugal dynamic of transferring ever more powers from the federal centre to the subunits soon reached the point of making the centre dependent on consensus among quasi-independent republics, empowered even with certain prerogatives usually reserved for sovereign

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<sup>536</sup> Vujić, p. 36.

<sup>537</sup> See Irvine, p. 169.



states in the international system'.<sup>538</sup> Secondly, the Constitution changed conceptually how the republics were perceived, since the new constitution referred to the republic's national homelands, and not simply to socialist communities, as was the case in the previous constitution.<sup>539</sup> This also meant that the unifying Yugoslav political project was abandoned.<sup>540</sup> Thirdly, the constitutional reforms reduced the influence of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, the largest and most powerful Yugoslav republic, by establishing two autonomous provinces within its territory: Vojvodina, on the territory with a large Hungarian minority, and Kosovo, on the territory inhabited mostly by the Albanian population. The latter became a neuralgic point of political unrest through the 1980s and 1990s up to today.<sup>541</sup> Fourthly, the new constitution led to the replacement of the communist leaders. Given that this was the most important aspect in the case of Socialist Republic of Croatia, I will elaborate on it more thoroughly.

The new constitution granted more autonomy to the federal republics. However, as a counter-measure, the genuinely popular Communist leaders in Croatia and Serbia were replaced with loyal, but less competent, leaders who proved to be unresponsive to the 'most fundamental political aspiration' of both Croats and Serbs.<sup>542</sup> In the long-term perspective the replacement of the leaders proved significant for three reasons. The loyal but less competent leaders representing the two most powerful republics, Serbia and Croatia, turned the institution of the Yugoslav League of Communists 'into a debating club'<sup>543</sup> incapable of dealing with serious challenges which the state was facing in the context of the economic and political crises of the 1980s. In addition, the purge of the nationalists from the Serbian and Croatian communist party generated dissidents who by the late 1980s represented a political opposition to the communist regime. Many of the dissidents after the first multiparty elections were elected into the legislative bodies and constituted the post-socialist

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<sup>538</sup> Štiks, p. 71.

<sup>539</sup> See, Audrey Helfant, 'Budding, Nation/People/Republic: Self-Determination in Socialist Yugoslavia', in *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe*, ed. by Dragović Soso and Cohen, pp. 91-131.

<sup>540</sup> Štiks, pp. 89-90.

<sup>541</sup> To the rebellions in the early 1980s, and then to the raise of Slobodan Milošević, who established himself as the Serbian national leader in the context of those riots.

<sup>542</sup> Irvine, p.169.

<sup>543</sup> Duško Doder, 'Yugoslavia: New War, Old Hatreds', *Foreign Policy*, 91 (Summer, 1993) 2-23 (14).

political elite.<sup>544</sup> Finally, according to Irvine, this had a crucial impact on the increasing influence of the Catholic and Orthodox Church in Croatia and Serbia. She argues that ‘the lack of effective popular leadership allowed religious authorities to step into the vacuum and to undertake programs of ethnoreligious mobilization’.<sup>545</sup> This in turn provided the basis for a violent process of disintegration.

#### *After Tito: Dissolution and Wars*

Even though the new constitution quietened the requests for a larger degree of autonomy in the federal republics, the stability it brought lasted only until the end of the decade. Tito’s death in 1980 represented a key moment in understanding the events which led to the dissolution of the state. As a paramount political and symbolic figure in post-war Yugoslavia, Tito’s power and charisma could hold tensions under control while promoting the ‘political formula of ‘brotherhood and unity’.<sup>546</sup> After his death Yugoslavia was left locked in a system ‘whose paradoxes and impasses, but also numerous beneficial possibilities, only he was capable of navigating’.<sup>547</sup> Due to the new leadership being unable to solve the ‘national question’, different manifestations of the republics’ demands for more autonomy kept corroding the state. This especially concerned the province of Kosovo, in which two riots broke out during the 1980s, anticipating the violent events which would happen there in the following two decades.

While the outbreaks of nationalism in the southern part of Yugoslavia rusted the state from the inside, in the north of the country liberalizing tendencies began to gain increasing voice in the struggle for democratic changes. This especially concerned Slovenia, in which, thanks to the support of the Union of Socialist Youth of Slovenia (USYS), liberalizing initiatives started developing in the 1980s. The USYS was notable for daring to initiate some propositions which were previously considered taboo, including the request for the annulment of obligatory army service, special status for political convicts, the annulment of ‘crime of speech’, prohibition of weapon exports, and the annulment of the death sentence.<sup>548</sup> They supplied the youth with pacifist ideas, feminist values, ecological topics, and new spirituality, and with

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<sup>544</sup> Vujić, p. 23.

<sup>545</sup> Irvine, p. 170.

<sup>546</sup> Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Balkan Babel: the Disintegration Of Yugoslavia From The Death Of Tito To The Fall Of Milosevic*, 4th edn (New York: Westview Press), p. 4.

<sup>547</sup> Štiks, p. 82.

<sup>548</sup> Jakovljević, p. 267.

infrastructure, finance, and ideological protection, which assured the foundation's need for the development of civil society.<sup>549</sup> By the end of the decade between one and two dozen social and political groups advocating similar liberal ideas emerged, even in the other republics' capitals, including Zagreb and Belgrade. The rising political pluralization in Yugoslavia was, according to Sabrina Petra Ramet, 'a symptom of societal mobilization and reflected the breakdown of the old political order'.<sup>550</sup>

Finally, similar processes took place across the Eastern bloc. Most significantly this refers to the attempt to reform the Soviet Union, which was articulated through a political movement called *perestroika*. The movement took place under the leadership of the general secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, and it aimed to transform the socialist system, conducting the transition from authoritarian to democratic government. As Mary McAuley has described it, *perestroika* 'intended to produce major changes in the economic and political system' introducing the elements of a market mechanism, a variety of forms of ownership and restructuring 'the old forms of organization that had emerged in the Stalinist epoch which had either outlived their usefulness or had been inimical to the proper arrangement and functioning of a socialist society from the first'.<sup>551</sup>

The reformation of the most powerful communist state had a strong impact on the Yugoslav economy. Thanks to its strategic position in the Balkans, independent foreign policy, and leadership in the nonalignment movement, in the context of the Cold War Yugoslavia had access to foreign credits and capital markets in the 1960s, which strongly supported its development. According to Susan Woodward, after the Cold war was brought to an end, the Yugoslav strategic position was diminished, and security and domestic political and economic viability were significantly challenged.

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<sup>549</sup> Dražen Cepić, 'The Rise of Independent Media in Undemocratic Systems: Friendships and Democratic Coalitions in Slovenia from 1984 to 2013 – The case of "Mladina"', Final report for Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe Research Project, University of Oxford, p. 3.

<sup>550</sup> Ramet, p. 45.

<sup>551</sup> McAuley, p. 59.

America, and the MMF imposed austerity measures increasing the economic crises in which Yugoslavia found itself in the 1980s and which by the end of 1980s.<sup>552</sup>

The reforms in the USSR not only affected the seriousness of the economic crises, due to the straitening debt conditions, but had a tremendous political impact on the state. As the USSR started weakening and dissolving, communism started collapsing throughout Europe. According to Dejan Jović, once it was ‘left without its ideology, without the belief that had been absolutely central to its identity, Yugoslavia was simply no longer possible’.<sup>553</sup> In the light of the fall of communism, the first multiparty elections took place in Slovenia and Croatia. While the elections in Slovenia were won by the anti-communist alliance, the conservative nationalist party HDZ [Croatian Democratic Union] won the elections in Croatia. Within the following months, elections took place in the other republics, all resulting with the rise of the nationalists to power. In the Serbian case, the elections were won by Slobodan Milošević’s party, who had already become the leader of the League of Communists of Serbia in 1986, and by then had already demonstrated his ‘commitment to nationalist hegemony’.<sup>554</sup> As the regional Yugoslav leaders turned to nationalism as a new source of legitimacy after the fall of communism, the predispositions for renewal of the ethnic conflicts which were suspended since the Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were again strong.

In Croatia, the leader of HDZ, Franjo Tuđman, won the elections, after which he conducted constitutional actions to separate Croatia from Yugoslavia. This concerned the referendum on independence, following the result of which Croatia declared independence in 1991. The new ruling party in Croatia, just as the political elites in the other republics, demonstrated the tendency to ‘reduce ethnic heterogeneity and to create “pure” ethnonational states, the territorial shape of which was to be decided either by mutual agreements between the former federal republics or by the use of military force’.<sup>555</sup> Unfortunately, in the case of Yugoslavia the latter was the

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<sup>552</sup> Susan Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1995), pp. 47-57. For detailed figures illustrating the crisis see Ramet, pp. 50-51.

<sup>553</sup> Dejan Jović, *Jugoslavija: Država koja je odumrla: Uspon, kriza i pad četvrte Jugoslavije* [Yugoslavia, the State Which Died out: the Rise, Crises and Fall of the Fourth Yugoslavia] (Zagreb: Prometej and Beograd: Samizdat B92, 2003), p. 481.

<sup>554</sup> Ramet, p. 55

<sup>555</sup> Štiks, p. 132.

case. Only a couple of months after Croatia's declaration of independence, in September 1991, the JNA [Yugoslav People's Army] attacked Croatia, marking the beginning of a bloody five-year war on the territory of Croatia (1991-1995), known as the Croatian War of Independence.

The reason for the beginning of the war lay in the fact that the majority of Croatian Serbs did not accept Croatian independence, and the Serb-dominated JNA supported the rebellions of the Serbian minority on the Croatian territory. The extensive army actions were quietened in the beginning of 1992 with the signing of a peace plan with the support of the international community, after which the Serb-controlled zones were formed. At the same time, the war fought on the Croatian territory cannot be separated from the armed conflict in the neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, between three constitutive nations: Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats. In 1995 the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were marked by the return of concentration camps in Europe, massacres and ethnic cleansing, destruction and the serious loss of human life (as many as 100,000 in Bosnia and around 20,000 in Croatia), culminated with the Srebrenica genocide in 1995, as well as the brutal destruction of cities such as Vukovar, Sarajevo, Mostar, finally ending with a peace agreement (the so-called 'Dayton accord'), brokered with the support of the European Union and the USA.<sup>556</sup>

### **CASE STUDY TWO: Female Martyrdom in a Reassessment of National Identity: Performances of the *Passion of Saint Margaret***

In the previous case study, I demonstrated that, after they had not been performed for more than one hundred years, the saints' plays reappeared again at the end of 1960s, which corresponded with the time of turmoil and crisis. In the analysis, I showed that they became popular due to their potential to act as a provocation in a political, aesthetic and moral sense. After the Croatian Spring was shut down in 1971, the saints' plays again disappeared from the stages until early 1990 – another turbulent period in recent Croatian history.<sup>557</sup>

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<sup>556</sup> Štiks, p. 134.

<sup>557</sup> It has to be mentioned that in 1985 in the context of Dubrovnik Summer Festival Joško Juvančić staged the play *Ecce Homo*, a collage of different medieval plays. The authors of the collage were Slobodan Prosperov Novak and Nikola Batušić.

In the period between 1990 and 1994, medieval religious dramatic genres flourished on Croatian theatrical stages. This included productions of plays belonging to the original medieval corpus of saints' plays, as well as of the plays written by contemporary authors (sometimes anonymously), respecting the conventions of the medieval genre.<sup>558</sup> The performances of these plays were in two main ways different from the productions from the first wave. One difference regards production conditions and the performers. In contrast to the first wave of reappearance of the saints' plays in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the plays occupied the stages of the most prominent festivals in the country, the performances in the second wave took place in a more dispersed form. They included amateur and youth performances in churches, in schools and in small local theatres, as well as in the national theatres.<sup>559</sup>

The other difference regards the shift in ideology and values. Both waves were seemingly similar in their critical stance towards the Yugoslav communist regime, however, the context in which the critique was addressed made a difference. On the one hand, the performances of saints' plays in the first wave criticized the regime from the leftist perspective, arguing for greater democracy and greater autonomy of the artistic expression. Performances of the second wave, on the other hand, opposed the communist regime from the nationalistic angle, celebrating a primordial ethnic identity and Croatian Catholic heritage. After achieving independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, the cultural institutions in the newly established Croatian state embraced the performances of the second wave which thereby lost the anti-establishment profile. In contrast to the first wave which was critical towards the regime, the performances of the second wave, therefore, for the most part acted as apologists for the new regime in which they were performed.

In this case study, I analyse the staging of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* by the Puppet Theatre from Zadar as one possible way in which theatre responded to great

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<sup>558</sup> Sanja Nikčević, *Što je nama hrvatska drama danas* [What Does Croatian Drama Mean to Us Today] (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2008), p. 42.

<sup>559</sup> Nikčević, p. 52. In the context of the repertoire of the Zadar Puppet Theatre it is worth mentioning that the staging of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* marked the beginning of the trend of staging the plays belonging to the Croatian ancient drama. Several other adaptations of plays from the old Croatian literary tradition followed in the 1990s, in the Zadar Puppet Theatre. See Teodora Vigato, *Svi zaderski ginjoli. Prilozi za povijest Kazališta lutaka Zadar* [All Zadar Guignols. Contributions to the research of the Zadar Puppet Theatre] (Zadar: Sveučilište u Zadru), pp. 95-105.

social and political change, and wartime.<sup>560</sup> I will first provide a description of the performance based on analysis of the video recording of one of the performances from the early 1990s.<sup>561</sup> Secondly, I will analyse the main reasons which characterize the *Passion of Saint Margaret* as national. Thirdly, I analyse how the issues of space and national community are reflected in the spatial dimension of the performance. Fourthly, I analyse emotions as an important mechanism for establishing the nation-performance relationship in different contexts. Finally, I will conclude the case study by looking into the gender-relations comprised in this staging of the saint play in relation to the vision of the national identity.

### **Staging the Passion of Saint Margaret in Zadar**

In 1990, the Zadar Puppet Theatre staged an adaptation of the oldest Croatian saint play, the *Passion of Saint Margaret*. This was done in collaboration with Wiesław Hejno, a prominent Polish director and the stage manager of the Wrocław Puppet Theatre – a continuation of a decades-long tradition of theatrical exchange between Zadar's theatre and the Polish institutions.<sup>562</sup> The premiere took place in April 1990. After it was premiered the play continued to be performed intensively, with short interruptions, until 1994.

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<sup>560</sup> For a recent publication on this topic see *Theatre in the Context of the Yugoslav Wars*, ed. by Jana Dolečki, Senad Halilbašić, Stefan Hulfeld (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). The book includes the academic studies on the topic, as well as testimonies from the artistic actors on the scene, with special focus on artistic responsibility during the time of war and hardship.

<sup>561</sup> The performance was recorded by Duško Brala for the purpose of the official theatre's archive. Even though the precise date of the recording of the performance is not known, according to the archivist of the Zadar Puppet Theatre it was not long after the premiere of the play.

<sup>562</sup> For more details on collaboration between the Zadar Puppet Theatre and the Polish artists see Vigato, pp. 47-62.



Figure 12 The production's poster. *The Passion of Saint Margaret*. Zadar Puppet Theatre archive.

There are three important features of Hejno's staging. The first one refers to the 'poetic heterogeneity'<sup>563</sup> – the combination of the actors' theatre and the object theatre.<sup>564</sup> In the brochure published following the premiere of the play, Hejno rejected the label of a puppetry theatrical performance which was implied by the fact that the *Passion of Saint Margaret* was staged as part of the repertoire of the puppet theatre company. According to him, the play should not be characterized as a puppetry theatrical performance, but 'only as a play staged using puppetry conventions'.<sup>565</sup> The puppetry conventions included animated puppets, and masked actors, as well as the animated objects (no puppets). Only the two main characters, Saint Margaret and

<sup>563</sup> The term coined by Henrk Jurkowski explained in Igor Tretinjak, 'Carićeve Judite i Planine. Putovanje u lutkarsku heterogenosti i ritualnost' [Carić's Judits and Mountiains. Journeys to the Puppetry Heterogeneity and Rituality], in *Dani hvarskog kazališta. Književnost, kazalište, domovina* [The Days of Hvar Theatre. Literature, Theatre, Homeland], ed. by Boris Senker and Vinka Glunčić-Bužančić (Zagreb and Split: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti and Književni krug Split, 2019), pp. 386-406 (p. 396).

<sup>564</sup> According to Helena Peričić, this kind of staging practice was not characteristic for the Zadar Puppet Theatre until that point and can be attributed to the influence of the Polish tradition, which the director Hejno incorporated in the staging. *Tekst, izvedba, odjek. Trinaest studija iz hrvatske i inozemne dramske književnosti* [Text, Performance, Echo. Thirteen Studies on Croatian and International Dramatic Literature] (Zagreb: Erasmus naklada, 2008), p. 38.

<sup>565</sup> The brochure published before the premiere of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* by the Zadar Puppet Theatre.



villain Olibrius were enacted through manipulated puppets, while the other characters were played by the actors who carried over-sized masks. The fact that the character of the Saint Margaret was staged as a puppet whose movement on stage were very limited and which looked mere like a statue, triggered associations with the statue of the Virgin Mary,<sup>566</sup> the aspect which I will tackle in the section which explores gender relations.

The second important feature refers to the musical dimension. The music composer Antun Dolički composed the instrumental music which was played in the background. The music can be characterized as very expressive, especially in the most violent scenes of the torture and execution, with the organ as the dominant instrument. In addition to background music, Dolički set to music the parts of the play which were sung by the female choir. The style of choir singing can be described as a combination of influences of liturgical singing, imitation of medieval choral singing, and Dalmatian traditional singing.<sup>567</sup>

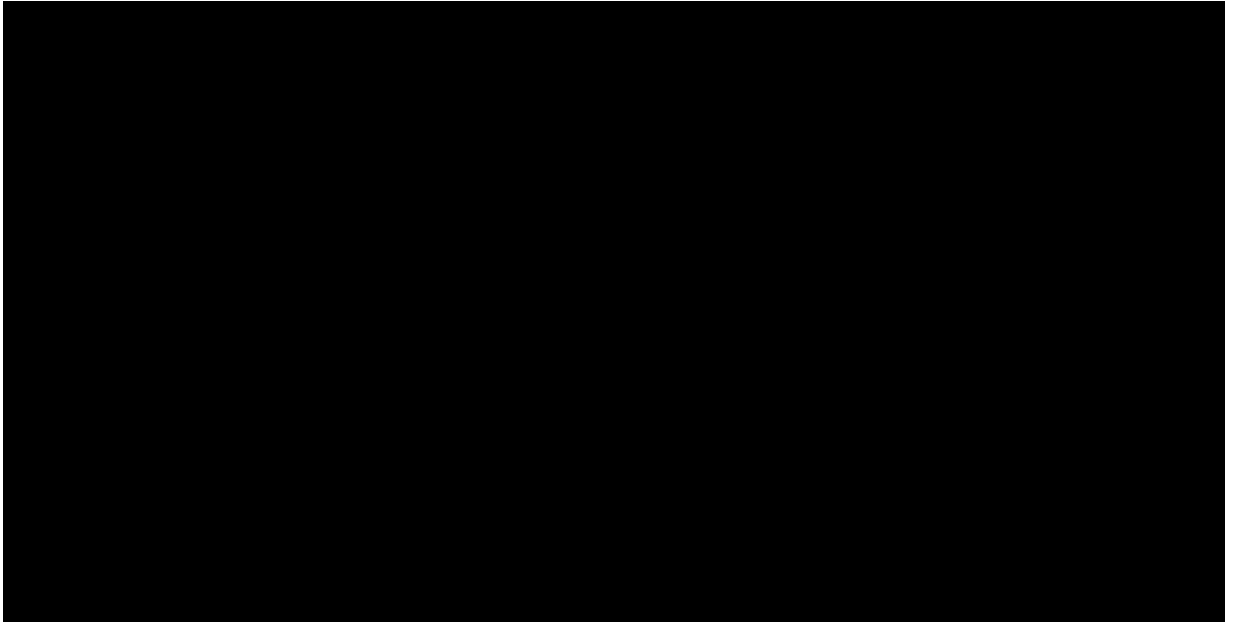
The third feature refers to the role of the stage directions. In the staging of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* the stage directions were pronounced loudly. As we have seen in the previous chapter this was also the case in the staging of the *Play of Saint Lawrence*. While in the case of the latter the effect of loud pronunciation was a ‘violation of illusionistic expectations’,<sup>568</sup> and the establishment of distance from the content of the play, namely the religious narrative, in the case of performance of the *Passion of Saint Margaret*, the effect was significantly different. The stage directions were pronounced by the choir or by the female or male actor who animated the puppet (in which case the puppet did not move), in the way that it was not clear where they came from, and thus it created a notion of the ulterior ‘voiceover’, which intervenes where necessary to explain the action to the audience. This had as its effect direct mediation and the erasure of any distance from the religious content of the play.

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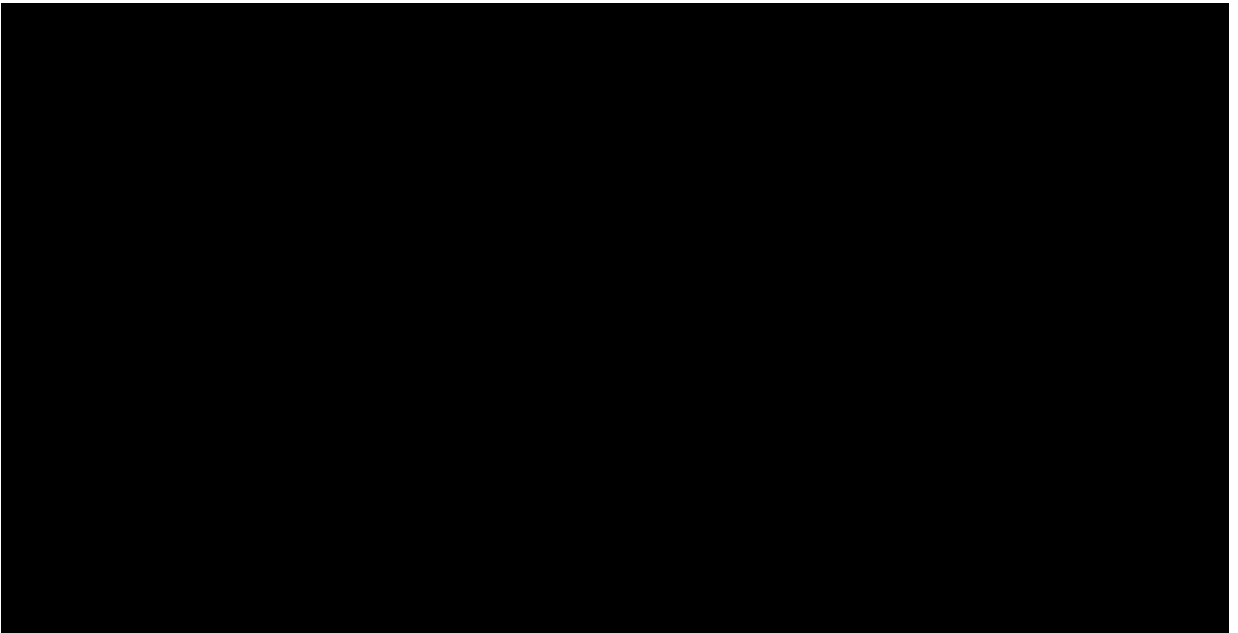
<sup>566</sup> Mani Gotovac especially emphasized this aspect in her critique entitled ‘Wooden Mary’. See daily *Danas*, 24 July 1990.

<sup>567</sup> To my knowledge there are no studies focusing on the musical elements of the staging.

<sup>568</sup> According to Niall W. Slater’s definition in *Spectator Politics: Metatheatre and Performance in Aristophanes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 3



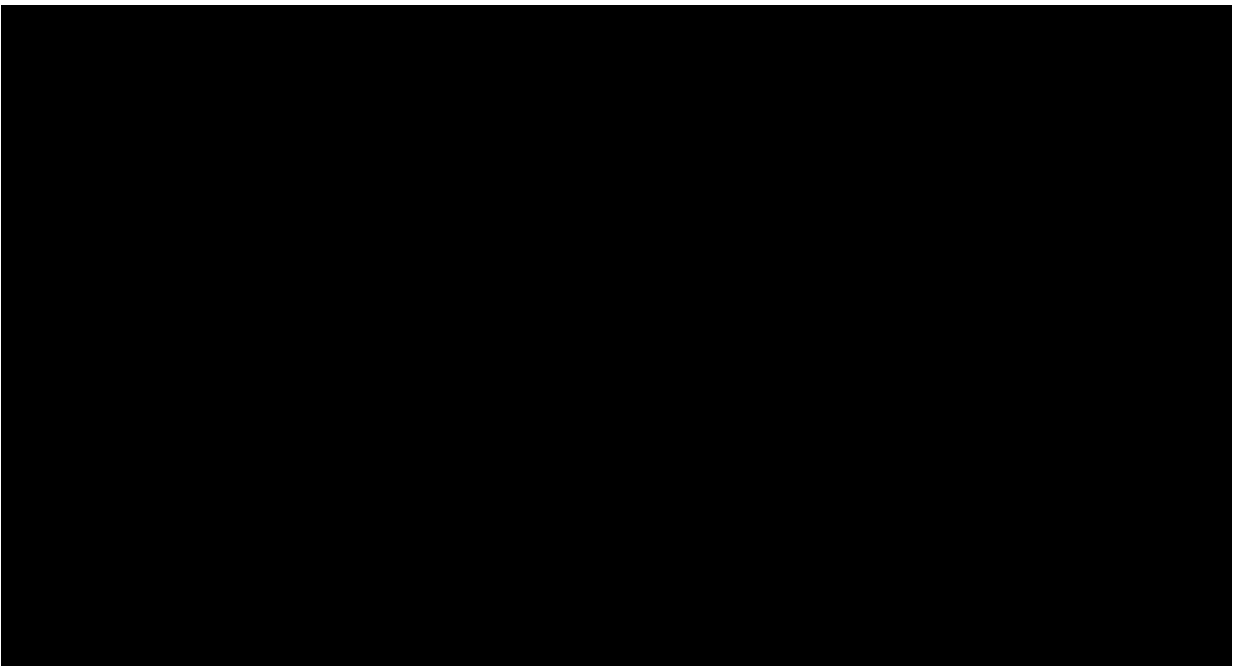
*Figure 13* *The Passion of Saint Margaret, Zadar, 1990.* Video recording by Duško Barla (screenshot). Zadar Puppet Theatre archive.



*Figure 14* *The Passion of Saint Margaret, Zadar, 1990.* Video recording by Duško Barla (screenshot). Zadar Puppet Theatre archive.



*Figure 15* *The Passion of Saint Margaret, Zadar, 1990*. Video recording by Duško Barla (screenshot). Zadar Puppet Theatre archive. Margaret is about to be tortured by being boiled in a huge pot. Zadar Puppet Theatre archive.



*Figure 16* *The Passion of Saint Margaret, Zadar, 1990*. Video recording by Duško Barla (screenshot). Margaret, as she defeated a dragon in the dungeon. Zadar Puppet Theatre archive.

Apart from the internal staging features inherent to the director's creative vision of the staging, what made this production especially significant were the external conditions, in particular the war. According to Jana Dolečki, Senad Halilbašić

and Stefan Hulfeld, ‘theatre can be used as an artistic weapon to fight for national independence and new forms of collective identity’.<sup>569</sup> Dolečki, Halilbašić and Hulfeld further suggest that

‘this is crucial in the case of Yugoslav wars, which were fought along ethnic and national lines. Presenting and re-interpreting collective historical myths, as well as fostering “blood and soil” narratives, are the related functions of at least one type of wartime theatre’.<sup>570</sup>

I suggest that the five-year long period of performance, from 1990 to 1994, can be divided into two phases, with the beginning of the war as a benchmark. The first phase includes the performances which took place before Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia. In this phase, the play was staged mostly in a deconsecrated church from the thirteenth century which served as the theatre’s main venue, with the exception of a performance in the context of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival in July 1990. The decision to stage the performance in this particular space was of prosaic nature: the Zadar Puppet Theatre did not possess its permanent theatrical venue.<sup>571</sup> In the absence of the permanent performance space, the Puppet Theatre used a temporary improvised stage in the space of the abandoned church. Within this space, the author of the visual identity, Mojmir Muhatov, did not create any fixed *mise-en-scène* for the performance. Instead, the *mise-en-scène* was provided by the church interior, which was then contrasted with the bright and oversized theatrical objects such as masks, puppets, and torture devices.

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<sup>569</sup> Dolečki, Halilbašić and Hulfeld, p. 4.

<sup>570</sup> Dolečki, Halilbašić and Hulfeld, p. 4.

<sup>571</sup> Despite the fact that since the closure of the Zadar Popular Theatre in 1962 Zadar Puppet Theatre was the only professional theatre in company in Zadar. See Tretinjak, p. 338.



*Figure 17 The deconsecrated church of Saint Dominic. Photo taken in September 2018.*



*Figure 18 The deconsecrated church of Saint Dominic.*



Figure 19 An oversized mask, the prop used for the character of demonic creature. I took the picture in September 2018 in the deconsecrated church of Saint Dominic which now, as the Zadar theatre finally possesses the permanent building, serves as a puppet stock.

The first phase of the performance of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* ceased with the beginning of combat activities in close proximity to Zadar. The war on Croatian territory started in August 1991, and the military campaign spread closer to Zadar in mid-September.<sup>572</sup> During the most intensive military engagement all the cultural activities in Zadar were paused, including the performances of Zadar Puppet Theatre. However, as soon as 28 October a group of Zadar's artists founded *Nezavisni vod umjetnika* [Independent Unit of Cultural Workers], a unit attached to the command on the Zadar sector of the Croatian Army, with the aim to preserve cultural production during the time of war hardship in Zadar. The Independent Unit gathered the majority of artists and troupes from the town, including the Zadar Puppetry Theatre as one of

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<sup>572</sup> The most critical time for Zadar's defence took place between 4 and 6 October, when the town was put under siege. However, even after the siege was broken, the town continued to be under bombardment with poor supply of water and electricity until 1994. See, 'Domovinski rat ['The Homeland War'], in *Croatian Encyclopaedia. Electronic Version* [Hrvatska enciklopedija. Mrežno izdanje] <<http://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?ID=14285#start>>[accessed 23 August 2019].

the most active ensembles,<sup>573</sup> marking the beginning of the second phase of performance of the *Passion of Saint Margaret*.

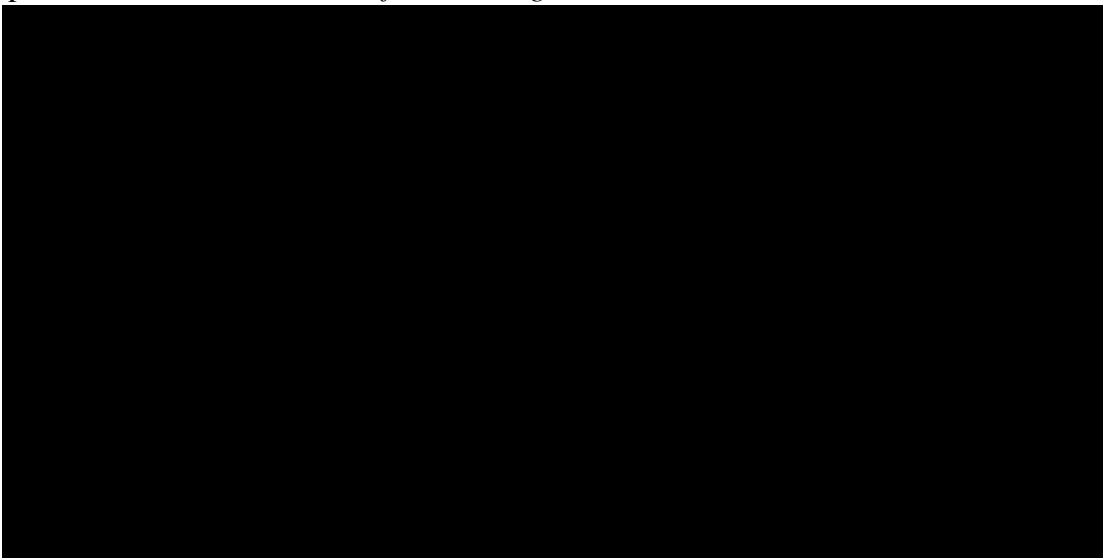


Figure 20 'Nezavisni vod umjetnika [Independent Unit of Cultural Workers] in 1991. The second from the left is Srećko Šestan, the actor who played Olibrius's character in the *Passion of Saint Margaret*. Internet source: <https://ezadar.rtl.hr/kultura/2322537/ni-rat-nije-mogao-zaustaviti-cvjetanje-umjetnosti-u-zadru/> Accessed 3 August 2019.

During the second phase, the *Passion of Saint Margaret* was still performed in the deconsecrated church in Zadar, making an important contribution to the local community, as advocated by the Independent Unit of Cultural Workers. In addition, the second phase was characterized by the growing national and international presence. The play began to be performed throughout Croatia, including Croatia's biggest cities Zagreb and Split, and receiving recognition in locally and internationally recognized festivals in Croatia. It received an award at the International Puppetry Festival in Zagreb, and it received several awards at the Festival 'Marulovi dani' in Split. The play was also performed in close proximity to the war zone, including Zemunik Donji (February 1994) and Šibenik.<sup>574</sup> When it comes to performance in an international context, the *Passion of Saint Margaret* was performed in France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, and Switzerland. The international performances were intended for a foreign audience with the purpose of spreading a message about the war

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<sup>573</sup> Radomir Jurić, *Ljetopis kulturnih događanja u Zadru 1986. – 1996*. [Annals of Zadar Cultural Events 1986-1996] (Zadar: Ogranak Matice hrvatske, 2014).

<sup>574</sup> For the dates of the Zadar Puppet Theatre's local performances and international tours see Jurić.

atrocities happening in their country as, for instance, in France and Switzerland in January 1992.<sup>575</sup> At the same time, they performed internationally for the Croatian diasporic audience, which served to connect the diaspora with their homeland; this aspect was especially important with regard to the financial help which Croatia received from the diaspora during the war. One example of such a performance was the performance in the context of the Croatian cultural week in the small German town Gaggenau, in June 1992, and in Mostar, Bosnia and Hercegovina, in December 1994.<sup>576</sup>

The staging of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* – the fact that it was produced during Yugoslav communist regime, interrupted by the war, and then continued in the newly established state, in war-like conditions – offers interesting analytical moments. Why did this production have such a strong political impact? In the next section I explore this in connection to the performance of national identity. I tackle the following issues: how was the nation-performance relation established; what did it imply; who was included and who was excluded from the performed image of the national identity; and how the idea of the national identity was disseminated through performance of saints' plays in the 1990s?

#### *Transformation of the Cultural Field*

In the last chapter I have discussed how the idea of 'brotherhood and unity' of the Southern Slavs was in the basis of Yugoslavia, which was the reason why the commonalities among the constituent ethnic groups were so emphasized. In the state which was first established in 1918 on the territory which was previously dominated by various traditions (Austro-Hungarian, Italian, Ottoman), common language represented exclusive grounds for unification. It is thus not surprising that the cultural communality was reinforced as the crucial principle around which the national identity was built. However, as Štiks has demonstrated, the ambivalence towards Yugoslavian identity was present already during Yugoslavian 'prehistory'.<sup>577</sup> In the 1920s the Communist Party was divided into the right-wing and the left-wing around the 'national question', which concerned the issue of whether Yugoslavia should choose federalism or unitarism. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia, decided to apply the

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<sup>575</sup> Jurić, p. 53.

<sup>576</sup> Jurić p. 54, p. 61.

<sup>577</sup> Štiks, pp. 42-45.



principle of self-determination which allowed for the existence of the instances of the national identities on the level of the republics.<sup>578</sup>

After the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was established, these principles were applied. Instead of unitarism, which marked the longer period of the first Yugoslavia, the communist regime propagated the Yugoslavian identity as well as the federal system in parallel, which gradually introduced the development of the ‘bifurcated citizenship’,<sup>579</sup> giving prominence to (sub)-national, republican identities. Despite all of this, as the fall of the Yugoslav state was approaching, the idea of endangerment of national identity started to dominate public discourse within particular republics. Although, it has to be mentioned that the self-victimization produced by the republics was to a certain extent based, on the policies of the regime which, in the attempt to suppress the nationalism, prohibited various cultural and media outputs, as was already discussed. The public discourse in Croatia became increasingly dominated by the idea that Yugoslav cultural policies suppressed any statements of the particular national character, which grew into the ‘syndrome of discovery and production of the old/new identity’.<sup>580</sup>

As the dissolution of Yugoslavia became more clearly apparent, the new circumstances created a need for cultural production that would fully underline the specifics and individuality of the new states.<sup>581</sup> This affected the repertoires of theatres in Croatia. The new context of raising nationalism, and conflicts between the republics, as well as the rising distrust between the ethnic groups, in particular the Croatian as majority, and Serbian minority, affected theatre production. Hence, the professional theatres turned to reviving period drama, and dramatic adaptations of national historic myths, including nineteenth-century romantic historical tragedy, ‘newly-written plays and adaptations of novels that retold ad nauseam the episodes of

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<sup>578</sup> Štiks, pp. 42-45.

<sup>579</sup> The term coined by Štiks. For a more in-detailed explanation see Štiks, pp. 62-66.

<sup>580</sup> Svanibor Pettan, ‘Music politics, and war in Croatia in the 1990s. An introduction’, in *Music Politics, and War: Views from Croatia*, ed. by Svanibor Pettan (Zagreb: Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Research, 1998), pp. 9-29 (p. 11).

<sup>581</sup> Similar process took place in Serbia. For more on this topic see Irena Šentevska, ‘Stages of Denial: State-funded Theatres in Serbia’, in *Theatre in the Context of the Yugoslav Wars*, ed. by Jana Dolečki, Senad Halilbašić, Stefan Hulfeld (London: Palgrave, 2018), pp. 54-62.

national political history'.<sup>582</sup> This primarily concerned the national theatres, since they had production conditions which allowed for the grandiose staging of period drama and national myths. According to Lada Čale Feldman, the national theatre of the Croatian capital Zagreb, 'became a site for almost explicit nationalist propaganda' fostering the 'patriotic historicism and inciting the Croatian people not to endanger its homogeneity by any petty private concerns'.<sup>583</sup>

For the better understanding of the dissemination of the nationalistic ideas through theatre it is also important to reflect upon the wider field of social performative practices. Lada Čale Feldman describes how the idea of the new identity was envisioned and embodied in the political rituals and spectacles of that time. In her study of the political rituals in 1990 she focuses on the pre-elections rallies. According to Čale Feldman, the conservative party HDZ won the elections thanks to recognizing

the existing thirst for an unambiguous, unproblematic, uncontradictory image of Croatia's future, which would in fact imitate in many aspects Croatia's past, an image which would inaugurate the continuity of the "century-long dream of statehood", that was supposed to relegate the fifty years of the communist interregnum to a transitory dark episode of slavery.<sup>584</sup>

When describing the rally of HDZ, Čale Feldman emphasized Croatian symbols including the tricoloured flag, *trobojnica*, symbols such as arm coat and *pleter* – the reclaimed or 'invented' medieval symbols, as well as religious symbols (palm branches, on the day of the Palm Sunday), which anticipated 'the restoration of the official cultivation of religious customs'.<sup>585</sup> Furthermore, even the second largest opposition party 'dipped into a similar mythological reserve of Croatian sacrificial history (above all through the presence of patron "martyr – saints" at their rallies)',<sup>586</sup> celebrating and promoting the leaders eliminated in the purge of the aftermath of the Croatian Spring. In sum, it can be said that both the repertoires of the professional theatres, as well as the broader performed political manifestations operated with the

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<sup>582</sup> Lada Čale Feldman, 'Within and Beyond Theatre: President Tuđman's Birthday Celebration at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb', in *Theatre in the Context of the Yugoslav Wars*, pp. 151-72 (p.156).

<sup>583</sup> Čale Feldman, 'Within and Beyond Theatre', p. 155.

<sup>584</sup> Lada Čale Feldman, 'The Theatralisation of Reality', in *Fear, Death, and Resistance: An Ethnography of War, Croatia 1991–92*, ed. by. Lada Čale Feldman, Ines Prica, and Reana Senjković (Zagreb: Matrix Croatica and IEF, 1993), p. 10.

<sup>585</sup> Čale Feldman, 'The Theatralisation of Reality', p. 10.

<sup>586</sup> Čale Feldman, 'The Theatralisation of Reality', p. 11.

imagery similar to the one which is inherent to the saints' plays. The overlaps and the discrepancies will be discussed in the next subsections.

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The previous subsections have demonstrated the great socio-political transformation which Yugoslavia has undergone in a short period of time: from loose federalism to the dissolution which happened in the most violent way. The transformation of the political context and the new social climate has created a need for a new sense of national community and the new communal identity. This need was especially fostered with the context of war which accompanied the Croatian proclamation of independence, the context of prevailing violence, destruction, immense suffering, and war crimes. In line with this social and political frame, my analysis of the second wave of performance of the saints' plays will revolve around explaining how the saints' plays responded to the challenges of the new context, as well as around the exploration of the nexus between the violent content on stage, and tensions and violence in the surrounding reality.

## Representation of the National Identity

The production of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* began in 1990 while Croatia was still a part of communist Yugoslavia, a period marked by social turmoil and crisis of state caused by the advanced stages of centrifugal federalism and decentralization.<sup>587</sup> In the given historical moment it ‘reflected, among other things, the implicit role of the so called construction of the national consciousness and (re)affirmation of the heritage.’<sup>588</sup> What qualified the performances of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* to represent the Croatian national identity? I identify four main reasons.

The first reason pertains to the language of the play. The *Passion of Saint Margaret* is written (and was performed by the actors of Zadar Puppet Theatre) in the ancient čakavian dialect. In order to explain why this is relevant, it is important to briefly reflect on Croatian dialectological history (this was partly discussed in the previous chapter). Historically, the Croatian ethnolinguistic community contained three main dialects: čakavian, kajkavian, and štokavian variant. In the mid-nineteenth century, when Croatian national identity was constructed for the first time in the modern sense (with the Illyrian movement), the kajkavian dialect was on the highest degree of linguistic standardization,<sup>589</sup> while the čakavian dialect had the longest literary history. However, the Croatian intellectual elites affiliated with the Illyrian movement chose neither of the two as the basis for constructing the standard Croatian language. Instead, they chose the štokavian dialect, which was least represented among the members of the Croatian ethnolinguistic community at the time (but which, having become a standard variant and the basis for the official Croatian literary language, has become the most widespread of the three ever since). The reason why the Illyrians had chosen the štokavian variant was that this dialect was the closest to other south Slavic languages, and therefore it was linguistically accessible to Croats and Serbs. This had to do with the Pan-Slavic ideology of the Illyrian movement, and the tendency of the intellectuals involved in the movement to create a Croatian national establishment in Austria-Hungary by emphasizing linguistic and ethnic unity with all South Slavs through the unified cultural and linguistic foundation.<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> See Štiks, pp. 74-79.

<sup>588</sup> Peričić, p. 44

<sup>589</sup> Alexander, p. 347.

<sup>590</sup> Alexander, p. 354.

With the creation of the Yugoslav statehood after the First World War, the Serbo-Croatian language based on štokavian dialect was used as a standard among all the members of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and then, after the Second World War, of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In this respect, the language of the performance of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* and the choice to use čakavian dialect could act as the embodied resistance to, what was seen as, the hegemonic Yugoslav identity. This can be compared to Hurley's work on the case of Québec. As a part of her investigation of the modern Québécois theatrical and cultural performances, Hurley analysed the potential of language to play the role of the nation's 'defiance and revolt'.<sup>591</sup> She shows how the staging of the play *Les belles-soeurs* by Michel Tremblay in the 1960s in Canada, during the Québécois national independence movement, was largely seen as a sign of *québécoisité* and framed as the national performance.<sup>592</sup> Hurley points out that the usage of a specific sociolect (a language system) in constructing a 'national performance' is especially applicable in the case of 'small nations'.<sup>593</sup> I argue that this can be translated into the crisis of the 'national question' in Yugoslavia of the late 1980s, in which the usage of the čakavian dialect, which was spoken only in Croatia, allowed for an identity distinction from other ethnicities.

The second reason pertains to the religious background of the play, which was in contrast to the proclaimed secular and atheist values of the communist Yugoslav regime. The practice of religion was by no means completely forbidden in Yugoslavia, and religious symbols freely circulated in the mainstream culture, as I illustrated in the previous case of the performance on saints' plays in national festivals.<sup>594</sup> The Catholic Church in Croatia nonetheless kept emphasizing their role as victims of the communist

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<sup>591</sup> Hurley, *National Performance*, p. 75.

<sup>592</sup> See Hurley, *National Performance*, pp. 70-76.

<sup>593</sup> The description of the term 'small nations' as used in political science and provided by Hurley can be used to denote the status of Croatia within Yugoslavia: 'it perceives itself as a national community, based on a common history, territory, language, and culture, yet it lacks a state that would ratify this self-concept. Rather, it is ensconced within a larger state apparatus', p. 19.

<sup>594</sup> In her paper 'Born in YU: Performing, Negotiating and Transforming an Abject Identity', Silvija Jesrović points out that in Tito's Yugoslavia 'religious festivities were not officially observed, [but] they happened anyway', which made them a part of the Yugoslavian supraidentity. See *Theatre and National Identity. Re-imagining Concepts of Nation*, ed. by Nadine Holdsworth (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 129-44 (p. 134).

regime.<sup>595</sup> In that sense the performance of the medieval religious drama was framed as a symbolic brake-up with the system that prohibited religion, and restricted people's freedom to practice their faith.<sup>596</sup>

The third reason is related to religious identity in the narrow sense and concerns the importance of the impact of Catholic liturgy on the development of vernacular drama. More precisely, this pertains to the fact that, among all member states of former SFR Yugoslavia, medieval dramatic forms were performed during the middle ages only on the territory of today's Croatia.<sup>597</sup> In this respect, the staging of a saint play in the late 1980s had unambiguous ethnic connotations. This reason is related to the previous one, although it addresses another layer of expressing religious identity. The narrative of victimization through martyrdom here is not built on the threat from the proclaimed atheism of the communist regime, but from the religious contender in the form of Orthodox Christianity, represented by the members of the Serbian ethno-religious community. The Croatian nationalist narrative, which started taking shape in the late 1980s and which was, to a large degree, developed by the nationalist dissidents who were persecuted in the aftermath of the Croatian Spring in 1971, therefore contained a somewhat inconsistent story arc that Croatian identity was under attack from two enemies: the atheist, a-national, pro-Yugoslav Communists, and the Orthodox, nationalist, pro-Serbian interests, whereby the latter in many accounts somehow infiltrated the former in order to use Yugoslav unitarism as a weapon against Croatian national interests. The staging of the play fostered Croatian national identity, which was constructed in opposition to the communist project of nation-making (which, in the view of Croatian nationalists, endangered the existence of the Croatian cultural identity), as well as against the Serbian ethno-political community.

The fourth reason why the *Passion of Saint Margaret* qualified to represent the Croatian national identity pertains to the tendency of the saints' plays genre to

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<sup>595</sup> Others claimed that, due to religious affiliations being perceived as a dividing trait between different ethnicities, the curbing of their influence constituted an important aspect of the implementation of the idea of 'brotherhood and unity'.

<sup>596</sup> See Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 4.

<sup>597</sup> Exceptionally, medieval genres were performed in the early modern period in the other Yugoslav states, however they had not been the product of the medieval religious tradition. See Franjo Fancev, 'Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja' [Croatian Church Plays], *Narodne starine*, 11 (1932), 1-28.

embody, what I call, the Manichean principle. In order to explain how this principle works, I will go back to the previous case studies. Thus far in this thesis, several examples have been pointed out in which the saints' plays have proved to be a politically potent genre. In the first case study of the second section, it was demonstrated that the performances of the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* in early modern Hvar reflected the conflict between the noblemen and the commoners. In the analysis, I showed that both groups of spectators recognized themselves in the characters, and concluded that this shaped their group identities, which again could serve as a source of group mobilization. In the more recent example, I analysed the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* in Dubrovnik. Here the mobilizing potential consisted in the critique of the authoritarian regime, which was enacted by depicting the torture of the righteous individual on behalf of the dogmatic ruler. These cases demonstrate that the performance of saints' plays in various times and circumstances fed into social struggles of the given period. I argue that this is not a random occurrence, but a pattern which is related to the Manichaeic principle which the genre incorporates.

The Manichean principle, which made a genre a conducive source for political mobilisation, is evident through the depiction of the one-dimensional characters which are strictly divided between good and evil pole; for instance Saint Lawrence in opposition to villain Valerian, as well as between Saint Justina and her contrapuntal character, emperor Decius. The same can be said in the case of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* and the attribution of the good and the evil features between Saint Margaret and the villain Olibrius. For the spectators, all this provides an illusion that the attribution of responsibility can be entirely simple and unquestionable. This is especially important within the frame of the interethnic rivalry and rising nationalism in the period of transition from the first to the second phase, or in other words to the new context which clearly 'denoted and mediated positions of Us vs. Them'.<sup>598</sup> In semiotic terms, it became evident what the 'Them' stands for, which consequently affected the reception.

The performances of saints' plays did not generate conflict or tension *per se*. However, I argue that they attributed a special meaning when they were performed in contentious situations— situations filled with displeasure, conflict, and open group

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<sup>598</sup> Dolečki, Halilbašić and Hulfeld, p. 4.

conflicts. The historical context of early modern Hvar, marked by the conflict between noblemen and commoners, the conflict which generated killings and rapes, can be characterized as a such context. Similar observation stands for the context of 1968 Yugoslavia, a critical time for the ruling regime which was criticized for the (sometimes violent) suppression of democratic rights. In such situations, a performance of pain, sufferings and death of innocent protagonist triggers the associations to the narratives of the ‘conflicts between dualistic contrasts,’ which are in the core of the concept of victimhood.<sup>599</sup> Finally, all of this can be applied in the context of the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s in this case study.

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Language, religion, and Catholicism explain why the *Passion of Saint Margaret* was selected as the national performance – through its performance, the Croatian identity was symbolically dissociated from the other Yugoslav identities. The Manichean principle incorporated in the saints’ plays, at the same time, does not speak about the dissociation from the other groups *per se*, rather it explains why the *Passion of Saint Margaret* offered a good channel for identity unification based on the foundations of moral supremacy against their enemies. During the first phase, references to the actual interethnic relations were mentioned only implicitly, whereas in the second phase, with the declaration of independence and the outbreak of the war, reference to the political reality became much more explicit.

The next subsection demonstrates how the identities were translated into the spatial dimension of the performance of the saints’ plays, making them an important semiotic mode of intervention in the political debates of the time.

### **Outlining the Community through Performance Space**

As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, an important feature of the first wave of interest in saints’ plays refers to the fact that the performances were framed within the cities’ representative spaces. Whether performed in the city parks or in front of the churches, the performances from the 1960s and 1970s incorporated urban architecture, creating grand, ambient theatrical performances. In opposition to the trends

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<sup>599</sup> See Harald Wydra, *Politics and the Sacred* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2015), p. 7.



characteristic of the first wave, the *Passion of Saint Margaret* was conceived as an indoors performance. The way the fictional space is constructed within the real performance space has some interesting implications.

The *Passion of Saint Margaret* begins with the scene of Olibrius spotting a young princess, Margaret, while she takes care of the sheep. In Hejno's adaptation, this scene is preceded by a scene in which actors are batched in two groups, both of which resemble statue processions from Christian tradition. The first procession includes only female performers, who perform two functions: one group walks in front and carries banners, and the other group walks behind them and carries a wooden table, with the puppet of Margaret fixed to the table in an upright position. The second procession, formed of male performers, has a similar composition: the banner carriers in front, and the puppet carriers in the back. The latter carry the puppet of the villain Olibrius, who is fixed in the identical, upright position on a wooden table.<sup>600</sup> The female procession departs from the left side of the stage (as seen by the audience looking at the stage), and the male procession from the right side.<sup>601</sup> They by-pass each other at the centre of the stage and place their respective tables on the opposite sides of the stage. After the tables are positioned, the performers, dressed in black, form a line, bow to the audience, and then cover their heads with cowls and loudly pronounce the first stage direction of the play: 'Here begins the passion of Saint Margaret!'<sup>602</sup>

The introductory processions represent, according to my respondent: 'two separate worlds, two different principles, two different excitations: the good and the evil'.<sup>603</sup> After the introductory ritual the plot starts unfolding on stage. The Pagan villain ruler, Olibrius, notices a young Christian, Margaret, while she is taking care of sheep; after this she refuses to forsake her fate and to marry him, Margaret is put in a dungeon. She is then put to different tortures, until she is decapitated, and her soul is taken to God. However, while different scenes exchange on the stage, the division on the stage between good and evil remains fixed. In the first scene which shows

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<sup>600</sup> The content of the banners could not be deciphered from the video recording, while the respondents who participated in the performance could also not recall what was depicted on the banners.

<sup>601</sup> *The Passion of Saint Margaret, Zadar, 1990*. Video recording by Duško Barla (screenshot). Zadar Puppet Theatre archive, 00:15.

<sup>602</sup> *The Passion of Saint Margaret, Zadar, 1990*. Video recording by Duško Barla (screenshot). Zadar Puppet Theatre archive, 02:15.

<sup>603</sup> RESPONDENT 1.

Olibirus spotting Margaret, Margaret is placed on the left side of the stage, while the wolves and Olibirus are placed on the opposite side (as seen by the audience looking at the stage). In the next scene Margaret is put in a dungeon which is enacted on the left side of the stage. Later, as Margaret would be put to torture, different torturing devices were exchanging on the left side of the stage while Olibrius, surrounded with his servants watches the torture from the right side of the stage. In performative terms, the stage division outlined with the introductory processions remains present throughout the performance.<sup>604</sup>

Social conflicts always simultaneously incorporate the principles of exclusion and inclusion. In the case of the performance of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* exclusion is symbolic and it occurs through the division of the stage between good and evil, by translating Manichean division in the spatial terms. As explained above, that division reflects the division Us vs. Them, victims vs. perpetrators, unfairly attacked vs. reckless aggressor. A very important repercussion of that division relates to the audience. As the stage is divided into two poles, the structure of the whole audience is radically unified through the experience of suffering and unambiguous positioning on the side of good, which takes place through the identification with the saint in pain. In that sense, the audience is shaped as a community through the construction of the ‘implicit spectator’.<sup>605</sup> The empirical spectator is thereby not offered an alternative but to identify with the implicit spectator and to position herself/himself within the homogeneous audience community. Again, this can be explained through the Manichean principle. In the performance of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* the stage reflects the real world – the social conflict which smoulders in the context of the performance. However, in comparison to reality, in which neither pure justice nor pure injustice exist, and in which neither pure evil nor pure good exist, the saints’ plays

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<sup>604</sup> The good-evil division is also recognized by Vigato. See ‘Srednjovjekovna drama *Muke Svete Margarite* u izvedbi zadarskog kazališta lutaka’ [Medieval Play the *Passion of Saint Margaret Performed by the Zadar Puppet Theatre*], unpublished version of the paper.

<sup>605</sup> Defined by Patrice Pavis, as an ‘ideal super-spectator on whom all the meanings of the play would converge, who would be the ideal receiver the author had in mind’. *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, trans. by Christine Shantz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 264. Marco De Marinis also proposes the term ‘model spectator’ and ‘empirical’ or ‘real spectator’ in opposition. *In The Semiotics of Performance*, trans. by Áine O’Healy (Bloomington Indiana University Press, 1993).

through the Manichean principle provide an illusion that the attribution of the responsibility can be entirely simple and unquestionable.

The characteristics of the actual space in which the performance took place only confirmed the above provided explanation. My respondent described the space of the deconsecrated church in the following way: ‘during the performance the walls of the church transformed into the dungeon ... the whole space acted as one huge dungeon, and that contributed to the potency of the performance’.<sup>606</sup> It is easy to imagine that in the full darkness in which the performance took place, as the video recording clearly demonstrates, the members of the audience were immersed into the space, feeling as if they had been sharing the dungeon with the captured virgin saint, and participating in the martyrdom. In doing so, the audience established a direct relationship with the character of Saint Margaret, identifying with her and positioning themselves on the good side of the binary division suggested by the performance space. The audience has lost its neutral position and has taken the status of victims, or precisely that of martyrs.

I suggest that the spatial constellation is made in a way that the whole performance space, the stage and the auditorium together, can be imagined as one mansion within which the whole staging takes place. While the audience watches the performance, they are positioned as if they were a part of the fictional ontology, in the dungeon. The repercussion of this spatial position is that it creates the impression that the audience occupies the space of the saint’s martyrdom. The ‘internal bifurcation of ontological levels’,<sup>607</sup> that of the stage and that of the auditorium, are thereby annulled and encompassed into one ontological space. Curiously, this creates a sense of a reverse effect of theatre within theatre.<sup>608</sup> While the traditional dramaturgy of plays-within-plays relies on characters taking over the function of the audience in the play,

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<sup>606</sup> RESPONDENT 1.

<sup>607</sup> Lada Cale Feldman, ‘The Context Within: The Play within the Play between Theatre Anthropology, System Theory and Postcolonial Critique’, in *The Play within the Play. The Performance of Meta-Theatre and Self-Reflection*, ed. by Gerhard Fischer and Bernhard Greiner (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 285-96 (p. 286).

<sup>608</sup> For a similar interpretation of Genet’s *Balcony* based on the principle of the reversed meta-theatrical dramaturgy see Caroline Sheaffer-Jones, ‘Playing and not Playing in Jean Genet’s the *Balcony* and the *Blacks*’, in *Play within the Play*, pp. 46-58 (p. 54).

in this case the audience enter the dramaturgical space given that the auditorium becomes the fictional space of the dungeon.

Finally, what happens with those who nevertheless refuse to recognize themselves in the Manichean good? This is related to the status of the negative characters in the play. On the one hand, negative characters are clearly present in the play, starting from the procession located on the right-hand side to the later scenes described in this section. On the other hand, if we look at the whole theatrical space as a large mansion within which the staging takes place, then the room for them becomes curbed. They share the space with the audience because they are on the stage, and because the audience is a part of the fictional space. However, at the same time they are not among the members of the audience, because the ‘implicit spectator’ identifies with Saint Margaret, and against Olibrius. This is an ambiguous position because they exist among us, while at the same time being absent.

A similar thing can be said for the ‘empirical spectators’ who reject the role of the ‘implicit spectator’: they may be (empirically) among us, but at the same time they are (theoretically) excluded. They are not present because the stage setting does not allow them to watch the performance and not to identify with Saint Margaret. Those members of the audience are symbolically exiled to ‘Them’ – those who attack Saint Margaret, the sheep, the good – those who do harm. And in the context of the town under Serbian siege, the country under attack from the Yugoslav National Army, it is not difficult to assume who ‘they’ are, Serbs, communists, and all traitors of Saint Margaret who are not ready to unambiguously recognize themselves in the Manichean image depicted on stage, whereby Croatian powers are a sacred and unambiguous good, and all who fight them are pure evil. This is the core of the mobilization potential of the saints’ plays which becomes important in the context of the social conflicts.

### **Targeting Different Audiences with Affects**

In the previous sections, I have explored the performance of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* with respect to the identity divisions, and with respect to how the idea of national identity translates into the spatial dimension of the performance. This section will examine the performance by looking at the affects which it sought to disseminate.

By now it has been clear that saints’ plays can be described as a highly affective genre. In the last chapter, the analyses of the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saints Cyprian and Justina* demonstrated that the performances of the saints’ plays can

activate powerful emotions, such as astonishment and awe. The affective response was related to the mode of staging, to the suggestiveness of the presentation of the supernatural related to the spectacular staging of this play, that provoked a powerful affective experience of astonishment and in some particular cases of *awe*. However, the production of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* differs from the one described in the previous case study in that it was not a grandiose representative performance, but a small-scale puppetry performance. I will demonstrate how the affects functioned in the poetical framework of object theatre by focusing on three types of affects: fear, empathy, and compassion.

### *Fear*

I start my analysis by unfolding the atmosphere which the performance creates. As mentioned above, the performance was set in an abandoned gothic church. According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, the performative space ‘always also creates an atmospheric space [...] Spatiality results not just from the specific spatial uses of the actors and spectators but also from the particular atmospheres these spaces exude’.<sup>609</sup> I suggest that the atmospheric space of the capacious dark place of the church whose walls served as a scenography provided by this church can be characterized as an eerie atmospheric space. The atmosphere is underlined by the appearance of the performers dressed in black with cowls on their head who are assimilated to the darkness of the space. The strong affective potential is further underlined with the music. The inclusion of church organs, the use of dissonance,<sup>610</sup> and long tones, resembles the accompanying music in horror movies. The material objects which appear on stage (puppets, torturing devices, masks) also contribute to the eerie atmosphere. Most importantly this concerns the use of puppets and masks. John Bell argues that the ‘essence of the puppet, mask, and object performance is the animation of the dead world by the living humans’.<sup>611</sup> Their presence is therefore often described as

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<sup>609</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 114.

<sup>610</sup> Joe Tompkins, ‘Mellifluous Terror. The Discourse of Music and Horror Films’, in *A Companion to the Horror Film*, ed. by Harry M. Benshoff (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), pp. 186-204 (p.113).

<sup>611</sup> John Bell, ‘Theoretical Approaches to the Puppet. The Death of "the Puppet"?’ in *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance* (London: Routledge, 2015).

uncanny.<sup>612</sup> All these elements, from space and objects, to performers and music, have a potential to trigger fear in the audience.<sup>613</sup>

The types of affects triggered by the performance can be linked to the types of audience which have attended the performance of the *Passion of Saint Margaret*. I have already outlined three types of audiences relevant for the reception of the play: the local Croatian audience, foreign audience members who have attended the performance in various international festivals where the play was staged, and diasporic audiences who saw the show when the play was staged as part of immigrant clubs and local churches. I argue that fear was most relevant during the performance for the Croatian audience and in the context of ethnic tensions and military aggression. This can be seen in the first scene, the one which depicts the first encounter of Margaret and Olibrius. While in the original medieval play this scene is situated in a rustic world, in Hejno's staging the rustic world is transformed into a battlefield. On the left side of the battlefield, Margaret's side, female actors carry puppets depicting sheep, while on the opposite side the male actors carry the puppets of wolves, obviously an aggressive threat to the sheep.<sup>614</sup> I have already explained the Manichean principle inherent to the genre according to which the audience is prone to identify with the side of good, as opposed to the side of evil. Thanks to the Manichean mechanism, the implicit viewer is supposed to identify with the sheep, and consequently watches the scene with the impression that wolves represent a threat to them.

In her study of making of a national community, Ahmed paraphrases Martin Heidegger who argues that fear relates to 'that which is not yet in the present, in either the spatial or temporal sense of the here and the now. Fear responds to that which is approaching rather than already here'.<sup>615</sup> With this 'futurity of fear'<sup>616</sup> in mind, it is important to remind ourselves that the *Passion of Saint Margaret* was premiered while

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<sup>612</sup> For the generally accepted way of thinking, as well as for its critique see James R. Hamilton, 'The "Uncanny Valley" and Spectating Animated Objects', *Performance Research*, 20 (2015), 60-69.

<sup>613</sup> In line with Aurel Kolnai, according to whom fear is characterized as 'a certain abstractness and an indifference to the intrinsic nature of things: what is dangerous is there before us only as "danger," and one's own self is intended principally as a unity of existence only'. *On Disgust*, ed. by Barry Smith and Carolyn Korsmeyer (Chicago: Open Court, 2004), p. 38.

<sup>614</sup> See Vigato, 'Srednjovjekovno prikazanje *Muke Svete Margarite*'.

<sup>615</sup> Ahmed, 'Affective Economies', pp. 124-25.

<sup>616</sup> Ahmed, 'Affective Economies', p. 125.

Yugoslavia was going through the process of dissolution and only months before the war in Croatia broke out. In that sense the wolves enacted on the stage can be seen as a threatening object of fear which is approaching. Furthermore, this helps explain why, soon after the war started, the *Passion of Saint Margaret* was described as prophetic by scholars and critics who argued that the play announced the beginning of the war.<sup>617</sup>

However, if we accept a presumption that fear relates only to something not-yet-present, a question arises: after the war began, and the object of fear became present, could the audience still experience the performance with fear? I suggest that the same elements of the performance with the potential to trigger fear, in the new context triggered another negative affect: hatred. According to Aruel Kolnai, the negative affects of fear and hatred belong to the same group of affects which he classifies as ‘standard modes of aversion’. Hatred, Kolnai argues, is ‘directed against the person or persons’ and it emerges from the situation of the ‘hostile encounter’.<sup>618</sup> Seen through the lens of Kolnai’s definition, the cruel wolves attacking the innocent sheep can be understood as such ‘hostile encounter’, the theatrical objects which were used in enacting the scene as the theatrical materialization of the object of hatred.

### *Empathy*

I have pointed out that the second phase of performance of the play included an international audience. It can be said that, in contrast to the previously discussed local audience, neither fear, nor hatred could be dominant for reception for the foreign audience given that the war threat was not real for them. International audiences were structurally in a different position, and there was the urge to create a different type of emotion targeting them. I argue that the dominant emotion which tended to be achieved through the reception of the performance by foreign audiences was empathy.

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, empathy is defined as ‘[t]he ability to understand and share the feelings of another’.<sup>619</sup> In her discussion of empathy, Alison Landsberg points out the elements which are central to empathy. The first element

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<sup>617</sup> See Vigato and her recapitulation of the newspaper critiques. Vigato, ‘Srednjovjekovno prikazanje *Muke Svete Margarite*’.

<sup>618</sup> Kolnai, p. 105. On the relatedness of fear and hate see also Ahmed, ‘Affective Economies’.

<sup>619</sup> ‘Empathy’, in *Oxford English Dictionary*, online at <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/61284?redirectedFrom=empathy#eid> [accessed 18 February 2021].

refers to distance. According to Landsberg, empathy ‘requires one to imagine the other’s situation and what it might feel like, while simultaneously recognizing one’s difference from her’.<sup>620</sup> Hence, empathy is feeling for ‘someone whose circumstances lie far from our own experiences’. The second feature of empathy is contemplation. Landsberg argues that ‘experience of empathy requires an act of imagination – one must leave oneself and attempt to imagine what it was like for the other person given what he or she went through’.<sup>621</sup> This is related to the first aspect: ‘[w]ith empathy there is a leap, a projection, from the empathizer to the object of contemplation, which implies that a distance exists between the two’.<sup>622</sup> I argue that both elements could be found in the foreign reception of the *Passion of Saint Margaret*. I illustrate this with material from one of the interviews which I conducted.

In the interview, one of my respondents described the tour across western and central European countries (France, Italy, Switzerland and Germany) which took place in Spring 1992. The tour, which was partly organized by Amnesty International (the respondent emphasized this several times during the interview), happened in the midst of the war in Croatia. According to my respondent, the main purpose of the tour was to ‘acquaint Europe with the truth about Croatia, the truth about the Homeland war’.<sup>623</sup> Regarding the affective responses of the audience, my respondent describes two contradictory reactions. At first, foreign audiences acted ‘quite cold and reserved’.<sup>624</sup> However, in the course of the performance, audiences gradually changed their stance. After the performance, the events included talks and public discussions with the audience. According to my respondent, the reactions after the performance were quite different: ‘I remember that they were extremely surprised! They were warm, approachable, they looked at us in a different way. The approach, the communication was quite different after they had witnessed the performance. We had also demonstrated that we are not a nation without history, without heritage, and culture’.<sup>625</sup>

The last passage from the interview reflects the distance which Landsberg describes as a feature of empathy. This is related to the background knowledge of the

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<sup>620</sup> Landsberg ‘Memory, Empathy, and the Politics of Identification’, *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 22 (2009), 221-29 (223).

<sup>621</sup> Landsberg, 223.

<sup>622</sup> Landsberg, 223.

<sup>623</sup> RESPONDENT 2.

<sup>624</sup> RESPONDENT 2.

<sup>625</sup> RESPONDENT 2.



international audience who watched the performance that is, their position as outside observers. However, despite their neutral status, the experience of seeing the performance helped transcend the *distance* between them and the war victims. In order for the audience to achieve a better understanding of the war conditions, they were exposed to content which was supposed to affect their way of feeling and thinking about the war which was remote to them. Secondly, this was achieved by *contemplating* the war atrocities which the victims went through, which was fostered by metaphorical content. By this I want to say that the play had no literal depictions of the war, but that it exposed the audience to war suffering by representing the suffering of a saint character who only indirectly denoted the real war victims.

### *Compassion*

In the words of Lindsay Cunningham, ‘theatre, both professionally and academically, often takes up the call to produce a better society through empathy’.<sup>626</sup> This is related to the ‘ability to give a distant “other” an embodied, affective presence is what makes theatre seem, to many, an ideal medium for encouraging empathy’.<sup>627</sup> The previous section indicated that the performance of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* indeed was successful in its attempt to trigger empathy with the Croatian victimhood among the international audience. In this section, I continue to analyse this ability, but in the case of a special subset of international audience, namely the Croatian diaspora in the countries of Western Europe. I argue that thanks to its distinct position towards both local audiences (in Croatia) and international audiences (in Western Europe), the performance of the play in front of this audience triggered a distinct type of emotion – compassion.

Compassion has often been confused with (other) ‘humanizing emotions’<sup>628</sup> including sentimentality, love, sympathy, and the above-discussed emotion, empathy. For instance, the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that compassion is ‘sympathetic

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<sup>626</sup> Lindsay Cunningham, *Empathy as Dialogue in Theatre and Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2015), p. 4.

<sup>627</sup> Cunningham, p. 5.

<sup>628</sup> Lauren Berlant, ‘Introduction. Compassion (and Withholding)’, in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. by Lauren Berlant (New York, London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1-11 (p.5).

pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others'.<sup>629</sup> This definition to an extent overlaps with empathy, as it puts forward the concept of sympathy and focus on others. Given the fact that compassion, just as sympathy and empathy, is caused by exposure to another's harm, those terms are often intuitively considered as synonyms.<sup>630</sup> However, Lauren Berlant points out several ways in which compassion can be distinguished from them. I will mention two features which I find relevant in describing the Croatian diaspora audience who saw the performances of the *Passion of Saint Margaret*.

According to Berlant, 'when the response to sufferings scene is compassion – as opposed to, say, pleasure, fascination, hopelessness, or resentment – compassion measures one's value (or one's government's value) in terms of the demonstrated capacity not to turn one's head away but to embrace a sense of obligation to remember what one has seen and, in response to that haunting, to become involved in a story of rescue or amelioration'.<sup>631</sup> What Berlant suggests is that, in comparison to other similar emotions, compassion involves a certain obligation to react to sufferings, requiring an agency of those who feel compassion. The second important aspect refers to Berlant's characterization of compassion as an emotion denoting privilege. In her words, 'the sufferer is *over there*. You, the compassionate one, have a resource that would alleviate someone else's suffering'.<sup>632</sup> Both aspects, the obligation and the position of privilege are relevant in the case of the Croatian diaspora.

The performance of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* activates within the diaspora audience the obligation to act. Although this applies to some extent also to the foreign audience, there is a slight difference between the general foreign audience and that of the Croatian diaspora. When it comes to the former, the purpose of the emotional labour was to achieve a general sensitization. More precisely, the goal was to inform the general public about a country which was going through war hardship. As for the latter, however, the imperative was much stronger. On the one hand, as

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<sup>629</sup> 'Compassion, in *Oxford English Dictionary*, online at <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/37475?rskey=oVc8dM&result=1#eideid> [accessed 18 February 2021].

<sup>630</sup> For more on similarities between compassion, empathy, and sympathy see Marjorie Garber, 'Compassion', in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, pp. 15-27.

<sup>631</sup> Berlant, p. 7.

<sup>632</sup> Berlant, p. 4.

members of the ethnic group which was under attack, the diaspora members were supposed to feel stronger obligation to help their co-patriots in defending against the enemy of their shared nation. This had to do not only with gathering humanitarian aid (which was sent by foreign governments, international aid organisations, foreign citizens), but also with the purchase of arms and resources for warfare. Under the international arms embargo imposed on Croatia,<sup>633</sup> this kind of help could not be sought from the foreign audience, but from the specific subset of foreign citizens who, due to their transnational status and ties, felt stronger obligation to send aid. This is where the second aspect kicks in. As workers in the rich countries of Western Europe, the Croatian diaspora had for decades financially supported their parents, marital partners, and siblings who stayed in Croatia. Now the time had come to redirect these remittances to the nation at large. The triggering of compassion within the diasporic audience was important in the sense that it encouraged them to recognize that they were the only ones who had the resources needed for the defence of Croatia and that they were obligated to help their homeland.

One way of explaining how mobilization through compassion is achieved is through the identification with the body in pain. This can be seen from the recollection of one of my respondents on performances which were organized for the Croatian diaspora community in Switzerland:

That time when we performed in Switzerland, and that was while Croatia was at War, *our* people who saw the performance approached us. Then, *our* people told us that while they watched a scene of Margaret's body being dismembered, they felt it was if *their* Croatia being dismembered ... and it was, because Croatia was at war. They said they were terribly moved.<sup>634</sup>

From this testimony we can recognize, first, that the audience experienced, as Holdsworth puts it, a 'powerful affective experience',<sup>635</sup> and second, that this experience was triggered by the suffering of the body in pain. In their reception, the pain was extended from the theatrical object in pain to the collective body of nation. Hence, I argue that the injury of the staged body worked to trigger the feeling of collectiveness. To paraphrase Ahmed, the nation becomes the object of compassion

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<sup>633</sup> [https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/eu\\_arms\\_embargoes/croatia](https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/eu_arms_embargoes/croatia) accessed on 20 August 2019.

<sup>634</sup> RESPONDENT 1.

<sup>635</sup> Holdsworth, *Theatre and National Identity*, p. 4.

precisely by associating the proximity with others with loss and injury.<sup>636</sup> The collectiveness was achieved through aligning the bodies who felt compassion.

Like empathy, compassion is established on the principle of metaphor. As I showed in the previous section, the *Passion of Saint Margaret* did not show her suffering through an iconic presentation; the play did not depict Croatian war-reality and tribulation. Instead, the experience of suffering of war victims was mediated through the suffering of the martyr, Saint Margaret. As I sought to demonstrate, the foreign audience needed to contemplate her suffering in order to feel the empathy with the Croatian nation. However, in the context of the diasporic audience, the metaphoric structure of the message is of different sort. As for the foreign audience, the metaphoricity is anonymous, it does not depend on the shared frame of reference: suffering of Saint Margaret is suffering like any other. But in the case of compassion, the metaphor is constructed on the shared symbol of the Virgin Mary as a suffering female figure. For the diaspora audience, the virgin saint is not just an anonymous medium through which the suffering is depicted. Instead, the affects which the performance was supposed to trigger are inscribed in the Marian symbol through which Saint Margaret is represented, as I pointed out in the subsection on the staging features.

This results in two important implications. Firstly, for the diasporic audience there is no distance which needs to be overcome. Given the shared national identity, there is no need to evoke feelings of empathy. The association which the audience establishes towards the idea of the suffering is more direct. Secondly, this association is gender based. Looking at the suffering of the suffering object, the virgin saint, allows for the diasporic audience to draw a parallel between the suffering mothers whose sons fight or died in war, whereby the figure of mother stands for as a metaphor for the Croatian nation.<sup>637</sup> This kind of usage of the female figures in national

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<sup>636</sup> I paraphrase the subsequent quotation: ‘the nation becomes the object of love precisely by associating the proximity with others with loss, injury and theft’. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, p. 12. Love is exchanged for compassion according to the fact that both can be characterized as belonging to the group of ‘humanising emotions’ according to Berlant, as quoted above.

<sup>637</sup> In Croatian culture, most remarkably presented in the statue by Ivan Meštrović entitled the ‘History of Croats’ [Povijest Hrvata]. The statue appears on the frontage of Croatian passport. See [https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Povijest\\_Hrvata\\_\(Me%C5%A1trovi%C4%87\)#/media/](https://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Povijest_Hrvata_(Me%C5%A1trovi%C4%87)#/media/)

narratives is already recognized in scholarship. Building on the work of several feminist theatre historiographers including Diana Taylor, Tracy C. Davis, Susan Bennett, and Charlotte Canning, Hurley has concluded that ‘woman-as-metaphor-for-nation’ relations are often built into the narratives of national histories.<sup>638</sup> Those narratives, according to her, work *through* women but not *for* them. However, in the case of the *Passion of Saint Margaret*, the symbol of the caring mother, who suffers because for her children, just as the Virgin Mary (*Mater dolorosa*) suffered because of the loss of her son, becomes even more emphasized given the importance of the Marian cult in Croatian tradition.<sup>639</sup>

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In this chapter I have demonstrated how the *Passion of Saint Margaret* fulfilled the idea of the new national identity constructed by the political elites in times of great social transformation. Language heritage, as well as a double symbolic stake of religious and Catholic heritage set against atheism and secularity, have been pointed out as crucial for the inclusion of this production in the national repertoire after it was premiered in the beginning of the 1990 when the dissolution of Yugoslavia took place and there was the urge for the (re)creation of the national identity of the new nation. The potential of this staging to contribute to the process of the creative production of national identity was only further fostered within the contextual frame of war, which ensued in the early 1990s. Through the performance analysis I have pointed out that the ideological embracement of the *Passion of Saint Margaret*, as well as its popularity among the audience across the country and Croatian diaspora, depended on the capability of the performances of this saint play to delineate the idea of national community through two most important aspects: construction of the spatial dimension and potential to trigger the emotional labour of the audience. In many ways the

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[Datoteka:Povijest Hrvata \(Me%C5%A1trovi%C4%87\).jpg](#), source: Wikimedia commons.

<sup>638</sup> England’s Britannia or France’s Marianne. See Hurley, *National Performance*. pp. 5-6.

<sup>639</sup> Compare with Zlatko Skrbiš, ‘The Apparitions of the Virgin Mary of Medjugorje: the Convergence of Croatian Nationalism and her Apparitions’, *Nations and Nationalism* 11 (2005), 443–461.

appearance of the saints' plays in this period can be explained through the correspondence with the social and political reality, the nation and state building process, as well as the wartime. In my last empirical subsection, I will explore the correspondence between the saints' plays and contemporaneity.

### **The Third Wave: Amateur Performances in Neoconservative Croatia**

The last case study analysis includes the most recent performances of saints' plays which have been staged since 2016 in the context of what I will describe as the 'conservative revolution'. This period was, similarly to the previous two waves, preceded by post-war stability, which corresponded with Croatian accession to the European Union. At the same time this period overlapped with other significant events, including the refugee crises, and a global rise of support for populist politicians and radical right parties. The focus of my analysis will be on the staging of the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* by the amateur theatre group, the Hvar Popular Theatre. This staging is particular for its long tradition; it was staged for the first time in 1970, however, as I will attempt to demonstrate, in recent years it has gained a new meaning in the new context.

#### **Social and Political Context of Contemporary Croatia**

In order to provide a better understanding of the context within which the last wave of performances of saints' plays has been taking place, I will outline the most important political events which have affected its current social and political situation. This will pertain to the events related to the end of war, which corresponded with the decline of the second wave of contemporary interest for the saints' plays. It will include discussion of the lasting importance of the Croatian war for independence for the state's political situation, especially concerning party politics, and a more recent phenomenon: the Croatian EU accession.

After the most intensive war activities ended in 1992, and the Serbian (Yugoslav Army's) troops moved from Croatian territory,<sup>640</sup> the war was continued in

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<sup>640</sup> Mile Bjelajac and Ozren Žunec, 'The War in Croatia, 1991-1995', in *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies. A Scholar's Initiative*, ed. by Charles Ingrao and

the diplomatic political arena. Croatia took part in the peace negotiations which were supported by Western negotiators, who ‘tried to promote a comprehensive peace settlement between the Croatian and the Krajina Serb governments.’<sup>641</sup> Simultaneously, Croatia was preparing for military operations, aiming to gain control over the pre-war Croatian territory from the forces of the Republic of Srpska Krajina. Hence, in 1995 Croatia launched two military actions: Operation Flash and Operation Storm. The operations were successful in the sense that Croatia gained control over three quarters of its lost territory. The public celebrations in the aftermath of the operations marked them as ‘among the most important events in the nation’s history’.<sup>642</sup> The political elite thereby ‘encouraged the public to celebrate the fact that the Croatian army had become “a regional power”’.<sup>643</sup> However, the events after Operation Storm became perhaps the most controversial issue surrounding the war in Croatia. According to Mile Bjelajac and Ozren Žunec, it is ‘a well-documented fact that after the military part of the operation was over, the chaos of wholesale looting started and several hundred Serbs, the majority of them elderly, were murdered’,<sup>644</sup> while the operations were followed by the exodus of approximately 200,000 Serbian refugees’.<sup>645</sup>

It can be argued that the legacy of the War for Independence has had a great impact on the political life in Croatia.<sup>646</sup> After the military operations and the full integration of Croatian territory in 1998, the ruling party, the ‘Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) tried to enforce its own legitimacy by virtually creating a myth around these

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Thomas A. Emmert (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press/Purdue University Press, 2009), pp. 231-70 (p. 239).

<sup>641</sup> Bjelajac and Žunec, p. 253.

<sup>642</sup> Bjelajac and Žunec, p. 258.

<sup>643</sup> Bjelajac and Žunec, p. 256.

<sup>644</sup> According to Bjelajac and Žunec, ‘[s]ome, including government officials and institutions, claim that this was the work of criminals who acted on their own, while various journalists, scholars, political and non-governmental activists, along with the [Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia], think that it was a premeditated and organized operation’. Bjelajac and Žunec, p. 257.

<sup>645</sup> Dolečki, Halilbašić and Hulfeld, p. 3.

<sup>646</sup> The analysis of Josip Glaurdić and Vuk Vuković shows the legacy of war to be the single strongest determinant of the pattern of voting. ‘Voting after War: Legacy of Conflict and the Economy as Determinants of Electoral Support in Croatia’, *Electoral Studies*, 42 (2016), 135-45.

achievements'.<sup>647</sup> On the same grounds this conservative nationalist party preserved its ruling dominance. Since Croatian independence, HDZ was almost uninterruptedly in power. There were only two exceptions in which the Social Democrat Party won the elections in coalition with other liberal parties. The first time the break of The HDZ's dominance happened was in 2000, after the problems with democracy, authoritarianism, and freedom of press under the HDZ escalated. The second time that HDZ lost the election was in 2011, after the great corruption crises which led to the imprisonment of the prime minister, Ivo Sanader.

The HDZ's dominance can be seen both as the cause and the consequence of the fact that the nationalistic narrative was established as the leading and unquestionable narrative of mainstream politics in Croatia. The idea of Croatian unquestionable rightfulness during the war provided a strong basis for the maintenance of the nationalistic narrative. However, the issue of rightfulness and the sacredness of the war also represented one of the main sources of disagreement between HDZ and the opposition. This especially refers to war crimes committed during the military actions Flash and Storm. The issue escalated when Croatian generals were accused or indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia. Some of the accused, like general Ante Gotovina, the main general of Operation Storm, were established as heroes and martyrs.<sup>648</sup> This has further fed the HDZ's claim for legitimacy as the only credible patriotic political choice.

One of the strongest motivations for Croatia to collaborate with the ICTY was the process of joining the EU, for which Croatia had aimed for since the end of war.<sup>649</sup> During the accession process, one of the most important conditions for accession was to 'co-operate and assist the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in bringing before the tribunal without delay persons indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide'.<sup>650</sup> The accession finally took place in 2013 when Croatia entered the EU as part of the third wave of the EU eastern

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<sup>647</sup> Bjelajac and Žunec, p. 256.

<sup>648</sup> Vjeran Pavlaković, 'Croatia, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and General Gotovina as a Political Symbol', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62 (2010), 1707-740 (1717).

<sup>649</sup> According to Štikš, 'the process has been dominating the region and the EU is one of the most powerful external factors in shaping post-Yugoslav citizenship regimes', p. 18.

<sup>650</sup> Ana Vizjak and Maja Vizjak, 'The Accession of the Republic of Croatia to the EU the Past, the Present, the Future', *DIEM*, 1 (2015), 806-19 (811).



enlargement. However, as with several other countries of Central and East Europe (CEE), the EU accession did not inevitably lead to social and political transformation.

According to Dražen Cepić

The analyses of recent trends in the region invoked the famous Ralf Dahrendorf's prediction of six months needed to replace a political system, six years necessary to transform an economic system market, and 60 years required to change a society, implying that institutional solutions were far easier than creating democratically mature citizens.<sup>651</sup>

One of the most noticeable changes which happened in the last 10 years pertains to the appearance of new actors on the conservative scene – the Catholic Church 'satellite civil organizations'.<sup>652</sup> These organisations are part of a broad religious-political movement connected to other international conservative organizations and initiatives.<sup>653</sup> They led several public campaigns, which helped them establish themselves as important actors in the field of policy-making.<sup>654</sup> The most famous campaign was the one which carved out the constitutional definition of marriage.<sup>655</sup>

Their intense activities, that have taken place in the last 5 to 10 year years, and which has been termed the 'conservative revolution',<sup>656</sup> should be regarded in the

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<sup>651</sup> Dražen Cepić, *Class Cultures in Post-Socialist Eastern Europe* (Oxon: Routledge, 2019), p. 2.

<sup>652</sup> According to Roman Kuhar, this refers to the 'civil society initiatives, which either work in close collaboration with the RCC, are based on the RCC's value system or are established by the RCC'. 'Playing with Science: Sexual Citizenship and the Roman Catholic Church Counter-Narratives in Slovenia and Croatia', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 49 (2015), 84–92 (84).

<sup>653</sup> See Antonija Petričušić, Mateja Čehulić, Dario Čepo, 'Gaining Political Power by Utilizing Opportunity Structures: An Analysis of the Conservative Religious-Political Movement in Croatia', *Politička misao: časopis za politologiju*, 4 (2017), 61-84.

<sup>654</sup> For the influence in policy making see Petričušić, Čehulić, and Čepo.

<sup>655</sup> See Kuhar, 'Playing With Science' and Petričušić, Čehulić, Čepo, p. 74.

<sup>656</sup> Even though the term does not appear often in the scholarship, it is widely in use in the media, both the mainstream media, for instance <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/prva-petoljetka-hrvatske-konzervativne-revolucije-pocela-je-u-prosincu-2012-godine-danas-je-hrvatska-znatno-drugacija-zemlja/6849711/> accessed on 19/09/2019; as well as in the conservative media which can be considered as an important mechanism of the revolution. Even though they use the term, some of the most vocal people within the movement express their scepticism against the usage of it because of the leftist connotations which the term implies, <http://laudato.hr/Novosti/Hrvatska/Mobilizacija-konzervativnih-snaga-u-Hrvatskoj.aspx> accessed on 19/09/2019.

context of the other trends which are characteristic for the rest of eastern Europe. It has been argued that the ‘democratic regression which many of these countries witnessed – manifested in the attempts to bend the rule of law and to suppress media freedoms, as well as to undermine European solidarity through nationalist sentiments and fierce anti-immigrant rhetoric’.<sup>657</sup> At the same time this period overlapped with other significant events, such as the refugee crises, and a global rise of support for the populist radical right.

In scholarship the term re-traditionalization is used to describe recent illiberal trends in post socialist states including Croatia, Slovenia, and Slovakia.<sup>658</sup> The term ‘populism’, as I use it, has been used from the mid-1980s of the last century to ‘evoke the transformation of political ideology and practices with rhetoric, style or “narratives” designed to conquer electoral audiences’.<sup>659</sup> Later, due to the intersection of media and academia, the term has started being dominantly used in a pejorative sense.<sup>660</sup> In the context of my research it should also be emphasized that the term, as I use it, is linked to the populist parties and movements in the liberal democracies of the twenty-first century, which are connected with right-wing politics, as opposed to populist movements which use the rhetoric and pursue objectives that are in the tradition of the Left.<sup>661</sup>

### **CASE STUDY THREE: Staging National Identity through Amateur Performances of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr***

The analysis of the first two waves of contemporary revival of the saints’ plays in Croatia resulted in a conclusion that performances from the two periods shared little in common. Despite being seemingly similar, insofar as they both appeared in

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<sup>657</sup> Cepić, *Class Cultures*, p. 2.

<sup>658</sup> See Mojca Pajnik, Roman Kuhar and Iztok Šori, ‘Populism in the Slovenian Context: Between Ethno-Nationalism and Re-Traditionalisation’, in *The Rise of the Far Right in Europe: Populist Shifts and ‘Othering’*, ed. by Gabriella Lazaridis, Giovanna Campani, Annie Benveniste (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 137–60.

<sup>659</sup> Annie Benveniste, Giovanna Campani and Gabriella Lazaridis, ‘Introduction. Populism: The Concept and Its Definitions’, in *The Rise of the Far Right*, pp. 1-23, (p.3).

<sup>660</sup> See A. Benveniste *et al.*, ‘Introduction’, pp. 3-4.

<sup>661</sup> See A. Benveniste *et al.*, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

turbulent historical periods marked by nationalism and social turmoil, the analysis demonstrated that the performances filled the medieval genre of saints' plays with different types of values and ideological content. Whereas the first wave propagated individuality, and confronted the authoritarianism of the state-socialist regime, the second wave promoted (ethnic) collectivism and ideological uniformity. It is an interesting question then to consider how to account for the performances which have taken place in the most recent period of time which can be characterized as dominated by nationalism. I discuss this issue by analysing the example of performances of the *Play of Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* by the Hvar Popular Theatre, an amateur theatre group from Hvar. I will start by outlining the long history of performance, then I will focus on the staging, after which I will elaborate on the aspects which granted these performances the label of national performance in the context of contemporary Croatia. In doing so, I will focus especially on issues of relevance and the political significance of the ancient genre in contemporary society.

### **The Long Tradition of Hvar Popular Theatre and Play**

Whenever mentioned in scholarship, media, or among the performers from the Hvar Popular Theatre, their staging of *Plays of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* by the Hvar Popular Theatre is always associated with its long tradition of performance.<sup>662</sup> Premiered in 1970, and performed (with some interruptions) through to today, it stands as the second longest play tradition in Croatia.<sup>663</sup> My analysis of the third wave of performance of the saints' plays will thus begin with a metaleptic

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<sup>662</sup> See Dubravka Crnojević-Carić 'Pučko, poularno i političko u kazališnim predstavama Marina Carića (kazalište i komuna) [Popular and Political in the Performances Directed by Marin Carić (Theatre and Community)], *Dani hvarskog kazališta*, 43 (2017), 320-37, Jakša Fiamengo, Hvarsko pučko kazalište iliti Hvarani kojima se prikazalo prikazanje [The Hvar Popular Theatre or the People of Hvar to whom the Plays Appeared], *Dani hvarskog kazališta*. 38 (2012), 412-23, Kazalište je život (Hvarsko pučko kazalište i Prikazanje života svetoga Lovrinca mučenika: Četrdeset godina života jedne predstave) [The Theatre is the Life (The Hvar Popular Theatre and the *Play of the Life Saint Lawrence, the Martyr: Forty Years of Life of one Performance*], *Vijenac* (2010). This was also the case during the interviews which I have conducted with the performers of the play.

<sup>663</sup> The *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* is the second while the play *Stilske vježbe* (the adaptation of the play *Excercices de style* by Raymond Queneau), which has been performed since 1968, holds the first position.

return to the first wave of contemporary performances of the saints' plays when this staging was performed for the first time.

In 1969, not long after the saints' plays were performed on the most important Yugoslav festival stages, such as the Dubrovnik Summer Festival and the Split Summer Festival, a group of students from the island of Hvar gathered in the capital Zagreb to form an amateur theatre group. One of their first tasks consisted in staging a medieval saints' play, the *Play of Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*. A decision to stage this particular play is not surprising given the fact that it was, as discussed in the second section of the thesis, one of the most important plays for the communal life of the island from which the students came. The play was adapted by one of the students, later a prominent theatre director, Marin Carić, who became especially recognised for his staging of Croatian theatrical heritage.<sup>664</sup> The premiere of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* happened in July 1970 at the Festival of Amateur Theatres of Yugoslavia which took place every year on the island of Hvar.

The play was an immediate success. After winning the competition part of the Festival, and with several critiques pointing it out as one of the most successful performances ever to be shown at the festival, it continued to be performed in the following year. However, the play stopped being performed in Spring 1972 when the group fell apart. The cause of this was a small-scale political scandal which happened in 1971, at the next year's edition of the Yugoslav Festival of Amateur Theatre. As the reigning laureates, members of the Hvar Popular Theatre were assigned to participate in the opening ceremony, and, as part of their performance, the troop intended to display the Croatian flag. However, instead of using the official flag of the Socialist Republic of Croatia – consisting of three equal size, horizontal stripes in colours red, white and blue (the traditional national Tricolour, or in Croatian: *trobojnica*), and the red star in the middle (as the communist symbol) – the troop intended to use the *trobojnica* without the red star. The available records do not explain the detailed course of events, but from the written and oral sources we know that the

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<sup>664</sup> Tonko Maroević points out even more specific focus on the dramatic texts originating from Dalmatian islands, in particular the island of his origin, the island of Hvar. 'Držićev imenjak, Lucićev sugrađanin, Šnajderov vršnjak' [The Namesake of Držić, Fellow Citizen of Lucić, Coeva of Šnajder] in *Marin Carić*, ed. by Hrvoje Ivanković (Zagreb: Hrvatski centar ITI, Zagrebačko gradsko kazalište Komedija, 2011).

attempt to display the controversial flag did not succeed,<sup>665</sup> as someone stopped the troop from displaying it on the stage during the opening ceremony. After this event, the troop was accused of nationalism by the media, and members of the group began to fear political persecution.<sup>666</sup>

The reasons for wanting to display the mentioned flag are still not entirely clear. In the midst of the controversy the members denied having nationalist sentiments (their public statement, however, had not been published by the media), while even the recent interviews with the members who participated in the 1971 performance do not indicate nationalist motivation.<sup>667</sup> For the purpose of this research, I carried out an interview with the then-secretary of the troop who did not put large emphasis on the political dimension of the controversial event, and explained their action more in terms of artistic provocation than an ideology. However, even if this was true, it is easy to see why, in the aftermath of the Croatian Spring, the authorities were less tolerant of provocations which concerned issues of religious or national character. Faced with political pressures and fear of persecution, in 1972 the members of the group decided to disband, which marked a temporary break in the Hvar Popular Theatre staging of the *Plays of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*. I suggest that this also represents the end of the first phase of performance of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* by the Hvar Popular Theatre.

After finishing their studies, the members of the group returned to Hvar and re-established the theatre group. However, given their rebellious history, they decided to form a theatrical section of the already existing cultural institution, the Cultural Centre Dr. Orest Žunković, which was ideologically acceptable to the regime. Yugoslavia largely promoted the development of culture through the cultural centres and youth centres following the French model developed by André Malraux. Even the smallest town or village had a cultural centre.<sup>668</sup> By becoming a part of one such

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<sup>665</sup> Milan Lakoš, 'Poslanica pokojnomu Rinkotu' [An Epistle to the Departed Rinko], in *Marin Carić*, pp. 85-94 (p. 88), Fiamengo, 417., RESPONDENT 3.

<sup>666</sup> According to Lakoš, the accusation was published in *Vjesnik* on 18/01/1972, p. 88.

<sup>667</sup> Lakoš, p. 88.

<sup>668</sup> Dea Vidović, Ana Žuvela, Davor Mišković, 'Sudioničko upravljanje u kulturi u Republici Hrvatskoj' [Participatory Governance in Culture in the Republic of Croatia], in *Uradimo zajedno. Prakse i tendencije sudioničkoga upravljanja u kulturi u Republici Hrvatskoj* [Do it Together. Practices and Tendencies of Participatory

centre, KUD Dr. Orest Žunković, the group fitted into the image of the state's cultural policy promoted by the regime. Within the new context the troop was focused on other genres such as comedies, rather than saints' plays, so the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* remained inactive until 1984 when it was brought back when the director Carić decided to do a new adaptation of the play. This marks the beginning of the second phase of performance of this staging. In order to explain the division of two phases, or in other words, the repercussions of the innovation inherent in the 1984 adaptation, it is necessary first to elaborate on the original staging from 1970.

### **Staging of the Plays**

When Carić first directed the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*, one of his goals was to demonstrate for his audience how the original medieval and early modern play might have been staged. Given that this staging emerged from the student circle, it can be regarded as a part of the European trend of university drama which was shaped in the 1960s and 70s, 'fuelled on the large degree of academic experiment and research'.<sup>669</sup> In Carić's staging this was manifested in several ways.<sup>670</sup> Firstly, through costumes, as the costumes which the actors wore resembled the tunics of historical confraternities. In the second section of the thesis, I have elaborated in more detail on how the medieval drama in Dalmatia was likely performed by the members of confraternities who were obliged to wear confraternity tunics in cases of public activity and for devotional practices. Since the performance of the saint play was considered as such, Carić followed this convention. Secondly, the director's intention to stage the play as an authentic representation of the play as it was staged in the past, considers the dramatization of the stage directions. In the original staging from 1970, the performers pronounced aloud the stage directions, which corresponded with how the scholarship agrees that the historical performances took place.<sup>671</sup> This

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Governance in Culture in the Republic of Croatia] (Zagreb: Zaklada Kultura Nova, 2018), pp. 44-89 (p. 69).

<sup>669</sup> *Modern Mysteries* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), p. 26.

<sup>670</sup> Based on the writing of Fiamengo, pp. 414-15 and the descriptions of RESPONDENT 3 and RESPONDENT 4 in the interviews.

<sup>671</sup> See Boris Senker, 'The Stage Directions in Medieval Drama, from the Theatre Studies Perspective' [Didaskalije u srednjovjekovnoj drami s teatrološkog aspekta], *Dani hvarskog kazališta*, 2 (1985), 426-51.

resembled the staging of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* directed by Marko Fotez at the Split Summer Festival in 1968, which I analysed in the first case study. Reading stage directions on stage resembled the late medieval and early modern practice, when performers read the stage directions aloud to depict the context in which the action took place. This practice was used as a replacement of the grandiose *mise-en-scène* and rich props which were not available to the performing community, as I have discussed it in the second part of my thesis. Thirdly, in the 1970 staging, the staging of miracles and torments was done by using symbolic gestures instead of elaborate props. This again was intended to imitate the supposedly ‘poor’ staging conditions in which the historical staging in late medieval and early modern Hvar took place.

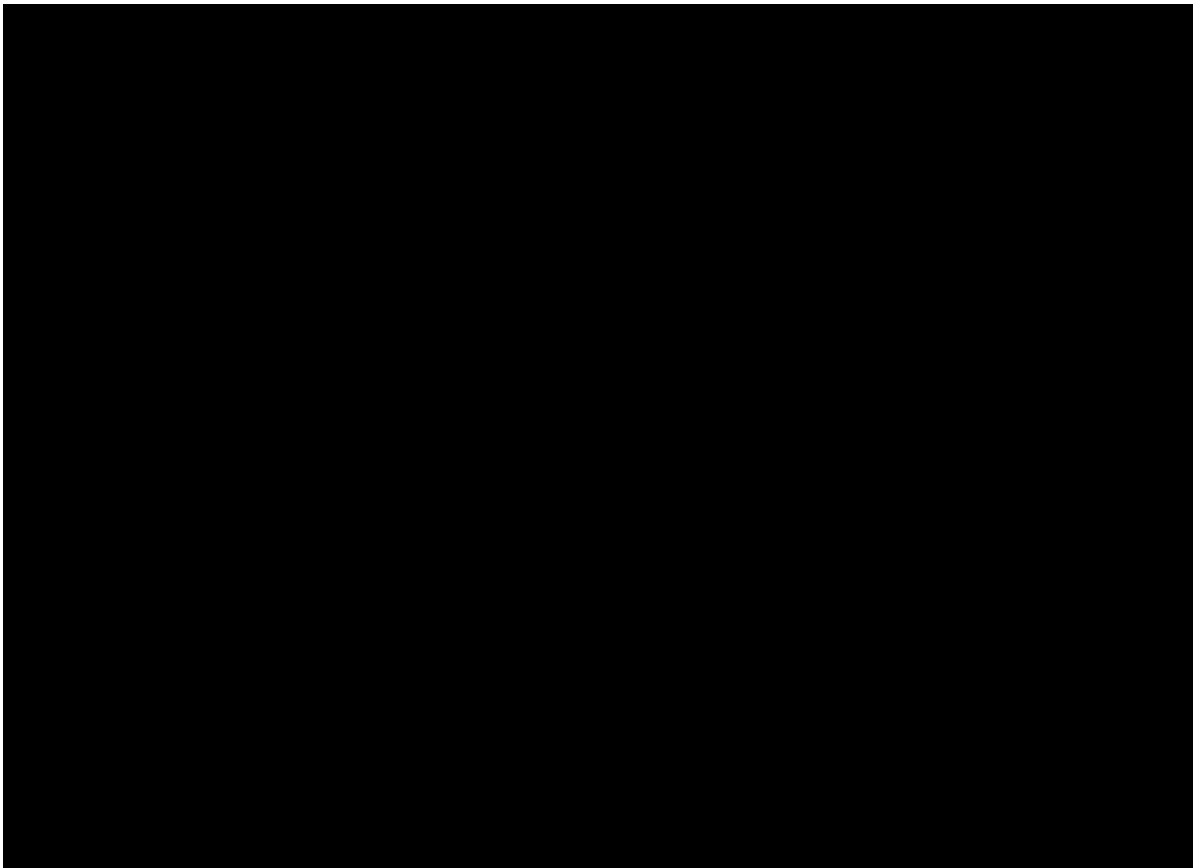


Figure 21 *The Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*. Photo from the premiere in Hvar, July 1970. The photo was published in the booklet which accompanied the tour of the Hvar Popular Theatre in 2010.

The described features were relevant for the first phase of staging of the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*, from 1970 until the group ceased its activities in 1972. The question which arises is how Carić’s new adaptation from

1984 differs from his original adaptation from 1970? We can see that the original production from 1972 was designed to look as closely possible to what we could imagine the early modern performance looked and sounded like. However, this staging was still not considered as a re-enactment, as defined as a ‘practice of re-playing or re-doing a precedent event, artwork, or act’.<sup>672</sup> Rather it was understood not as the ‘directorial interpretation’ or re-vision of performance, from a ‘critical direction, a different temporal angle’.<sup>673</sup>

The new adaptation from 1984 aimed to provide a more accurate presentation of the historical performance. This was epitomised by the decision to exclude female actors, and turn the staging into an all-male play. According to my respondents from Hvar, who were involved in performing the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* from the first days, women were at first naturally involved since they were part of the theatrical group. Hence, they played female roles and the role of the angel.<sup>674</sup> However, my respondent argues, ‘in 1984 Marin [Carić, the director] contemplated this issue, and concluded that it does not make sense to have women on stage, as this simply does not reflect the historical staging. Especially in the context of our confraternities! Then we decided, that all roles should be played by men and the role of angels should be given to adolescents’.<sup>675</sup> In the view of one of my respondents, this effectively changed the staging: ‘With this change we had returned to the origins; we have enacted the history as it had once been’.<sup>676</sup> This was also recognized by the critics. One of them, Jakša Fiamengo, wrote about the 1984 adaptation in these words: ‘The people of Hvar [referring to the amateurs from Hvar] have never been as close to themselves as now when they spoke in the voice of their ancestors in the rustic and authentic way’.<sup>677</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 2.

<sup>673</sup> Schneider, cites Adrienne Rich’s term ‘re-vision’, which was originally termed to study textual artefacts, and, she argues, that ‘if coupled with regesture, re-affect, re-sensation – might be applicable to performances or enactments’. Schneider, *Performing Remains*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>674</sup> RESPONDENT 3

<sup>675</sup> RESPONDENT 4

<sup>676</sup> RESPONDENT 3

<sup>677</sup> Cited in Mira Muhoberac, ‘Marin Carić i Hvarsko Pučko Kazalište’ [Marin Carić and the Hvar Popular Theatre] in *Marin Carić* p. 185.



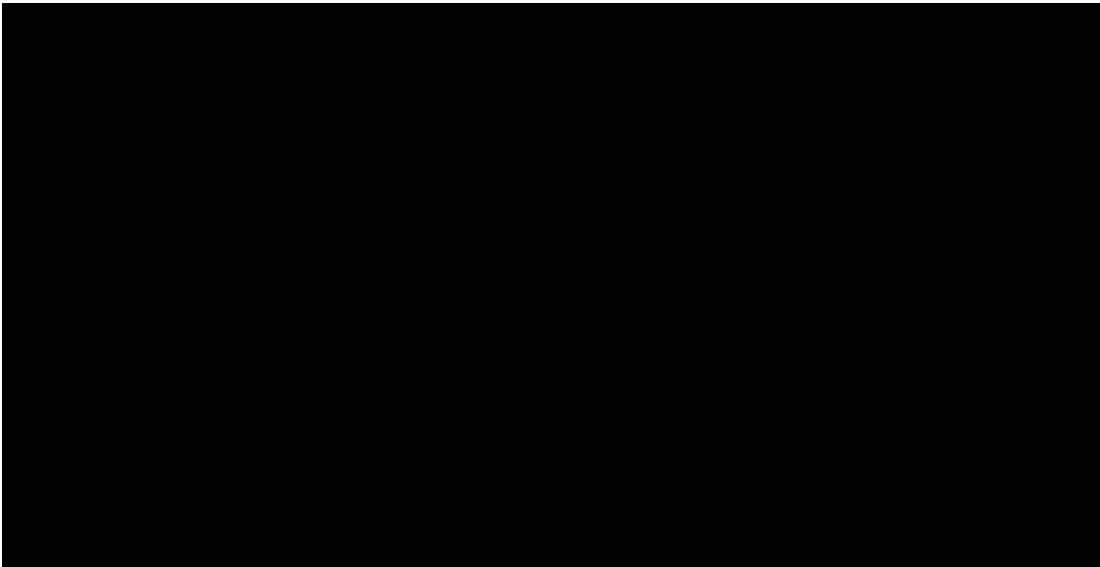


Figure 22 The performers are getting ready for the performance in Brusje 1994. *The Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*. The photo was published in the booklet which accompanied the tour of the Hvar Popular Theatre in 2016.

This shift between the first and the second phase of performance of the play resonates in an interesting way with the differences between the first and the second wave of contemporary revivals of the saints' plays. During the first wave of contemporary interest for the saints' plays in the late-1960s and the beginning of the 1970s the plays were performed as a product of curiosity for history of theatre. As was pointed out in the scholarship, but also stressed by the festival authorities in which the plays took place, the interest was didactical which is why in many cases scholars were involved in the staging.<sup>678</sup> As argued above, in doing so the professional theatres of Yugoslavia followed the European trends from the second part of the twentieth century in the staging of medieval plays.<sup>679</sup> Normington identifies three main reasons for the performance of medieval dramatic genres today: 'the potential to challenge dominant

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<sup>678</sup> Dubrovnik Summer Festival 1968, booklet. Split Summer Festival 1968, booklet. Sanja Nikčević, *Što je nama hrvatska drama danas*, p. 47.

<sup>679</sup> Normington argues in the case of England, that '[t]he development of heritage of performing medieval drama was shaped in 1960s and 70s, whereby university drama involving academic engagement with the purpose of discovering how the original plays may have worked' was developed. *Modern Mysteries* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), p. 26. In addition, Normington argues, those years were fruitful for 'theatrically innovative productions' of adaptations of mystery plays including the Living Theatre's production of *The Mysteries* and *Smaller Places, Paradise Now*, Jerzy Grotowski's ensemble piece, as well as Dario Fo's *Mistero buffo*. *Modern Mysteries*, p. 28.

staging methods, the opportunity of the material to allow strong directorial interpretations, and the chance to develop community identity'.<sup>680</sup> It can be argued that, for the first wave of contemporary interest for saints' plays, the first and the second motivations were relevant. The attempt to offer a reconstruction of a part of history was especially emphasized in the context of the summer festivals. In this context, apart from the local audience, the performances attracted tourists who were motivated to capture a nostalgic sense of the history of the place they were visiting.<sup>681</sup>

The first phase of staging of the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* by the amateurs from Hvar fits into this described paradigm. On the one hand, similarly to the 1968 performance from Split which was directed by Fotez, it attempted to reveal how the original plays were staged in the past – putting in the forefront the information about the mode of staging in the middle ages, it emphasized the didactical aspect of performance. At the same time, as we can see from the flag-related scandal, it displayed the potential to act as a political provocation, which makes it similar to the provocative 1968 performance from Dubrovnik.

The second wave was different in the sense that it did not intend so much to offer an insight into the theatrical past, but it was focused on the history of the community (local, regional, or national) to which the theatrical tradition belonged. Theatrical heritage was performed with the intention to establish links between the historical community which was involved in performance and contemporary society. By bridging a several-hundred-year-long gap, it offered the chance for the development of community identity, which is a third reason for staging medieval drama, according to Normington.<sup>682</sup> All of this was in the service of collectivism and nationalism and this is why it is possible to establish a link between this second wave of contemporary performances of the saints' plays and the new phase of performance of the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* which started with the 1984 adaptation in Hvar.

I argue that, with the adaptation of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* from 1984, the amateurs from Hvar tended to re-enact the historical

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<sup>680</sup> Normington, *Modern Mysteries*, p. 23.

<sup>681</sup> Similarly driven, the contemporary staging of mystery plays cycle in York are 'an unavoidable part of a commodified heritage industry'. Beckwith, *Signifying God*, pp. 12-16.

<sup>682</sup> Normington, *Modern Mysteries*, p. 23.

performance, to replay an artistic act from the past,<sup>683</sup> by putting a special emphasis on those who performed, meaning the community. Not only did the new adaptation involve an accurate representation of the structural status of those who performed the plays in the past (the men from the island), but it also involved the other layers of community in the performance, by including the youngest members of the society to perform the roles of angels and children. With this the performance became what could be characterized as a community play according to the definition of Helen Nicholson, who argues that community plays involve ‘participation of community members in creating a piece of theatre which has special resonance for the community’.<sup>684</sup> The performance was no longer just a product of the interest of a group of students in theatre and heritage, but it started serving a similar purpose as the above-explained second wave of the revival: linking the performance with the past of the community and contributing to the building of the nationalistic narrative. Another feature which links this phase of performance of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* with the second wave of revival lies in the fact that, after the 1984 adaptation, the play was frequently performed for the Croatian diasporic communities in European, as well as South American countries, which was, as we have seen, typical for the second wave of interest in saints’ plays.

It could be said that the performances of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* by the amateurs from Hvar coexisted with the first and the second waves of interest for saints’ plays and fitted into both trends. The emergence of the staging temporally corresponds with the first wave, while after the adaptation from 1984 it became compatible with the ideology of the second wave. In this sense it is especially interesting to see that not only can a genre serve as a source of dissemination of different ideological messages, which we could see in the shift from the first to the second wave of contemporary revival, but this can be done through a single play; just as the *Play of the Life and Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* from 1970 served a different purpose from the one adapted in 1984. However, in this case study I analyse the

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<sup>683</sup> Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p. 2.

<sup>684</sup> It is also important to say that participating in the play can take place over the whole life-course of an individual. As confirmed by my respondents in the history of the Hvar Popular Theatre there are examples of performers who entered the group as children performing the role of an Angel, or one of the Christians’ children, and as they aged, they took over different roles. That is how the performance is further embedded in the community.

performances of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* from Hvar in the context of the third wave of political turmoil, and I will argue that amateur theatrical performances are the new mode of performance of national identity, especially reinforced in the context of the intense activity of the Catholic Church and Croatian Church-related organisations, which has been termed the ‘conservative revolution’.

### **Theatrical Amateurism and the Power of its Affective Ties**

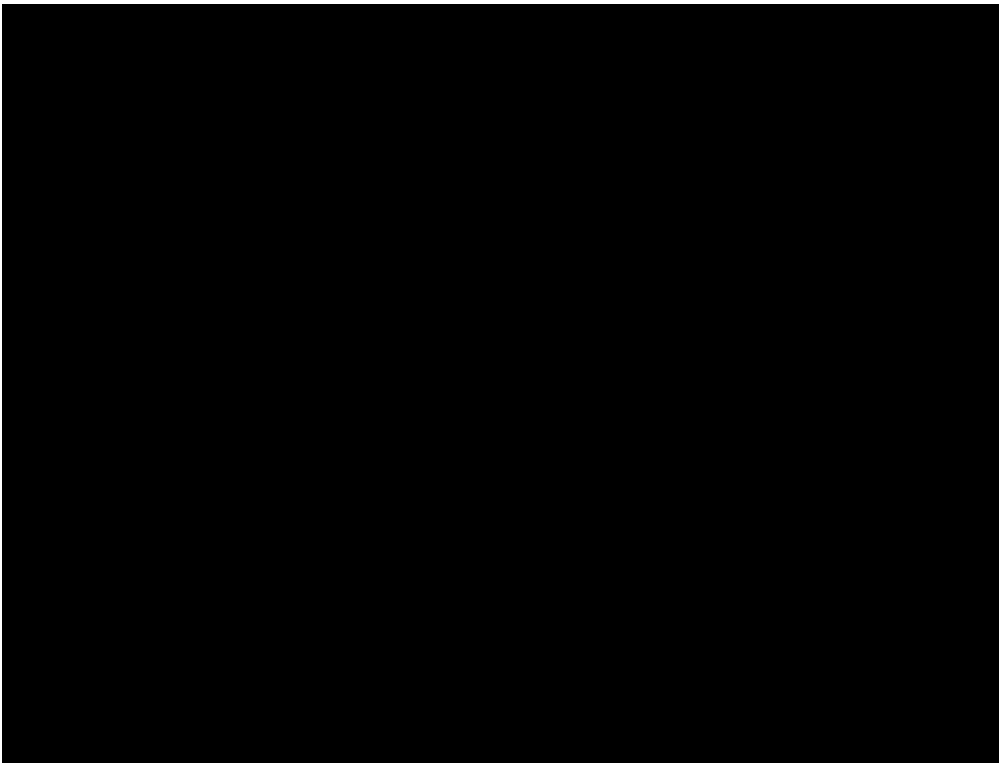
As I mentioned above, for decades the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* appeared mostly in low-scale theatrical events. Similarly to the second wave performances, the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* was shown in parish churches and other atypical theatrical venues such as school auditoria. Hence, the show existed on the margins of mainstream culture.<sup>685</sup> However, its marginal position began to change in the 2010s, with performances at high-profile events, and followed by increased media coverage, culminating in 2016 with performance at the Split Summer Festival, one of seven festivals in Croatia designated as ‘the national festival’ and aimed at showcasing Croatian national culture.<sup>686</sup> Given the fact that the Hvar Popular Theatre is an amateur group, the invitation to appear at the Festival represented a sign of high recognition. Why did their play – which had been performed for decades in provincial churches and school auditoria – in the last decade achieved a breakthrough in the mainstream culture? I analyse this question in this section along with the affective ties which these performances created.

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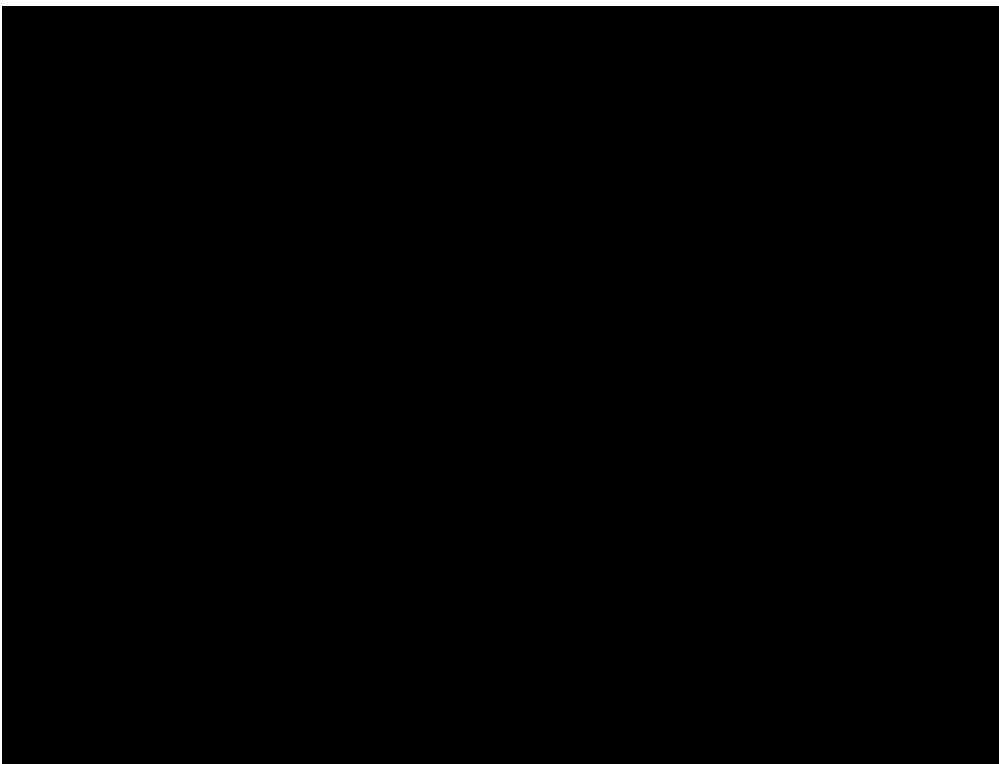
<sup>685</sup> Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre* (Houndmills, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 10.

<sup>686</sup> Apart from appearing in the traditional mainstream media such as the Croatian Radio Television, Slobodna Dalmacija, Novi list, Jutranji list, the trend includes media coverage by the newly emerging internet portals which can be ideologically associated with right-wing thought.

The status of the national festival implies stability through state financing, as well as responsibility to showcase Croatian national culture, and an active role in cultural diplomacy. For more on the status of the Croatian national festivals see Ana Žuvela, ‘The Dialectics of Cultural Diplomacy. Example of Dubrovnik Summer Festival’, in *Cultural Diplomacy: Arts, Festivals and Geopolitics* ed. Milena Dragičević Šešić et al (Belgrade: Culture Desk Serbia, 2017), 173-84.



*Figure 23 The performance of the Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr in the context of the reopening of the seventeenth-century Hvar Theatre after the renovation. May, 2019.*



*Figure 24 The performance of the Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr in the context of the reopening of the seventeenth-century Hvar Theatre after the renovation. May, 2019.*

In the previous sections, language, religion, and martyr-plots were explained as crucial elements for establishing a referential relation between the genre of saints' plays and the idea of nation, which is not surprising given that those elements belong to the set of shared cultural values on which nationhood is usually based.<sup>687</sup> However, as Hurley argues, performing arts also 'hold open the possibility of a strong emotional connection that is substantially non-referential'.<sup>688</sup> According to her, '[A]rt's "usefulness" to national projects comes not only in its referential capacities but also through its more basic affective linking functionality; feelings produce alliances, identifications, and disidentifications among participants in relation to common objects'.<sup>689</sup> The benefit of this perspective, for the theatre and performance researchers concerned with the national performance, according to Hurley, lies in the fact it allows them to 'consider how performances that do not signify as national come to matter as such nonetheless'.<sup>690</sup> On the grounds of Hurley's observation, I argue that the key for answering the question why an amateur performance, which for decades existed on the margins, achieved the status of the national performance, lies in the potential of that performance to create strong affective ties between the members of the audiences and its content. This potential has been, as, I demonstrate further in my analysis, (mis)used in the media to frame this performance as a form nationally desirable theatre. I support my argument with excerpts from my fieldwork diary of the performance which took place in Velo Grablje in May 2019:<sup>691</sup>

So far, this performance made the strongest impression on me. Again, I felt goose-bumps just as the entrance song started. The song was strong, powerful, and overwhelming. I was again surprised with my own reaction to repeating the refrain of the exit song. This somehow felt uncomfortable.

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<sup>687</sup> Krueger, "It's Just Changed Color (p. 34).

<sup>688</sup> Hurley, *National Performance*, p. 29.

<sup>689</sup> Hurley, *National Performance*, p. 29.

<sup>690</sup> Hurley, *National Performance*, p. 29.

<sup>691</sup> Since 2016, I have seen the Hvar Popular Theatre performing the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* three times on three different occasions. The first occasion pertains to the indoor church performance, which took place in Varaždin in November 2016. The other two performances took place in Hvar, in May 2019, first in the high-profile event, during the opening of the reconstructed Hvar theatre, and second in the fields of Velo Grablje in front of a small thirteenth-century church.

Interestingly, some other participants with whom I talked after the performance shared with me a similar impression, emphasizing how the song stuck in their memory.<sup>692</sup>

The described interaction with the performance can be characterized as a direct bodily experience. This is crucial for Hurley's definition of affects.<sup>693</sup> The uncertainty in my recognition of those affects also confirms that this experience exceeded semiosis.

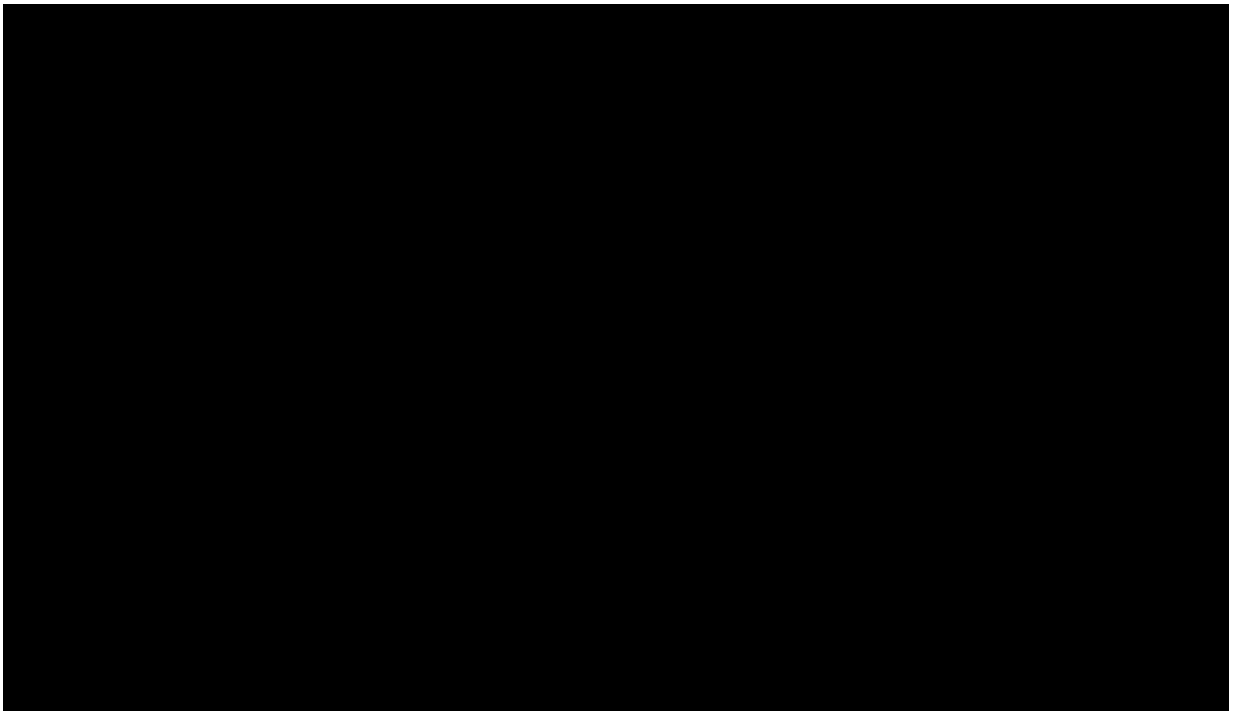


Figure 25 *The Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr in Velo Grablje, May 2019.*

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<sup>692</sup> Fieldwork diary, May 2019.

<sup>693</sup> Erin Hurley, *Theatre & Feeling* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p-14-18.

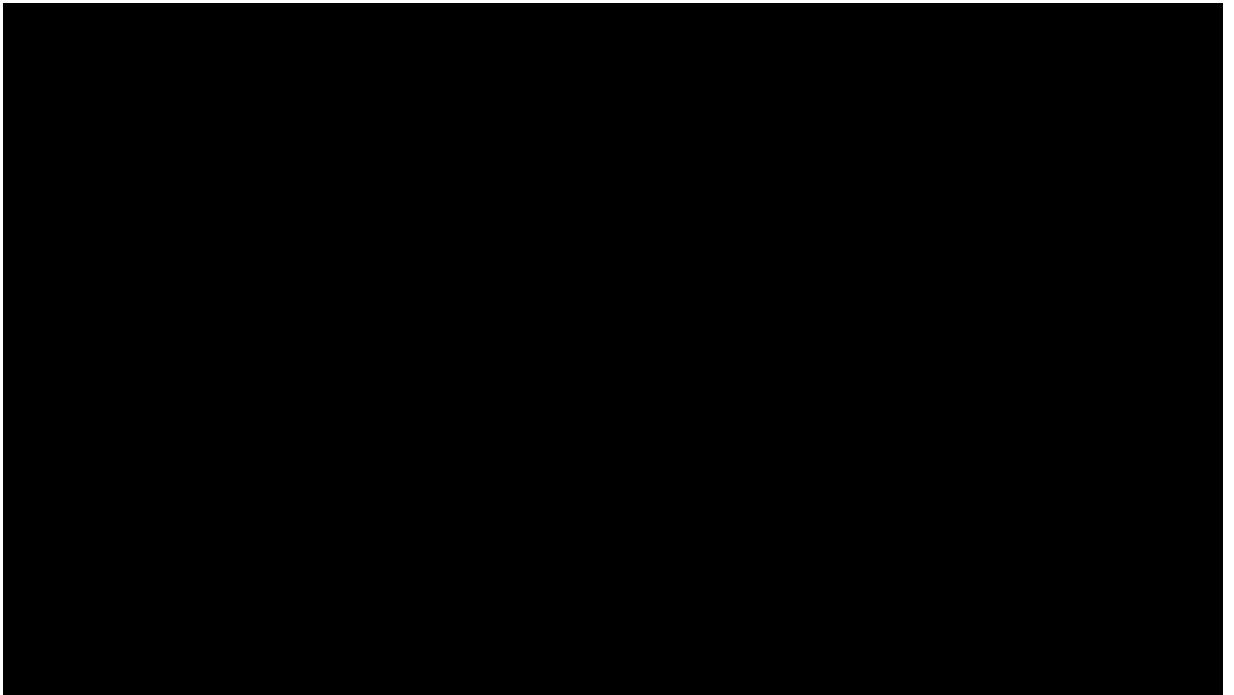


Figure 26 *Velo Grablje*, May 2019.

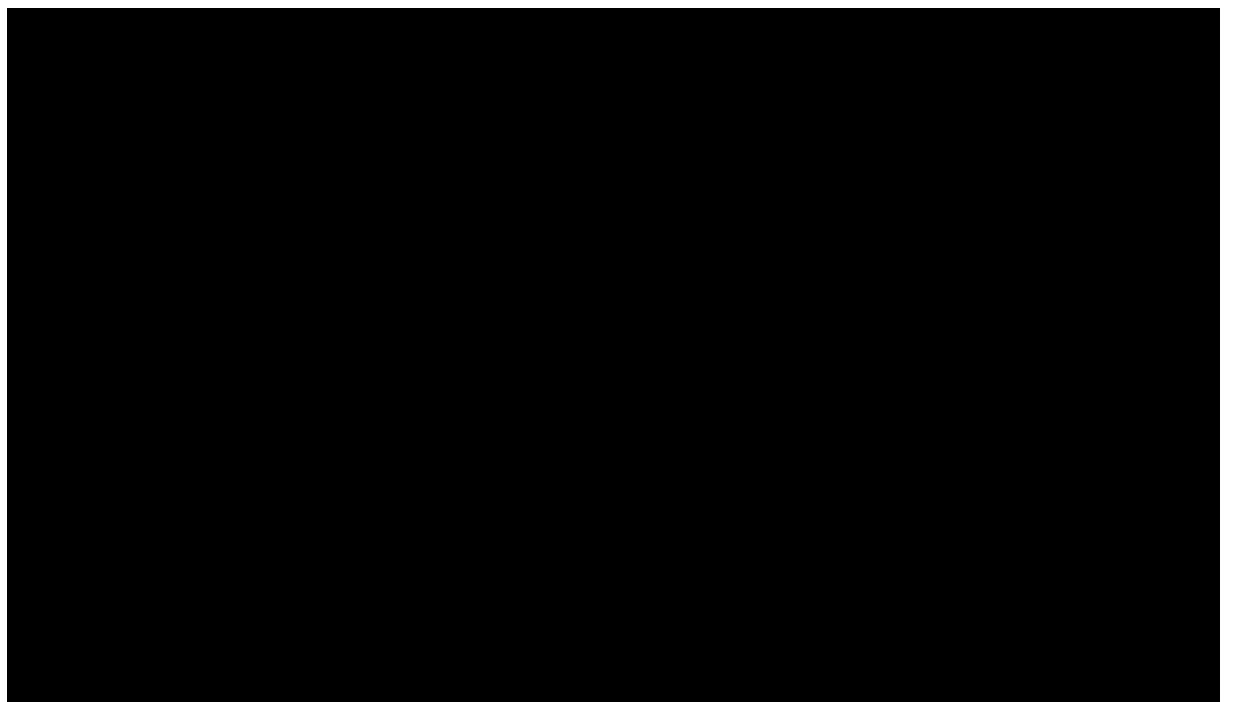


Figure 27 *Velo Grablje*. The performers in interaction during the performance while they are not 'on stage'. May 2019.

Hurley argues that affects which emerge from the interaction with performance can form different types of alliances.<sup>694</sup> In the performance of the *Play of the Life of*

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<sup>694</sup> Hurley, *National Performance*, p. 29.



*Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* from Hvar, I identify two such binding mechanisms. The first one derives from the musicality of the performance. According to Hurley, music, like affects ‘exceeds semiosis’ and encourages affective reaction.<sup>695</sup> In the case of the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*, as indicated in my diary, the singing of the performers at the beginning of the play, however surprising and uncomfortable, was crucial for my immersion in performance. At the same time the ending song left a long-lasting trace in my memory as well as in the memory of the other members of the audience.

Apart from the singing elements, the melody and authenticity of the spoken dialect is added to the musicality of the performance. As it is also noted in my diary: *during the performance I was less focused in the action, I was driven by the sound of their words, and the melody of the language.*<sup>696</sup> The melody of the language therefore played an important role in the invocation of my affects. There is no doubt that language can be considered as triggering ‘representation labours’ in relation to Croatian nation-ness. By ‘representational labours’ I refer to what Hurley defines as ‘representations that have a referential relation to an existing (if variable) idea of nation’.<sup>697</sup> This has already been discussed in the analysis of the first and the second waves of the revival of saints’ plays, where the linguistic aspect was one of the main signifiers of the play’ Croatian identity. However, here I want to point out the affective aspect of the language: the fact that the language is not only a symbolic signifier, but also an affective signifier. In the case of performance from Hvar, the dialect represents an important element in emergence of the affective alliances, even more because all the performers are originally from Hvar and speak the dialect as their mother tongue and as a part of their everyday lives. This was nicely illustrated in one of my interviews in which my respondent talked about the groups’ attitude towards the play in this way:

I think I can tell you what is so specific about the Hvar Popular Theatre. We feel and we love our čakavian dialect, this our Hvar idiom, mixed with Italian. We adore it! We are so happy when we can talk in it, when we can play it. That feeling is always present. For this reason, each performance

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<sup>695</sup> Hurley, *National Performance*, p. 148.

<sup>696</sup> Fieldwork diary, May 2019.

<sup>697</sup> *National Performance*, p. 3.

for us is so special. We feel the text, it lives with us, and that is because of the language, and the audience feels that.<sup>698</sup>

The quotation of my respondent suggests that in interaction with performance, the performers' share the same emotional repertoires with the members of the audience.

The second binding mechanism important for the establishment of affective alliances pertains to the feeling of equivalence between the audience and the performers, thanks to the amateur status of the latter. In the professional theatre productions, there is a stark distinction between the actors who are on stage and spectators who sit in the auditorium. However, in amateur performances, such as this one, the status of both groups is not as clear-cut. Even though the amateur performers still perform, while the spectators have a less engaging role, in the amateur shows the two groups are less divided and there is a higher sense of cohesion between them. This is even more so in the case of community theatre, where the proximity between two groups 'rests on the fact that many of the people who make up the audiences are family members, neighbours, friends, and work colleagues' as is argued by Nadine Holdsworth, Jane Milling and Helen Nicholson.<sup>699</sup> The same authors point out that

audience members who may not have a personal investment, but who are devoted supporters of local theatre contribute to an often very distinctive viewing experience of insiders willing on and celebrating the achievements of the cast and crew, which we think is partially tied up in their support for 'real' people engaged in sustained unpaid creative labour.<sup>700</sup>

This is partially the case in the Folk Theatre from Hvar, which is deeply embedded in the local community where the performance which I attended took place. (However, this is not the sole explanation, as the majority of the audience who visited the performance with me were foreigners!) I exemplify this with a field note from the performance:

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<sup>698</sup> RESPONDENT 3.

<sup>699</sup> Nadine Holdsworth, Jane Milling, and Helen Nicholson, 'Theatre, Performance, and the Amateur Turn', *Journal Contemporary Theatre Review*, 27 (2017), 4-17 (12).

<sup>700</sup> Holdsworth, Milling and Nicholson, 12.

The youngest actor who played the role of the angel again provoked strong reactions from the audience. His voice broke when he was telling the prologue. I have noticed warm reactions from the members of the audience, they were smiling as if they were encouraging his performance as they did, a night before when a boy made a mistake.

It is expected from the amateur performers to make more mistakes during their performances. However, instead of judgement, in my experience as a member of the audience, I have noticed encouragement. This generated the sense of cohesion between the audience and the performers. As I noted in my ethnographic diary, on the occasions when the performers made mistakes, I have exchanged looks with other members of the audience, where I and the other spectators expressed sympathetic reactions. A woman who sat beside me whispered: ‘Oh how sweet they are!’; while I expressed my agreement by nodding and smiling at her. The mistakes of the performers therefore did not cause the audience to express disapproval, criticism, or embarrassment. On the contrary, as I noticed: *Everyone seems immersed in the performance. I got the impression as if they had observed it with high respect, maybe with pride?*<sup>701</sup>

The amateur status of the show is also important with regard to the division of the space in which the performers operate. The professional theatres are divided between the back stage and the front stage. As theorized by Erving Goffman, this reflects the division between the private and public domain.<sup>702</sup> Thus, while private relations, the relations of encouragement, and emotional connection belong to the former, the latter is characterized by professional relationships. The behaviour of the performers is strongly determined by their presence in the respective spaces. When they are on the front stage, they take the role of their character and are determined solely by the intradiegetic relations with other characters, not with the persons who embody the characters; when they are back stage, they are who they ‘really’ are. The performance of the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* on Hvar is marked by the lack of this spatial division, and the appearance of the private relations on the stage:

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<sup>701</sup> Fieldwork diary, May 2019.

<sup>702</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London : Penguin, 1990).

I have noticed many moments when the performers' private gestures 'slipped' into performance. This included the performers helping each other to adjust the tunics (costumes); encouragingly patting each other, talking to each other. In addition, since they performed in an open space, after leaving 'the performance space' they were still exposed to the view of the members of the audience. Their private behaviour, their background conversations seemed to me as if they were staged, as that was a part of the 'extra' performance.<sup>703</sup>

It is difficult to tell if my observation was correct – whether those 'extra' gestures and relations were in fact staged, or the moments of private behaviour slipped into performance. What matters for my analysis is that such public manifestations of their private relations enhanced the sense of cohesion with the audience. In the eyes of the audience, the performers ceased to be solely the carriers of their characters, but people like them, who needed help with adjusting clothing for their performance (just as the spectators perhaps needed help when putting the clothes on for their night out in the theatre!), and people who are embedded in their community, rather than just characters embedded in the web of intradiegetic relations. The audience therefore does not see the performers as one of 'them', but is rather inclined to see them as one of 'us'.

As I have tried to demonstrate, thanks to the affects which this amateur performance triggers, it can be characterised as a highly immersive performance which fosters a strong sense of collectivity. Within a heterogeneously-composed audience, this affective potential could have been realized in many different ways, resulting with different meanings because, as Hurley points out, affect 'attaches itself to unlikely things and moves in unanticipated directions; it can move you to love the wrong person, for example, or feel part of a national collectivity that excludes you by definition (if you are an illegal immigrant, for instance)'.<sup>704</sup> (Hence, we could imagine the members of the audience that usually do not establish the relationship with the idea of nation through the principles of exclusion to connect themselves with the content of the play.) As a last part of my argument I will demonstrate how this potential has been (mis)used by the media in the recent Croatian context.

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<sup>703</sup> Fieldwork diary, May 2019.

<sup>704</sup> Hurley, p. 149.

## Politics and Poetics

In the introductory subsections I have indicated that the political scene in Croatia in the 2010s has been marked by the intense activity of the Church and Church-related civic initiatives, which some commentators even called the ‘conservative revolution’. Why is this important for understanding the peculiar position of the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* from Hvar in contemporary Croatian society? In my analysis I argue that there are several overlapping points between the two.

The first aspect of the ‘conservative revolution’ pertains to the attempt of the Church related organizations to present their work as a result of bottom up processes and grass-root organising, rather than being organized and controlled by the mainstream social institutions, such as the political parties.<sup>705</sup> The Hvar Popular Theatre, as an amateur community theatre troupe, fits into the image of a self-organizing initiative. The next feature pertains to the usage of affects. In the right-wing media campaigns, the mentioned initiatives and organizations often use emotions as the source of mobilization.<sup>706</sup> This first and foremost positive, warm emotions associated with family and tight-knit groups, even in the case of campaigns which seek to achieve exclusion and repression (e.g. campaigns against women’s reproductive rights and LGTB rights).<sup>707</sup> Again, there is a clear parallel to the use of affects in the performance of the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*. Finally, the ‘conservative revolution’ seeks to fuse political-territorial Croatian identity with religious, Catholic identity. Of course, the Catholic Church has always been an important ally of Croatian political elites and had an important role in creation and reproduction of Croatian national identity. However, in the most recent years there

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<sup>705</sup> For more on how the initiatives are organized see Petričušić, Čehulić and Čepo, p. 67. For a comparative approach to the right-wing organizations in Slovenia and Croatia see interview with Lev Centrih in *Novosti*, <https://www.portalnovosti.com/lev-centrih-desniari-su-preuzeli-civilno-drutvo> accessed on 20/09/2019.

<sup>706</sup> See Petričušić, Čehulić and Čepo, pp. 75-76.

<sup>707</sup> For more on these campaigns see Petričušić, Čehulić and Čepo and Kuhar, ‘Gaining Political Power’, and Kuhar, ‘Playing with Science’. See also, Maja Gergorić, ‘Shiny Happy People Laughing: The Far-Right’s Mobilization of Emotions Through Visual Repertoires of the March for Life’, conference paper presented at the ECPR General Conference, August, 2020.

was a shift in power relations, whereby the Catholic Church has tried to become an active political actor, rather than only an instrument of the political elites.

The new socially-conservative forces have provided an infrastructure for amateur theatre staging with a suitable ideological message. I want to suggest that, thanks to the affective ties which performances of the *Play of the Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* triggers this production fits into an image of the national theatre as it should be according to those conservative forces; ordinary, close to people, establishing continuity with an ‘imagined homogeneous national, regional, and/or religious’ audience, to which saints’ plays were performed in past.<sup>708</sup> According to Robert Sturges this kind of linking with the past through contemporary performances of medieval genres is highly problematic because, ‘far from forming the basis for community, the notion of identity created by those plays actually excludes large numbers of the modern, multicultural, often secular audience’.<sup>709</sup>

Since 2016 the number of the performances increased, as well as the reporting about them from the right-wing media portals of more recent origin including *narod.hr*, *bitno.net*, *laudato* (a portal and a television broadcaster). One of the important features of those media is their engagement in the creation of the new national canon which would be ideologically compatible with the values which the centres of political power propagate. One of the authors who often appears in those media, author and teatrologist Sanja Nikčević, shares her experience of seeing a performance of the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*:

I feared for those characters, I felt compassion with them, I supported them, I felt them emotionally. For me that performance confirmed something important, it confirmed that the theatre can be different from that which I saw on the big theatrical scenes, the theatre which was cold and distant, and which didn’t touch my feelings. While watching the people of Hvar performing, I realized that the theatre can be warm, interesting, smart, and spiritual.<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>708</sup> Sturges.

<sup>709</sup> Sturges, p. 12.

<sup>710</sup> The text by Sanja Nikčević published on the portal *bitno.net*, <https://www.bitno.net/kolumne/zivot-pod-reflektorima-vjere/hvarski-lovrinac-sanja-nikcevic/> accessed on 20/09/2019.

From this quotation it can be noted that the amateurism is proposed as a means of overcoming the distance between the contemporary audience and theatre. However, amateurism is not a sufficient criterion, as Nikčević further suggests:

The naturalness of the play which immerses the audience, the naturalness of the private actor who performs what he believes in, was discovered by the end of the twentieth century by European theatre directors as well as by some Croatian directors (Bobo Jelčić). However, without the spiritual dimension which is rooted in the *Play of the Life and Death of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr*, all those ‘authentic’ lives of the actors or the documentary theatre is empty and serves a single usage only.<sup>711</sup>

As is suggested from the quotation, the amateurism *per se* is not sufficient for a performance to be ideologically appropriate. What is needed in addition to amateurism is the rootedness of the play in the Christian faith.

The praise of spirituality and the affectional warmth is then contrasted to the mainstream contemporary theatre in Croatia which is characterized as ‘cold and distant’. What is it that Nikčević is in fact trying to criticize? As Nikčević has argued elsewhere, contemporary Croatian theatre, ‘is for the most part violent, shocking and noncommunicative’, and under the influence of the European theatre.<sup>712</sup> One of the targets of her critique is a theatre director Oliver Frlić, one of the most prominent Croatian theatre directors. Known widely for staging provocative content, mostly as European co-productions, portraying ‘a dystopic, cynical picture of European democracy under neoliberalism’ he is at the same time representatives of the poetics against which Nikčević is arguing.<sup>713</sup> For instance, as an open proponent of secularism and left-liberal social values, as well as a staunch critic of nationalistic and xenophobic tendencies, in his work he often incorporates religious symbols and rituals to subvert

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<sup>711</sup> <https://www.bitno.net/kolumne/zivot-pod-reflektorima-vjere/hvarski-lovrinac-sanja-nikcevic/>.

<sup>712</sup> Sanja Nikčević is known for the book in which she strongly criticizes ‘in-yer-face theatre’ and its influence on Croatian theatrical trends. *Nova europska drama ili velika obmana* [New European Drama or the Great Delusion] (Zagreb, Meandar, 2005).

<sup>713</sup> Silvija Jestrović, ‘Bringing the left back: radical performances of dissent from the remains of ex-Yugoslavia’, *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 39 (2019), 240-55, p. 250.

them with the purpose of criticizing religious-based nationalisms. At first sight Nikčević's critique might be seen only as a rejection of staging poetics based on aesthetical criteria. However, I argue that the stake of this discussion goes beyond the aesthetics and revolves around ideological disagreements. While Frlić's work incorporates the features of the contemporary theatre which Nikčević is criticizing – it is distanced, shocking, violent, under the influence of contemporary trends in European theatre – he is in fact most well-known for his political attitudes and the ideological messages which he disseminates through his performances.<sup>714</sup>

I argue that, in this double rejection (of politics and aesthetics), the critique of aesthetics is only a tool in the battle for the political stake. It is not surprising then that Nikčević in her critique writes: 'Everyone in the audience understands the performance, and everyone reacts in the same manner as I did'.<sup>715</sup> In contrast to the aesthetical arguments, in which an argument wins on the basis of better explanation, in the cultural war, which is how this clash can be labelled, it is important to demonstrate that your opinion has the support of the majority. At the same time this hints at the reason why an old medieval genre of saints' plays remains the topic of heated debates, because they, ever since, in the mid-twentieth century they had started being staged in the contemporary context, they remain to be used as a vehicle for Croatia's ideological struggle. This is the topic of the next, and final, subsection below.

### **Saints' Plays and a Founding Myth**

Despite the fact that the saints' plays are a genre of ancient origin, different social and political contexts seem to create a need for their performance. This was the case in the late-1960s just as in the 1990s, and finally this is the case today. Likewise, just as they have preserved their relevance, they have preserved their potential to raise controversies, as well as to be the subject of public polemics, or even of the culture war. But what makes the genre so relevant and timely in the Croatian context? In order

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<sup>714</sup> Nikčević's opinion on Croatian contemporary theatre and post dramatic theatre in general is evident from her article 'Suvremeno kazalište i publika ili od prezira publike do opravdanja njezinog bijega' [Modern Theatre and the Audience or The Audience's Contempt to Justification of Its Escape], *Dani hvarskog kazališta*, 42 (2016), 149-73.

<sup>715</sup> <https://www.bitno.net/kolumne/zivot-pod-reflektorima-vjere/hvarski-lovrinac-sanja-nikcevic/>



to explain this, I will introduce Marvin Carlson's concept of theatre as a memory machine.

According to Carlson, theatre can be regarded as the repository of cultural memory.<sup>716</sup> Many cultures have recognized a close connection between theatre and collective memory: '[t]he founding myths and legends of cultures around the world have been registered in their cultures by the theatrical repetition'.<sup>717</sup> Building on Carlson's work, Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen argues that 'the pre-existing narratives are recognised as they reappear in the theatre, in the form of more or less reworked or rewritten plays'.<sup>718</sup> According to him, these narratives 'affect the reception process by establishing themselves in the present social context of the audience as reflexive and critical references'.<sup>719</sup> The haunted narratives then 'tap into the cultural memory of values, beliefs, and morals, which are reactivated by the performance'.<sup>720</sup> Finally, being deactivated, they help to form society's self-understanding, which is why 'restaging the narratives of the past lends authority to the performances as they are made to "speak" to social and political issues of the present'.<sup>721</sup>

In the case of Croatia, the national founding myth revolves around the War for Independence (1991-1995). As I have already explained, the Croatian War for Independence happened as part of the process of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Croatian declaration of independence: the war started being mythologized as pure, sinless and just, as soon as the war ended. As demonstrated by Michaela Schäuble, one of the most common tropes in public and private discourse in Croatia revolved around a nation 'whose centuries long suffering and subjugation has finally been rewarded' after Croatia achieved independence in the 1990s.<sup>722</sup> Following the work of Carlson and Skjoldager-Nielsen, I argue that this founding myth about the sinless and just war by which the state was won, haunts the genre of saints' plays. As to explain my argument let me remind us here what the genre of the saints' plays is about.

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<sup>716</sup> Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage*, p. 2.

<sup>717</sup> Carlson, *The Haunted Stage*, p. 2.

<sup>718</sup> Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen, *Over the Threshold, Into the World: Experiences of Transcendence in the Context of Staged Events* (Stockholm: Stiftelsen för utgivning av teatervetenskapliga studier, 2018), p. 17.

<sup>719</sup> Skjoldager-Nielsen, p. 17.

<sup>720</sup> Skjoldager-Nielsen, p. 17.

<sup>721</sup> Skjoldager-Nielsen, p. 17.

<sup>722</sup> Michaela Schäuble, *Narrating Victimhood: Gender, Religion and the Making of Place in Post-War Croatia* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), p. 268.

The main story arch is about the martyrdom of a devoted and loyal man or woman who sacrifices his or her life for their religion. However, in their medieval enactments, as I showed in the second part of the thesis, the representation of the martyrs' sacrifices is altered, as religious affiliation is equated with community. In the parochial medieval version, the sacrifice for religion is therefore equated with sacrifice for the good of the community. This modification is the crucial piece of the puzzle which explains the link between saints' plays and the founding myth of the Croatian nation. In the first case study, I have shown that during the first wave of revival in the 1960s and 1970s, the saints' plays were used to promote values of individualism, democracy, anti-authoritarianism and critique of ideological dogmatism. This was possible, on the one hand, since, in his staging, Violić formulated the religious martyrdom as a struggle for ideals and as the resistance to tyrants. In so doing, the concept of martyrdom inherent in the genre is peeled from its medieval meaning. It is formulated through the values of universalism, cosmopolitanism, and the values close to the original idea of Christianity.<sup>723</sup> Fotez, on the other hand, looks at the medieval genre as an historical artefact whose staging informs the audience about the customs from the past. Both approaches are transgressive: they adapt saints' plays by annulling the function which the genre had in the past when it was originally performed and assign the old genre a new function. However, with the second and the third wave of revival of the saints' plays, we witness a regression to the traditional medieval reading of the genre. The tendency to equate martyrdom with sacrifice for the community is in fact what makes the saints' plays ideal candidates for reflecting the founding myth and nationalistic mythology.

Through the contemporary performance of the genre, this haunted narrative offers the audience a chance to celebrate martyrdom. Every time saints' plays are staged in the contemporary context, the topic of sacrificing and suffering is re-actualized. Through the suffering and death of a saint for his or her community, the story of every soldier who gave his/her life in the war is retold, and with each contemporary performance of saints' plays, the war injury of the nation is invoked again. In line with Sara Ahmed's writing, it can be said that with every performance

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<sup>723</sup> See interview with the director, 'Crno-bijelo prikazanje' [Black & White Play], interview led by Feđa Šehović in Božidar Violić, *Lica i sjene. Razgovori i portreti* [Božidar Violić. Face and Shadows. Interviews and Portrayals], ed. by Nives Tomašević (Zagreb, Naklada Ljevak, 2004), 22-28.

the cause of the injury, the war, is ‘repeated and transformed into a fetish object.’<sup>724</sup> The process of transformation included ‘forms of alignment, whereby individuals aligned themselves with the nation as being under attack.’<sup>725</sup> Each performance repeats the process of alignment whereby the nation aligned itself with individuals as having been or being attacked.<sup>726</sup>

As demonstrated in the second case study analysis, the performances promoting the narratives of victimhood, martyrdom, and suffering were encouraged during the war, at the expense of the symbolical exclusion of those who did not fit into the community of the implicit spectators. But the question which arises is: why the saints’ plays are performed even today, twenty years after the end of the war? Several of my respondents emphasised the actuality of the plays:

The play is actual even today, because it is in its essence nothing more than a clash of good and evil.<sup>727</sup>

This is not an ancient text; this is a contemporary text. All the struggles are contained in it. Even today we need to fight for our religion. Even today there are people are not believers and who will give you, like those devils in the plays, the whole world to persuade you to their side. None of that changed.<sup>728</sup>

The *Passion of Saint Margaret* today is even more actual then it was before. Because if we take Margaret as a metaphor of ‘us’ and Olibrius as the one which represents that is opposite of ‘us’, all the obsessions of the contemporary society, all the negative which takes place around us is embedded in the character of Olibrius. All the things that are wrong and that are in opposition to our culture and tradition.<sup>729</sup>

Thus, the element which my respondents had in common is the tendency to use the re-staging of saints plays to share their concern, not only for the society at large, but primarily for their community. True, while in the earlier waves of performance of

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<sup>724</sup> Ahmed, ‘Affective Economies’, p. 129.

<sup>725</sup> Ahmed, ‘Affective Economies’, p. 129.

<sup>726</sup> Ahmed, ‘Affective Economies’, p. 129.

<sup>727</sup> RESPONDENT 3.

<sup>728</sup> RESPONDENT 1.

<sup>729</sup> RESPONDENT 2.

saints' plays it was important to distinguish Croatian identity in relation to the other Yugoslav nations, especially against the nations who were seen as an imminent threat, the contemporary context is significantly different. Yet the saints' plays are not losing their popularity, and I argue that the explanation lies in nationalism which, as a principle of exclusion, always needs to generate new enemies. So who are these enemies?

One of the targets of the nationalist right wing, in Croatia and elsewhere in the New Europe, is the EU, and the fear that greater integration would affect the Croatian sense of national identity. As is demonstrated by Catherine Palmer, already a couple decades ago the European Union started being dominated with debates over issues such as Maastricht and a single currency. Those debates 'have highlighted the strength of feeling among people who consider their national sovereignty to be at risk.'<sup>730</sup> Another source of threat is related to current refugee crisis and fear of Islamisation, which, together with the politics of Multiculturalism, is an obvious threat to ethnic purity. Finally, liberalism as ideology can also be seen as an enemy and a threat to the traditional and the conservative values – which is why the prime minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, coined the term 'illiberal democracy'.<sup>731</sup> This is not to say that saints' plays, their performers, and their audience go against the listed phenomena, but I want to suggest that because the saints' plays are well embedded in the Croatian tradition, and because they have a capability to denote the martyrs and the enemies while at the same time being affectively immersive, they seem to provide the perfect genre for the expression of the resentment discussed here.

To conclude, I argue that the saints' plays can be regarded as an epitome of 'the contemporary right' in Croatia/New Europe. Today, they offer an ideal form to disseminate political paranoia. The political paranoia offers a format in which everyone is set against 'us' and whereby one fights against globalization and inevitable social changes by sticking to the small, provincial, but safe anchor and parochial identities.<sup>732</sup> In this respect the saints' plays are importantly Croatian and East

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<sup>730</sup> Catherine Palmer, 'Tourism and the Symbols of Identity', *Tourism Management*, 20 (1999), 313–21.

<sup>731</sup> In a 2014 speech, after the re-election. See <https://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-25th-balvanyos-summer-free-university-and-student-camp> accessed on 19/09/2019.

<sup>732</sup> See Schäuble, p. 266.

European – the cultural product from the European semi- periphery – but at the same time, it is a product which, by its causes, connects Croatia with the worldwide phenomena leading to Trump’s America, ‘the Brexiting UK’ and, in general, the global turn to the right.

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have examined the genre of saints' plays in the east Adriatic, with special focus on their cultural and socio-political role. Focusing on the performances of martyrdom, I argue that this genre tackles an array of socio-political dimensions, including community, class, gender and national identity. The thesis connects different historical contexts, from the middle ages to the contemporary period, tapping into a historical and geographical area of medieval theatre that has so far remained understudied. This is divided in three chapters: analysis of its emergence, historical performance, and contemporary staging.

The first question which I addressed in my thesis pertains to the geneses of the genre. In addressing this question, I have critically engaged with Croatian theatre historiography. I have demonstrated that the genre of saints' plays remained in a blind spot of Croatian historiography. The reason for the exclusion of the Croatian saints' plays from the studies is firstly related to their belated historical recurrence. Saints' plays in Croatia emerged in the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, which was not aligned with the national literary periodization. I conclude that a chronologically hybrid position seems to have confused historians so much that they have simply left them out of their analyses. Secondly, I explain that the majority of the saints' plays, in their view, failed the test of originality, and therefore could not represent Croatian tradition. In this sense, the genre did not fit into the dominant evolutionary interpretation of the emergence of Croatian medieval drama. According to the evolutionary interpretation, dramatic genres in Croatian medieval culture developed from the genres which previously existed in the tradition. Thirdly, I argue that the plays were also rejected for their lack of aesthetical and cultural value, as products of mere translation. For these reasons, I have argued that the reception of the saints' plays in Croatian theatre history can be labelled 'rejected tradition'.

After a detailed scrutiny of the treatment of the saints' plays in the historiography, I have concluded the 'autonomy hypothesis' is over simplifying and excludes the majority of corpus of saints' plays from the analyses given its origin in Italian source plays. However, I have also challenged that the saints' plays emerged as the mere translation of the Italian source plays. In my analyses I have proven that the transfer of the plays from the western to the eastern coast, according to Linda

Hutcheon's distinction, are not a result of translation but of adaptation. I conclude that the result of the adaptation was transformation of the genre.

The features which distinguish the newly adapted genre from the source genre are interpreted as signs of the ambiguous attitude of the community towards the source genre. On the one hand, due to the themes and ideas transmitted with the plays, which are universal to the Catholic community, the adaptation of a typical Florentine genre was easily facilitated, and the genre was successfully accepted in the community. At the same time, the signals of distortion of some of the most important features of the plays – which ultimately resulted in the hybridization of the genre — can be seen as a sign of resistance to the culture/language which the plays share with the Venetians, the imposed rulers of Dalmatia. These elements can be understood as ideological resistance to the mobility.

After analysing the adaptation of the genre, in the second chapter I have examined the historical performance of the genre. I have based this chapter on the corpus of saints' plays from the island of Hvar and have dedicated a large part of the analysis to the close examination of the social history of the island communities. Why is Hvar an interesting historical case? In the chapter, I explain that, due to theological changes and the influences of classical humanism on art and literature, the popularity of medieval drama in many parts of sixteenth-century Europe began to wane. However, by the end of the sixteenth century, the performances of medieval genres on the island of Hvar were neither discouraged, nor banned, and they were not replaced by newer forms of poetics. I show that the peak of production of the medieval theatrical forms, which almost exclusively thematised the life and martyrdom of the Christian saints, was reached only by the beginning of the seventeenth century. I have proposed that the popularity of the genre can be explained through the two modes by which theatrical performances became socially embedded, the mode of representation and the mode of transmission, with each function represented in one case study analysis.

In the first case study I have analysed the reception of the *Play of Life of Saint Lawrence, the Martyr* in the context of conflict between the noblemen and the commoners. I have demonstrated that both groups had the possibility to use elements from the play to draw legitimation for their struggle, as they identified with Christian characters in their righteous fight for their faith. While the issue of multiple interpretations and competing meanings remain impossible to dissociate from the

wider set of power relations, I concluded that the performances promoted dominant values of community. The second case study, on the other hand, focused on the female saints' plays. In this case, I attempted to demonstrate how the genre of saints' plays was used with a purpose of transmitting the idea of desirable conduct. I have demonstrated that the plays which thematised martyrdom of female virgin saints were recognized as a suitable medium for promoting desirable values in teaching conduct to the women of Hvar and I have compared the genre to the medieval and early modern literary genre of conduct literature. As in the first case study, I have pointed out that there was a plurality of possible interpretations, some of which were more empowering for the female members of the audience.

In the third chapter, I have studied modern staging of the genre. In my analysis I have shown that the modern performance of the saints' plays has been tightly related to their political uses and interpretations. I have demonstrated this by situating the performances in three periods in recent Croatian history when the restaging of the saints' plays was most frequent. Each of these three periods reflects distinct waves of nationalism, which determined the political trajectory of the Croatian nation. First, in 1968 the saints' plays reappeared during the turbulent period of the late 1960s and early 1970s, marked by two social movements: the student protests from 1968 and the 'Croatian Spring' of 1971. The second revival of interest in the saints' plays happened two decades later, corresponding with another key period of Croatian, and Yugoslav, political history – the breakup of the Yugoslav state, Croatian acquisition of national sovereignty, and the beginning of the ethnic war in the former Yugoslavia. The third wave concerns the most recent performances which have been staged since 2016 in the context of the neo-conservative backlash, rising right-wing populism across Europe, and re-traditionalization.

The first case study analysis included a comparative approach to the two performances of two saints' plays which appeared simultaneously on the stages of two prominent Yugoslav festivals in 1968. Even though similar in many respects, those two productions had different trajectories given that one was censored, whereas the other continued to be performed. In my analysis I have offered three complementary explanations for these different trajectories. The internal argument concerned different modes of staging of these two performances, while the external argument was concerned with context, including the political tensions and the status of the festival on which the performance took place. The third argument switched the focus from



textual and contextual aspects to the audience. Thereby I have analysed a complex set of affects which the performances had generated.

The second case study examined the staging of the *Passion of Saint Margaret* by a puppet theatre in the context of the dissolution of Yugoslavia and time of war. I have explored the performances with respect to identity divisions, addressing the issue of how national identity translates into the spatial dimension of the performance. I have demonstrated how the *Passion of Saint Margaret* fulfilled the idea of the new national identity constructed by the political elites in times of great social transformation. Language heritage, as well as a double symbolic stake of religious and Catholic heritage set against atheism and secularity, have been pointed out as crucial for the inclusion of this production in national repertoire. The potential of this staging to contribute to the process of the creative production of national identity was only further fostered within the contextual frame of war, which ensued in the early 1990s. Through the performance analysis, I have pointed out that the ideological embracement of the *Passion of Saint Margaret*, as well as its popularity among the audience across the country and Croatian diaspora, depended on the capability of the performances of this saint play to delineate the idea of national community. This was done through two most important aspects: construction of the spatial dimension and the potential to trigger the emotional labour of the audience.

Finally, in the last case study I have explored the correspondence between the saints' plays and contemporaneity by studying a case of performances of the saint play by an amateur theatrical group. I have concluded that the amateur theatrical performances can be understood as a new mode of performance of the national identity, especially reinforced in the context of the intense activity of the Catholic Church and Croatian Church-related organisations, which has been termed the 'conservative revolution'. I have concluded that, thanks to the affects which this amateur performance triggers, it can be characterised as a highly immersive performance which fosters a strong sense of collectivity, and activates shared repertoires of a 'pre-existing sense of nationness',<sup>733</sup> which is why the performances have been co-opted by the right wing and church related organizations.

In this thesis, I have thus analysed a long temporal span of Dalmatian and Croatian theatre history, from the sixteenth century to the contemporary; I have

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<sup>733</sup> Holdsworth, *Theatre and National Identity*, p. 4.

engaged in various disciplines and debates, from philology to social history, from text analysis to ethnography and performance analysis, and I have used sources as diverse as archival material, literary sources, media and visual records, and interview data. However, several aspects hold my analysis together. Firstly, the theoretical approach anchored in cognitivist approaches and theory of reception. My analysis through all three chapters was guided by the aim of unpacking the meaning which the audience granted to the genre. In the study of the emergence of the genre, I attempted to reconstruct the horizon of expectation of the audience in late medieval and early modern Dalmatia. In the second chapter, I analysed the reception of historical performances on the island of Hvar. Thanks to the insights from the cognitive approaches in performance studies – in the first place, conceptual blending – I have offered various interpretations of how Dalmatian audience saw the saints' plays. Finally, the analysis of the affects in the contemporary performances has facilitated the understanding of how the audience connected to the performed content, which was especially interesting when the content was linked to the idea of national community.

Second, in the thesis I followed a cross-historical approach by bringing together the modern and early modern performances of saints' plays. While in the first and the second chapter I looked at the early modern context, in the third chapter the performances of martyrdom were examined in the frame of the modern nation-state. Nevertheless, in both cases the analysis illustrated similar patterns of inclusion and exclusion and of outlining 'in and out' boundaries, across horizontal (e.g. east/west) and vertical (higher/lower status) boundaries. Despite working with such distant contexts (at least, in the temporal sense), I showed that performing martyrdom through saints' plays contained an unusually powerful potential to act as a mechanism of mobilization and social division. Thirdly, all chapters of the thesis look at how performances affected the communities in which they were carried out and observed. My research has included a large temporal span, and over the course of five hundred years, the socio-political realities on the east Adriatic, just as elsewhere in Europe, underwent fundamental changes, especially with regard to the notion of 'community'. The technological progress and economic growth, as well as the development of communication which took place from the nineteenth century, significantly affected the modes of societal and political ways of organizing, with limited and sovereign

modern nations as one of the most significant results of these processes.<sup>734</sup> ‘After the nations suppressed any older political formations’,<sup>735</sup> national identity became one of the most important means of collective identification. It can be said that, in more than one hundred years, which passed from the last historical performance of the saint play, to the first performance in the contemporary context, the idea of ‘community’ on the east Adriatic changed drastically. The previously dominant idea, of belonging to the local community and to the Christian Catholic community, was now enriched with some new notions on communal belonging. Not only did the nation become a dominant notion of belonging but, after Croatia became a part of Yugoslavia, the idea of community expanded the idea of the multicultural and multinational community. It was exactly in Yugoslav context that a saint play was performed for the first time in modern times. While in the early modern period the saints’ plays had an important role in power representation and circulation, with the development of the notion of national community the genre increasingly important in delineating that national community, and distinguishing the sense of ‘us’ from ‘them’.

All these elements help to answer the central question: how the performance of martyrdom contributes to co-construction or disintegration – of the community; that is, how the community is being performed through martyrdom? I have demonstrated that, in order for a death to be affirmed as martyrdom, the community needs to create a narrative which will fit the community’s image of reality and its needs. Furthermore, once a narrative is created, it needs to be successfully disseminated through community. In my thesis, I analysed the role of saints’ plays in dissemination of martyrdom through the performance of the plays. This again represents a link to the first aspect which I pointed out, the theory of reception. In my analysis of the saints’ plays as a dramatic genre, the presence of the audience is essential, while the martyrdom itself always requires an audience and functions as theatre. The aspect of radical dualism, inherent in the genre, was pointed out as crucial for fostering the identification of the members of the audience with the content transmitted through the plays.

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<sup>734</sup> Those are the conditions which, according to Benedict Anderson, made possible for the modern nations to develop. *Imagined communities* (New York, London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>735</sup> Jürgen Habermas, ‘The European Nation-State: On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship’, p. 237.

I have encountered the following limitations in my research. The first one refers to the accessibility of the sources relevant for the historical part of the research. Due to the oral rather than written nature of Dalmatian late-medieval and early modern culture, the attempt to reveal the production conditions and the audience's perspective was a great challenge. In my analysis I am partially overcoming this shortcoming through examination of preserved eye-witness' accounts of other events which were characterized by a high dramatic potential and which took place on the island of Hvar at the same time as saints' plays were performed. The analysis of those testimonies helped me reveal how the early modern people from Hvar perceived theatrical events and was used to grasp performance reception. In addition, insights from the cognitive approaches in performance studies – in the first place, the application of the conceptual blending theory to the history of theatre – helped me to examine various interpretations of how Dalmatian audience saw the saints' plays.

The second limitation pertains to the choice of saints' plays as the sole object of research on late-medieval and early modern theatre – rather than, say, including other medieval genres such as Passion plays and Mystery plays. On the one hand, this had to do with my choice to seek an in-depth perspective on a single genre, as opposed to study a plurality of genres at a cost of achieving lesser focus. The second reason pertained to the fact that other medieval genres have been studied a lot more in the Dalmatian context, whereas saints' plays have remained under-researched.

The third aspect refers to the geographic focus on the island of Hvar, while leaving out other east Adriatic communities (such as Brač, Rab, Trogir, Zadar), in which the plays were performed. Similarly to the previous limitation, the decision to focus on Hvar had to do with the choice to undertake an in depth analysis, which would not be it possible with a broader geographic focus. Given the popularity, the longest tradition of performance, and the highest number of recorded works, which stem from the island of Hvar, I decided to focus precisely on that island.

The above outlined limitations offer possible avenues for further research. The further research endeavours should overcome the accessibility of sources from the early modern period through further archival work, digitalization (which would make the material more widely accessible), or application of novel theoretical approaches for studying the existing sources. Research on saints' plays in other east Adriatic communities would further advance the scholarship on early modern theatre in Dalmatia, perhaps by taking into account a broader scope of medieval genres. Finally,

another possible direction which would enhance the knowledge set out in this study relates to broadening the Europe-wide geographic scope of the research. The transnational perspective of my research is limited to the cultural flows between the east and west side of the Adriatic, whereas links between Dalmatian theatre genres and other Mediterranean and European cultures remain understudied. A broader comparative philological analysis may reveal adaptation of the plays of which we are presently not aware.

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