

POSTSOCIALIST AND GOTHIC ELEMENTS IN THE NOVEL *CATHEDRAL* BY IVO BREŠAN

SANJA FRANKOVIĆ

Facultatea de Limbi și Literaturi Străine
Departamentul de Filologie Rusă și Slavă
Strada Pitar Moș 7-13, Sector 1, RO – 010451 București
sanja.frankovic@gmail.com

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This paper analyses the Gothic elements in the novel *Cathedral* (2007) by Ivo Brešan. The frame story, which thematises the narrator's life and the Croatian War of Independence in the 1990s, is intertwined with the story he writes about St. James Cathedral in Šibenik. After he was forced to leave the University of Zagreb due to his communist past, he worked in the museum of Šibenik, where he translated Latin historical documents. He appreciated the originality of past geniuses and despised contemporary spiritual and architectural uniformity. However, in romanticising modern culture, he used the postmodern grotesque profanation of the sacred, the Gothic diabolisation of Petrarchist love and the interpretation of history as a sequence of strange events. The irrationality of the romantic layer is caused by a ghost of an unhappily deceased young woman Klotilda, whose character is a postmodern ironisation of Petrarch's Laura and is seen by mentally unstable men. In the historical layer, the motif of cannibalism indicates an individual revenge on the Venetian conquerors. The narrator supplements incomplete facts with fantasy, emphasising that even historiographers cannot avoid narration in their "necrophilic" search for the past. Gothic elements are combined with grotesque and carnivalisation and are evident in the portrayal of male characters as symbolic androgynes who defy social norms with their female gender traits. In Brešan's novel, they emphasise

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¹ This is a more developed, reworked version of the analysis of Brešan's novel published in my book *Vrijeme zvonika, gradova i pojedinca* (*The Time of the Belfries, the Cities, and an Individual*) (2020), pp. 113–124.

the perpetual antithesis of beauty and human perversions in an ethical, grotesque and fantastic dimension. However, the tradition of Gothic novels is ironised at the end, in which the mystery is not resolved, but is created by the narrator's disappearance in his own story.

1. INTRODUCTION

The title of the novel *Cathedral* by Ivo Brešan emphasises St. James Cathedral in Šibenik as a spatial figure that gathers human characters who were connected with its construction. The initial epigraph of the novel is the first verse of Baudelaire's sonnet "Beauty" and is connected here with St. James Cathedral as a perfect work of architecture. The words of the poem are given to the cathedral, which speaks about itself: "I am lovely, O mortals, like a dream of stone" (Baudelaire 1909: 18). Vlasta Markasović describes Šibenik cathedral as the main character of the novel because its permanent and "almost transcendental beauty" is more important than its builders and people who lived in the time of its construction (Markasović 2008: 14). As a work of lasting value, the cathedral links the narrator's contemporaneity (the Croatian War of Independence in the 1990s) with the past (the Venetian occupation of Dalmatia in 1409). This division conditions the structure of the novel, so the frame story concerns the war, which left its traces on urban space and human behaviour, and the main story is a chronicle of the construction of the cathedral. The narrator's understanding of history offers a *romantic vision of the past*, in which various deviations (social inequality, colonial oppression, corruption, wars, murders, kleptomania, mental illnesses) were present as they are today. Still, unlike the spiritually empty contemporaneity, the past had many more original artists who made works of lasting value: "Even the most banal item for daily use was wearing an imprint of the master who made it. (...) And these things are produced serially today and their value is measured only by how much and how they serve their purpose" (Brešan 2007: 180).¹ The narrator's romantic approach to history allows the introduction of Gothic elements (an abandoned palace, the ghost of a deceased young woman, a graveyard) that are often combined with the grotesque because his romantic depiction of Šibenik history is ironised. The paper analyses the following problems: 1) The comparison of the traditional and the postmodern approach to history and ideology, 2) The narrative function of Gothic elements in Brešan's romanticised historical chronicle and their penetration into the contemporary everyday life of the frame story, 3) The modernist understanding of art and artists as geniuses.

2. THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF BREŠAN'S NOVEL

The titles of the novel's chapters symbolically contrast the phases of the cathedral's construction and human deviations. Markasović emphasises the ethical dimension of

¹ All quotations from Brešan's novel and sources written in Croatian are my translations.

that opposition; therefore, the cathedral as *an allegory of art* is the only winner of the opposites of human ingenuity and deviant behaviour (Markasović 2008: 15). On the narrative level, the frame story about the narrator's life during the Croatian War of Independence (1991 – 1995) and in the postsocialist period is intertwined with the main story, in which the narrator writes a historical chronicle of the construction of St. James Cathedral. The narrator is a university professor of Latin and Greek. In the frame story, he narrates about his life after a bitter divorce caused by the infidelity of his wife Valerija, who kept their daughter Dijana thanks to her false accusations about his violent behaviour. Due to his communist past, he was no longer wanted at the University of Zagreb, so he accepted the job of a translator of Latin documents in the Šibenik museum. Attracted by old manuscripts, he began to write a story about St. James Cathedral and all the people associated with its lengthy construction. It is a *historical chronicle* based on facts preserved in damaged Latin manuscripts (actually paraquotes) and the literature cited at the end of the novel. The lack of facts is compensated with the introduction of *love stories* and the *fantastic elements* of the romantic layer, taken from the tradition of *Gothic novels* and permeated with the *grotesque*. The portrayal of male characters with feminine gender traits also belongs to the romantic layer. The elements of popular literature are used in the narrator's postmodern parodic dialogue with literary heritage. *Social criticism* is present in the description of the narrator's contemporaries, who have no sensibility for the beauty of architecture, and in his disclosing human deviations in the past and in his own time. The end of the novel parodies the conventions of the Gothic novels as it does not bring the outcome of all events, but opens a new mystery. The fictional newspaper clipping from *Jutarnji list* reports about the disappearance of an employee from the Šibenik museum. The name of the narrator remains undiscovered. His last words announce his entering the Loredan's Palace in his neighborhood to discover whether the appearance of the ghost of the young woman Klotilda is just a dream, from which he will wake up. Such an ending implies the equating of literature and history with a dream:

I shivered and felt a strong need to turn around and run away as fast as my legs could carry me. But then I was stopped by a thought: maybe I am dreaming all this. In that case, if I enter and see something terrible, everything that might happen to me could make me wake up. (...) I pushed the door with my hand (...) and stepped – into uncertainty. (Brešan 2007: 374)

The end of the novel does not answer who wrote the last words if the narrator disappeared in the Loredan's Palace. His disappearance can be understood as an escape

from the monotonous everyday life that does not offer any happy outcomes, both in love and work. Since the only essence he could find was art, he disappeared in his own story.

3. THE NARRATOR'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS HISTORY

The narrator's attitude towards history is expressed in his comparison of historiography to literature and comparing the ideology of the past and the present.

3.1. *HISTORIOGRAPHY AND LITERATURE*

When facts are missing, the narrator's chronicle is aided by fiction. He is aware that the image of a particular past period depends on a small number of facts, so his remark indicates that historiography cannot avoid narration, which brings it closer to literature:

Anyway, what is the historical truth? It is regularly an image of some past reality arranged by people from a few facts, insufficient to get a complete insight, and sometimes even invented, according to their needs and wishes. (...) Therefore the same historical period in different later times is interpreted each time differently, suppressing one and exaggerating or inventing other facts. (...) (Brešan 2007: 32)

The narrator and his chief Ante Labor in the museum discuss the relationship between history and literature. As a historian, Labor represents the traditional approach to historiography. In his postmodern approach, the narrator recognises the same narrative strategies in literature and historiography, which has to organise dispersed facts into a coherent text. Jaume Aurell argues that the conventions of historiography are subject to change, which re-defines "the identity of the historian-as-author and the field of history itself." The ways in which societies construct their identities and preserve their tradition are broader today, so "more popular forms (such as memorials, reenactments, performances, gaming, graphic narratives, or films)" became acceptable in representing the past. Aurell emphasises that cooperation between historians and their audience is increased thanks to "a new democratization in historical representation: history is owned by those who experience or engage with it, not only by professional historians." History is influenced by "[m]ultimodality, re-creation, interactivity and

imagination,” so social media, images and films affect people’s views on their own time and the past. Aurell explains the historical genre as a historian’s ideological and rhetorical choice in organising “the knowledge of the past.” The form itself has a symbolic meaning, which means that every historical narrative has a plot that is typical of a particular genre. Aurell mentions two examples: medieval genealogies, which organised history as a sequence of biographies connected according to “hereditary succession,” and a biography, which takes the story of personal life as the subject of its main plot. Aurell emphasises that the content of the narrative is always influenced by its genre. On the other hand, historical genres are not independent of each other and depend on the change of historical circumstances (Aurell 2015: 147–151). The main plotline of Brešan’s novel follows the model of a medieval chronicle and is formed as a sequence of many human destinies and family genealogies that are connected with the construction of St. James Cathedral. In his own account of the cathedral’s history, the narrator gives voice to ordinary people and their experience of historical events. The novel preserves and critically examines cultural memory, combining it with fictional layers created on the principle of probability.

Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney explain the relation of literature towards historical and cultural memory. Literature can serve as a mediator, object, or *mimesis* of cultural memory. As *a means of cultural memory*, literature preserves it as a story in historical novels, historical dramas and autobiographies. However, this implies the memory of people and events and the reinterpretation of existing texts and stories. In their role as the *objects of cultural memory*, literary works connect different generations. Still, the ways in which literature remembers itself – intertextuality or rewriting old texts such as folk stories and myths – are more important. The approach to canonical texts implies quotation or critical examination. The literary forming of cultural memory discloses its impact on individuals and groups. As *mimesis of individual memory*, literature leads dialogues with philosophy and psychology, but it cooperates with historians and sociologists in its interpretation of the *collective memory* (Erll and Rigney 2006: 112–113). If these functions of literary creation of cultural memory are applied to Brešan’s novel, the following can be concluded: 1) The novel is a mediator of Croatian cultural memory in the form of historiographic fiction; 2) Its intertextuality confirms the author’s dialogue with the canonical texts of the Croatian Latin poet Juraj Šižgorić (elegies: “Elegia de duorum obitu fratrum”, “Ad Symonem Diphnycum theologum”, “Elegia de Sibenicensis agri uastatione”; historical and geographical prose discussion *De situ Illyriae et civitate Sibenici*) and Baudelaire’s sonnet “Beauty”, which are the objects of cultural memory; 3) as *mimesis* of individual memory, the novel is parodically leaned on psychology and stoic philosophy (the belief of

the Bishop Stafilić that all human deviations are allowed by God); 4) as *mimesis* of collective memory, the novel uses sources from historiography and the history of art, which are listed at the end.

Since the Latin manuscript translated by the narrator has no historical value, it can only serve as an exhibit in the museum and as a base for the narrator's chronicle, which is literary and cannot be considered a historical text. However, in his discussion with Labor, the narrator claims that historians similarly complement all the missing facts as literary narration does:

– Well, don't you historians do the same? You make the whole web of events that maybe never happened. And then you call that science. At least I do not have such pretensions.

– Excuse me, but we never draw conclusions if we do not have firm confirmations for them. And this work of yours is only imagination, imagination and nothing else than imagination. (Brešan 2007: 94)

The narrator considers the imagination a bridge between the existing world and worlds from the past or the future. He defends his opinion in his later conversations with the architect Silvija Katalinić, who came to Šibenik to restore the cathedral's dome, which was hit in the bombing of the city. Their conversations act as *self-referential parts of the novel* that examine the validity of the narrator's approach to history. Silvija thinks that writers should not use literature as an escape from reality. However, the narrator claims that literature has a right to modify the reality it writes about as it does not have real power to initiate any social change:

– (...) We are a strange country; as if we had not yet freed ourselves from that socialist empty phrase that literature has to play some social role. (...) And countless writers in the world sail the areas of imagination. (...)

– But that is still their kind of escape into illusion (...)

– (...) When did you hear that literature could initiate or change anything in the world? (...) (Brešan 2007: 302)

3.2. HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY

Speaking in favour of the fantastic, the narrator argues that historiography cannot avoid fantastical elements because it is a kind of *necrophilia*, dealing with the ghosts of past ideologies in order to escape from current social problems:

The victims of the Second World War and the Croatian War of Independence are being counted, and exhumations are being carried out, commemorative gatherings are being organised (...) Long-forgotten symbols come up on the street walls: swastikas, letters U, sickle and hammer... (...)

I admit a comparison with perversion is surely (...) inappropriate and a bit distasteful (...) But basically, that is spiritual necrophilia nonetheless. (...) (Brešan 2007: 254)

After the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the fall of communism, there were attempts of reviving its opposite from the past – the Ustasha regime. Maciej Czerwiński reminds us that interest in forbidden ideologies, which had previously existed illegally in exile, was renewed in most Central European countries. In those circumstances, most of the political right negated the crimes of the Second World War committed by the Ustasha regime (for example, in the camp in Jasenovac). On the other hand, the political left also negated communist crimes (for instance, Bleiburg). The term *postcommunism* is used by those who have a negative attitude towards the communist regime. Its negative consequences are described with expressions such as *the difficulties of the transition period*, *a post-totalitarian Epoque*, *chaos*, *non-government*, *corruption*, etc. Those who do not have a negative attitude towards communism use expressions such as *transition* or *wild capitalism* in order to say that living standards were better in the previous regime (Czerwiński 2013: 51, 56, 60).

The negative revision of history in Brešan's novel is visible in the destruction of partisan monuments. The narrator and Ante Labor watched through the window a group of skinheads wearing T-shirts with the image of the Ustasha leader Ante Pavelić, who were destroying the monuments of Šibenik heroes from the Second World War to take revenge on the Yugoslav National Army for the shelling the night before:

– Look, please! These idiots take revenge on the busts now for last night's shelling. And the guys to whom the busts belong did not fight either for communism or Yugoslavia but for the liberation of their native region. And that was from those to whom it was given by exactly this one they wear on their T-shirts. (Brešan 2007:164).

The narrator concludes that contemporary wars are being waged among symbols, not among people as it was in the past: "The war is being waged for them or against them, and concrete people, with their names and surnames, as if they gain or lose by them their right to exist. (...)" (Brešan 2007: 165). Then he remembers the butcher Matko

Svistić from his chronicle, who took revenge on a real man for his father's death after the re-establishment of the Venetian occupation in Šibenik in the fifteenth century. Matko did not intend to take revenge on the Venetian flag because man, even the enemy, was more important than symbols.

Dubravka Oraić Tolić explains that the national and the South Slavic options were stereotypes that stem from the dual ideology of the 1860s: "the Croatocentric philosophy of Ante Starčević (Croatian Party of Rights) and the Yugoslav idea of the Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer (populism)." This division was why Croatian national identity was not stabilised after the break up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, so the independent Croatian state could not be established earlier than in the 1990s (Dubravka Oraić Tolić 2005: 291).

The return to an abandoned ideology stems from the binary antifascist (communist) – fascist (Ustasha) opposition established in the communist regime. However, the anti-communist attitude no longer comes exclusively from right-wing politics but also a liberal orientation. In the Croatian official communication by the state and media, communism is perceived as an equally totalitarian regime like fascism and Nazism. At the same time, there are still some left-wing orientations whose anti-fascism includes a positive attitude towards communism. Regardless of political orientation, in Croatian official communication, communism is placed within the framework of the former Yugoslavia and Serbian conservative political structures (Czerwiński 2013: 64–67, 73).

4. THE MEDIEVAL AGE OF THE MAIN STORY AND THE POSTSOCIALISM OF THE FRAME STORY

Since the narrator is critical of the conventions of traditional historiography, he writes his own chronicle of the construction of St. James Cathedral, which becomes the main story of the novel. Although human deviations are not only a burden of his own time but have been existing in all times, the narrator finds artistic beauty in the past (Bošković 2008: 214). Therefore, the motif of the cathedral becomes a key spatial figure. It connects the narrator's time and the past with the message of the lack of spirituality and *uniformity* of contemporary time. The narrator alludes to social uniformity but also the *remains of socialist architecture* in the postsocialist period.

In their project "Deserted Utopia," Tanja Deman and Vesna Jovanović analyse the remains of ideologically conceived architecture created in Eastern European countries since Stalin's death (1953) to the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989). They are seen today as "brutal to their context" and "as monuments to dystopia." Both rational and irrational

components were employed in creating such buildings, so they are marked by “the unlikely juxtaposition of the principles of the modern project with communist ideals.” The authors place them in a utopia as “their common ground.” They are isolated experiments scattered throughout the countries of Eastern Europe, “somewhere between the idea of society and the failure to come close enough to this idea.” As a new social order that was never realised, the ideology of communism was also a kind of utopia (Deman and Jovanović 2014: 105–107). The authors pose a question: what characteristics make those buildings exclusively Eastern? According to Deman and Jovanović:

[a]n essence of modernity is the rejection of traditional axioms and their scrutinizing, a belief in the power of architecture to emancipate modern life. A wanting for the arrival of contemporary society created this expressiveness (...). The energy to bring about the new and the modern (...) left the territory of Eastern Europe abundant with objects and ensembles that are highly evocative and singular expressions of Europe’s 20th century architectural opus. (Deman and Jovanović 2014: 107)

In Brešan’s novel, the narrator’s dissatisfaction with his own life and contemporary social uniformity was the impetus for him to write his romanticised chronicle of the construction of St. James Cathedral. The atmosphere of dark and, at the same time, attractive romanticism is created with Gothic motifs and situations (a way of revenge of the colonised people in Šibenik). The political situation of the past (the Venetian colonisation of Dalmatia and an unsuccessful rebellion of Šibenik commoners) was partly similar to that of the narrator’s time when the Yugoslav National Army refused to leave Croatia, so it initiated the war to stop the disintegration of Yugoslavia. However, there is a difference in the outcome, as the narrator’s time brought the establishment of the Croatian state. Despite that, the narrator discloses the emptiness of social life, a lack of people’s sensibility for culture, and institutions’ superficial work. His chronicle of the construction of St. James Cathedral reflects the social, religious and political circumstances of the late Middle Ages in Šibenik. According to his interpretation, it was a much more vivid time in the cultural and spiritual life of the city.

4.1. *THE CHRONICLE OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF ST. JAMES CATHEDRAL*

The construction of St. James Cathedral lasted more than one hundred years (1430 – 1555). Delays were caused by wars, the regulations of the Holy Office and the events detailed in the romantic layer of the novel. The sculptor Oracije Zamanja comes to

Šibenik after the invitation of the builder Dišman Slavogostić. At the mass, he notices a young married woman Klotilda and does not give up on her, although Šibenik is far more patriarchal than his native Dubrovnik. Their first meeting is reminiscent of Petrarch and Laura (Bošković 2008: 210), but they start a secret relationship after several encounters, unlike Petrarch's platonic love. Klotilda is Oracije's model in his project of stone portraits for the cathedral's walls. However, its construction was postponed as king Ladislav of Naples sold Dalmatia to the Venice Republic in 1409. The folk rebellion and its short-lived government were broken due to the betrayal of a bribed commoner. Šibenik got the support of the troops of Ivan Nelipić of Cetina and the Hungarian king Sigismund. However, the folk leader Dišman Slavogostić was arrested later on by order of the Hungarian king, who intended to strengthen Šibenik for the battles against the Venetians, which was only possible with the restoration of the noblemen's authority, but the bribed nobility joined the Venetians. After the break of the rebellion, its participants and their leader Dišman Slavogostić were hanged by the Venetians. Slavogostić's son Fran was raised by Bishop Bogdan Pulšić, who sent him to schooling in Venice. With a new surname di Giacomo, Fran returned to Šibenik in 1430 with the sculptor Busato and the mason Pincini. A new Bishop, Juraj Šižgorić, also supported the cathedral's construction. Still, Fran ran away because of the suspicion that he was involved in the cannibalistic crime of his girlfriend Lucija's father, Matko. The Holy Office asked the sculptor and builder Juraj Dalmatinac (Giorgio da Sebenico) to pull down the northern wall because its builders ate the meat of butcher Matko Svistić, who was executed after admitting that he fed the Venetian fortress governor Moretti with human flesh. Doing this, he wanted to get revenge for his father's execution after the rebellion. Since Juraj Dalmatinac preserved the wall and began to build the baptistery, the Holy Office sentenced him to death at stake, but the Pope's approval of the construction saved him. However, the lack of money made construction impossible for the next ten years. When Juraj Dalmatinac brought Nikola Firentinac (Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino), an Italian architect and sculptor, the construction was postponed due to the devastations made by the Ottoman Army in 1493. Nikola Firentinac used stone of the highest quality from the island of Brač. After his stroke, the construction was interrupted for twenty years due to the Ottoman invasion. The outer walls were finished in 1536, but the inner chapels and altars could not be built due to the Venetian and Ottoman War in 1537. The cathedral was consecrated in 1555. Considering all the troubles that postponed its construction, the narrator thinks it may not be human but a divine work: "For, how to explain otherwise that this beauty sprouted in the middle of all those flared passions, wars, cruel crimes, bloodshed, scarcity, famine and disease? (...)" (Brešan 2007: 371). According to Ivan Bošković, the epilogue emphasises the narrator's thesis that beauty

should be sought in the past, as contemporaneity offers only uniformity. Therefore, history implies construction in the narrator's vision, while contemporaneity brings deconstruction, indifference, and spiritual emptiness. In such circumstances, the future is uncertain (Bošković 2008: 213).

4.2. THE FRAME STORY ABOUT THE NARRATOR'S LIFE

The frame story about the narrator's life takes place in the period of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the postwar period, so it describes the remaining elements of the former socialist system in the external appearance of the city and the functioning of institutions. Žarko Paić notes that the term *post-socialism* refers to the theoretical and cultural analysis of the way of life in the former Soviet Union (1917 – 1989) and Eastern European countries with "the ideological and political order of *real socialism*." Paić listed the following elements of real socialism: 1) "Popular democracies" with a communist party government and a totalitarian leader; 2) Excluded private property and bureaucratic control over the entire population; 3) Directive economy, in which industry is the driving force of the modernisation of the society; 4) Ideological equating the political state and civil society; 5) The colonisation of everyday life and the nullification of the difference between high and popular culture in a new concept of democratised culture (Paić 2014: 8–10).

The disappearance of the difference between high and mass culture is evident in Brešan's novel in the uniformity of the buildings that remained from the socialist period and in the behaviour of people, who mostly have no sensibility for high culture. The elements of bureaucratic control remained in the postsocialist period, so the institutions took revenge on their employees who previously were communists. Feeling uncomfortable and socially isolated due to his communist past, in which he had no political functions, the narrator leaves his position at the University of Zagreb and accepts the job of a translator of Latin documents in a Šibenik Museum, where he had a temporary job during the summer. The Croatian War of Independence (1991 – 1995) begins, and urban life in Šibenik shows a lack of spiritual and cultural values. In the narrator's romantic vision of the past, even the strict, patriarchal Šibenik society of the Middle Ages was more vivid thanks to its artists and ordinary people. They led more active lives in the public space (folk rebellion, domestic and international trade, *commedia dell'arte* on the city square, the construction of the cathedral). Arriving in Šibenik, the narrator realises that no one cares about the cathedral's beauty and that the city's soul has moved to coffee shops full of young people who resort to alcohol and drugs. Going to work, he sees that the stone heads on the cathedral were painted

by a self-proclaimed artist, an opponent of traditional art. Later he meets Ema, a girl who is a drug addict and offers him her body for money. To stop her attempt at seduction, he gives her money but regrets it when he finds out that she consumed drugs in a group of young people hit by a shell. Her father is mentally ill due to his fear of the war, and he bit the vein on the neck of a retired Yugoslav National Army Major while in a shelter. Although the Major was not guilty of his daughter's loss, he symbolised the enemy. The doctors interpreted this incident as lycanthropy, which shows that Gothic motifs penetrate the frame story.

Love relationships of the main story are reflected in the narrator's own relationships. His former wife, Valerija, married her lover, and the despised narrator ironically compares himself to the nobleman Bikačić, a character from his chronicle about St. James Cathedral. Its romantic layer contains several love stories, but the most important one is a secret love of a young married woman Klotilda and the sculptor Oracije in the fifteenth century. Since old Bikačić took Klotilda instead of the money her father owed him, their marriage was unhappy. Klotilda remained with Oracije during the persecution of Venetian conquerors in the folk rebellion. Innocent guilt is common to the narrator, who lost the right to see his daughter due to Valerija's malicious statements in court, and to Klotilda and Oracije, who her cruel husband punished. The second narrator's relationship was with the architect Silvija Katalinić, who became close to him while studying the construction of the cathedral's dome to restore it. She jokingly called him Oracije. However, she returned to Split, where she ran a private firm, but they remained friends. After his short return to Zagreb before he left his university position, he was in a relationship with his student Cintija, a spy hired by the faculty administration to compromise him. He was no longer acceptable due to his communist past, but another accusation had to be found. The Ethical committee offered him to leave voluntarily. This situation can be compared to the love of Klotilda and Oracije. Klotilda's husband Bikačić did not want to reveal their adultery in public, so Oracije was accused of being a Venetian spy and secretly executed. The same method of accusation of one's private rival for a political transgression has persisted to today.

The narrator returns to Zagreb one more time when he does not have enough work in Šibenik. The headmaster of the classical high school, his former student, invited him to teach Latin and Greek. The narrator becomes a form teacher in the class of his own daughter, who lives in the belief that her father was violent towards her and her mother. That was her mother's lie in court, as she did not want her daughter to contact her father because of his communist past. He does not reveal himself, but as her teacher, he encourages her interest in Latin poetry, inspired by his scientific book she had, and reads her own Latin poetry. Unfortunately, she dies of leukaemia, and the narrator

returns to Šibenik. Being aware that his life will not be interesting at all, he disappears in the Loredan's Palace in his mentally unstable state, trying to follow the main female character of his story – the ghost of a deceased Klotilda. His disappearance can be understood as his criticism of transitional society, whereby its spiritual emptiness is equated with spatial desolation.

Referring to Paul Virilio's book *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (1980), Paić notes that "[e]verything loses its rank, its level and roots in a particular space. (...) the implosion of information contracts the spatial extensibility to the zero point of oblivion regarding the past." Since social relationships are moved to virtual spheres, "[c]oncepts no longer originate in what we call reality." Today, it is debatable what direction follows after the collapse of socialism "if it is no longer that of self-understandable liberal democracy, capitalism with its idea of the market and profit, and man as a *homo oeconomicus*" and if it is not clear "why this second return to the past is taking place at all, moreover in the direction of regressive ideas such as the nationalist renewal of culture against the homogeneity of globalism." In this context, Paić explains *transition* as a term that promises a project that can never be fulfilled. According to Paić, contemporary art is no longer part of the discourse of post-socialism. Like in the times of communist leaders, modern art aims to avoid adjusting to ideological demands. In today's circumstances, it does not want to be an aesthetical cover and a political justification of "the ideology of vulgar pan-economism." Unlike the imperative of permanent innovations and progress, which dominates the techno-sciences, art tends to moderation. Paić sees its destiny in fighting against "the politics of oblivion" and "in the uncertainty and contingency of life itself," whereby its only support is in the "signs of language and image beyond remembrance and memory," which serves "today's market selling cultural relics from the times of dictators and bonvivants." Paić warns that creating new mythologemes for "cheap neoliberal purposes" poses the most dangerous threat to art. Postsocialism does not offer criticism of today's ideology but turns to be "the new culture of symbolic resistance against the social order." Even when it criticises the society of the spectacle, it actually serves it by producing cultural nostalgia (Paić 2014: 5, 12–14).

If Paić's remarks are applied to the time Brešan's narrator lives in, we can conclude that the narrator is not focused on severe social criticism. However, he criticises a lack of cultural awareness of young people (their ignoring St. James Cathedral as a great work of architecture and gathering in crowded coffee shops). From his perspective, people's relation towards space and its sights has changed. The centre remains desolate in the evening as social life has moved to the periphery. To overcome this spiritual emptiness both in his environment and in himself, the narrator abandons criticism and

the writer's role as a conscience of society. Instead, he parodies history, ideology and art on more levels: 1) By contrasting the postmodern view of historiography and the traditional principles of that scientific discipline, 2) By nostalgic recycling traditional high and popular genres, and 3) By the comparison of the contemporary centre of Šibenik and its image in the past. The motif of the museum the narrator works in symbolically refers to the *antiquarian approach to history*. Obsessive archiving comes from the notion that all information should be saved in archives as we do not know when and what information will get their historical importance (Nora 2007: 145–147).

5. GOTHIC ELEMENTS

5.1. *THE FUNCTIONS OF GOTHIC ELEMENTS IN BREŠAN'S NOVEL*

As a diffuse form, Gothic writing can be part of many genres. Fred Botting emphasises that it is a hybrid form of multiple origins, whose characteristics are present in the texts of different historical periods. It transforms other genres and changes its conventions at the same time. The main changes of Gothic writing took place from the period of neoclassicism to romanticism. Since it established itself by imitating other modes of writing or opposing them, its texts were not appreciated and were considered vulgar. However, they influenced fewer canonised literary forms as “a darker undercurrent to the literary tradition itself” (Botting 2005: 9–10).

In Brešan's novel, Gothic elements are present in the narrator's romanticised historical chronicle, in his description of the architecture, and in the colonial relations that provoke the rage of the oppressed. Botting emphasises that imagination and emotionality in the Gothic novel take precedence over reason. The terms terror and horror are the “countervailing aspects of Gothic's emotional ambivalence”. Terror brings “the pleasures of imaginatively transcending or overcoming fear and thereby renewing and heightening a sense of self and social value.” Under the threat of disintegration, the self “reconstitutes its identity against the otherness and loss presented in the moment of terror.” Unlike this subjective elevation, horror “describes the movement of contraction and recoil” in the moment of unavoidable threat (Botting 2005: 2, 6). In Brešan's novel, the city duke Loredan bought the former Bikačić's Palace and wants to see the ghost of Klotilda, who is said to suffocate her evil husband to avenge Oracije's death. Loredan sees Klotilda in his drunkenness and falls in love with her ghost. Since he was born on the day of Oracije's execution, Klotilda convinces him that he is Oracije's incarnation. After Klotilda's ghost tries to kill Loredan with gas from the stove, he finally understands that the ghost is a diabolic force that drags him to death.

The terror is overcome with the help of the vicar Juraj Šižgorić, and Loredan reconstitutes his identity, but his obsession with Klotilda left traces on his exhausted body. Another example of terror is the painter Ćulinović's dream of a *danse macabre*, after which he regrets his bad treatment of his deceased wife. The examples of horror are Oracije's execution, the walling of Klotilda and murders committed by the butcher's servant. In the frame story, the attempt of a mentally ill man to kill and then rape the architect Silvija and the incident of lycanthropy in the war shelter show that Gothic elements are also present in the narrator's time.

Brešan's narrator follows the features of the later Gothic novel from the nineteenth century. The plot takes place in the city instead of in castles, and the characters belong to various professions. Eerie phenomena appear in the visions of mentally unstable characters and are no longer acts of supernatural forces (Botting 2005: 4, 7–8). The narrator got an incentive for Klotilda's character while reading a Latin manuscript that mentioned her fornication. This detail provoked his dream in which he saw her. In the morning, he insisted that Labor orders the opening of the walled room of the Loredan's Palace. When workers found a female skeleton and one skull, he was unsure if the ghost was just a dream. Numerous motifs give the story its creepy atmosphere, which is attractive at the same time.

The Gothic motifs in the novel have the following functions:

1. *The dramatisation of space* is achieved by provoking fear and sometimes grotesque, whereby dark spatial figures are emphasised, or the sacred space of the cathedral is diabolised. In order to ironise the narrator's historical chronicle, the architect Silvija disguises herself to look like the killed daughter of the city duke and waits for him at the sea waterfront, where he used to take a walk in the dark. The painter Ćulinović had a weird and grotesque dream of *danse macabre* when he was drunk and fell asleep in the graveyard. The Holy Office ordered the preparation of the stake in front of St. Michael's Fortress for the builder Juraj Dalmatinac as he did not follow its orders. The young man Ciprijan is climbing the cathedral in the costume of a devil, in which he previously acted in a church mystery play. When he attaches the sculpture of an angel to the dome, his acrobatics entertain people until he falls from the cathedral. Loredan's Palace in the narrator's neighbourhood is where the ghost of deceased Klotilda appears over the centuries and is visible to sensitive male characters.

2. *The romanticised portrayal of the male characters as symbolic androgynes* discover their deviation from social and Church norms. Juraj Dalmatinac does not obey the regulations of the Holy Office because he understands his artistic work as an act of his own will. Oracije and Juraj Ćulinović (Giorgio Schiavone) do not respect moral norms, so the former commits adultery with Klotilda and the latter seduces a nun

and marries her. The secret meetings of the vicar Juraj Šižgorić with his love Jelena Skjulčić are contrary to his vocation. A disguised man called Apostat robs ships, citizens and noblemen. In the end, it is revealed that he is the innkeeper Toma Guštin, a kind of Robin Hood, who was taking the property of the rich in order to avenge his father's death caused by the unjust accusation of the Venetians. The vicar Juraj Šižgorić serves Mass in the unfinished cathedral to attract the citizens in the hope that Apostat will also come, so he lets Nikola Firentinac utter a lie in Mass that a caravan with food will come to help the city in case of a siege. When Šižgorić sees that his old friend is caught after this lie, he considers himself guilty of his death and dishonouring the cathedral with such cunning.

Oraić Tolić describes the artists of romanticism as “modern irrational counter-subjects” who opposed the modern culture of their fathers by developing female gender traits, so they became symbolic androgynes (Oraić Tolić 2005: 86, 89). Although Brešan's characters belong to the Middle Ages, their portraits are romanticised. They do not oppose their fathers but avenge their deaths caused by the Venetian oppressors. The narrator can also be considered a symbolic androgyne because of his romantic understanding of art, so he is a utopian counter-subject in the postmodern culture, which has rejected an artist's concept as a genius. According to Oraić Tolić, there are several types of symbolic androgynes, who appeared at the beginning of the modern epoch and lasted until the 1960s: *genius*, *dandy*, *bohemian*, *flâneur*, *superman*, *the man of possibilities* (Oraić Tolić 2005: 89). Brešan's male characters are rather combinations instead of the specific types of symbolic androgynes. Ciprijan Gusanić left his study in Venice and returned to Šibenik, where he organises theatre plays with the characters of *commedia dell'arte*, who remind Šibenik citizens of their own flaws. He has genius features (Oraić Tolić 2005: 90–91): intuition, originality and the spontaneous rejection of culture as a rational product. Since he provokes the seriousness of the public space with his theatrical plays, he is a social androgyne “who consciously excluded himself from civil society by unconsciously choosing the marginalised position of women” (Oraić Tolić 2005: 95).

The city duke Antonio Loredan came to Šibenik two years earlier due to his adultery problems in Venice. When he hears about Klotilda's ghost, he buys the Bikačić Palace. However, his humorous approach turns into an obsession with Klotilda, which is similar to a Petrarchist poet. He can see her ghost only in the state of drunkenness, so he loses his life strength. Although he is not a genius, he is a supporter of art, so he defends Juraj Dalmatinac from the punishment imposed by the Holy Office. The painter Juraj Čulinović is a genius because of his talent. As a bohemian (Oraić Tolić 2005: 96), he is untidy, addicted to alcohol and despises all social norms. He mistreats

his mistress, just as he did with his deceased wife. The cause of his violent nature is his creative crisis. None of his models can help him because, in his opinion, their eyes are passive in experiencing the world they live in. The next character of a genius is the builder Juraj Dalmatinac, who does not respect the regulations of the Holy Office concerning the ground plan of the cathedral, so he claims that he is God in what he is doing. His successors will continue building the cathedral according to his method of inter-grooved stone plates without plaster. Juraj Dalmatinac combined the style of northern Italy with the decorative elements of the early Renaissance period, so his work has the features of both Gothic and Renaissance styles (Čaplar 2013: 186–187). A younger vicar Juraj Šižgorić is a portrait of the Croatian Latin poet from the sixteenth century. He has to become a priest according to the wishes of his uncle and namesake, who is a bishop and invested in his schooling, so he cannot marry his love Jelena Skjulčić. His art and priestly work are aggravated due to many obstacles: the death of his friend Toma Guštin, in which he was involved, unaware of who the robber was, Jelena's death and his failure to obtain the title of a bishop because his uncle defended Juraj Dalmatinac. He participates in the battle against the Ottomans, hoping to find death as consolation. However, a letter from the young poet Marko Marulić brings him back to life, so he writes the work *De situ Illyriae et civitate Sibenici*. Apostat and Matko Svistić can be considered the figures of supermen because they judge people's lives in their own hands. The narrator cannot decide whether he has to give up on his university career, so he is a man of possibilities, "an ambivalent epistemological androgyne" who is not capable of bringing any firm decision, but finally finds his stronghold in some universal essence (Oraić Tolić 2005: 108). The narrator's stronghold is the art of the past.

3. *The romanticised portrayal of female characters* from the narrator's male perspective divides them into obedient and disobedient. Neither choice provides a satisfying life. Obedient wives are neglected even when mortally ill because their husbands are devoted to their own artistic work (Juraj Dalmatinac) or political tasks (Dišman Slavogostić). Some of them are marginalised as infertile (Ćulinović's deceased wife Elena, whom he beat and cheated) or submissive mistresses (a servant Janja, who gave birth to Ćulinović's two children). Or as unloved women (Jelena Skjulčić loves the poet Juraj Šižgorić, but after his ordainment, she obeys the wishes of her parents and marries his best friend, who cheats her and she dies of pneumonia soon after). Only solitary women (Silvija, the narrator's landlord Marija Miotti) have balanced lives.

Gothic elements are used to strengthen patriarchal values by the punishment of disobedient female characters. In the "double standard" of traditional society, which tends to stop uncontrolled sexual behaviour, extramarital sexual relationships are al-

lowed for men but not for women. Gothic novels exploit this situation in portraying passionate female characters who do not control their sexuality, so their lack of control has to be sanctioned. Their unfortunate ending sends a message to the readers that such behaviour leads to the destabilisation of family and marriage as social values. Therefore the Gothic novel preserves conservative values and a double sexual standard for men and women. It distinguishes two kinds of women: heroines, who meet the traditional expectations of the feminine sexual and domestic role, and passionate women who do not realise their role of motherhood. They become a negative model of behaviour, and the Gothic novel indirectly suggests “that passionate women corrupt the sanctioned institutions of society through their failure to perform their proper domestic roles in controlling sexuality, inspiring the man to be ‘good,’ and nurturing the members of the family unit.” Heroines are less beautiful than passionate women, but beauty is problematic as it leads women into temptation and attracts men on a superficial level of sexual relationships. Unlike the beautiful woman, “the plainer girl (with whom the readers identify) attains a stable marriage” because of her “domestic qualities.” When passionate women are not only rivals to heroines but also villains, they commit different crimes: “murder, attempted murder, theft, fraud, gambling, and smuggling.” The reasons for such behaviour are usually their subordination to a male villain, the jealousy of another woman or women’s excessive obsession with their beauty and neglecting female duties (Mussell 1975: 84–85).

The characters of the beauties in Brešan’s novel do not meet social expectations, so their lives have unfortunate outcomes in any case of their disobedience: the rejection of a partner they did not choose themselves, adultery and malicious seduction. In order to revenge on his young wife, Klotilda and her lover, the old nobleman Bikačić walls Klotilda in one room of the palace and throws her Oracije’s decapitated head. The Gothic can also be associated with the rage provoked by colonial oppression: Lucija Svistić’s grandpa was hanged by the Venetians after the folk rebellion, so she hates them and refuses to be a model to the sculptor Busato for one of his stone portraits. After rejecting the suitor Vittorio di Palma, he threatens her and her father Matko, so their weak-minded servant kills him with an axe. Matko takes off the skin from di Palma’s body and takes his flesh as a portion of animal meat to Moretti, the governor of the fortress, to make him a social outcast after eating human flesh. To fulfil his plan, Matko sends his servant to provide him with human flesh. On the eve of Lucija’s wedding, the servant accidentally cuts her hand in the dark, and she dies. The noblewoman Katarina Žilević refuses Melkior Tavelić, whom she secretly likes, but she cannot accept his arrogance. He kills her companion Petar Mišić in a duel and runs away from the city. After many years he returns as a soldier and a mature man who re-

pents for his evil deeds. He marries Katarina but is mortally wounded when his army goes to the hinterland of Šibenik to prevent the entrance of the Ottomans into the city. Laura, the sister of the city duke Loredan, is a seductress. When she comes to Šibenik, she takes the money and values of married men. After she abused Stjepan Marasović from Skradin, she suddenly died. People explain her death as revenge for Klotilda's ghost. Klotilda's maiden surname was Marasović, and she was from Skradin too.

By punishment for the transgressions of male and female characters, the Gothic novel supports a conservative social order. The offences that endanger an individual life and social order originate from the excess of emotions. David B. Morris warns that "[t]he Gothic hero's capacity for rage is legendary" and "[a]ffection and disaffection are usually instantaneous as well as rigid and extreme" (Morris 1985: 303).

4. Depicting *the perversions of the past and contemporaneity* (cannibalism, lycanthropy, kleptomania, necrophilia), the narrator emphasises that they are constant of all times. Still, unlike the present, the past had ingenious artists. At the same time, he narrates about the Venetian oppressors in medieval Dalmatia and admires the architecture and artists of that age. This is the characteristic of the Gothic novel, which nostalgically recalls "the architecture, customs and values of the Middle Ages" despite "the tyranny and barbarism of feudal times" (Botting 2005: 4).

5.2. THE ELEMENTS OF GOTHIC ROMANCE IN BREŠAN'S NOVEL

The classical values created a national past that differed from the rational values of the Enlightenment age. It was named Gothic, which was "a general and derogatory term for the Middle Ages which conjured up ideas of barbarous customs and practices, of superstition, ignorance, extravagant fancies and natural wildness." Its buildings, ruins, songs and romances were initially considered uncultivated, but during the eighteenth century, the imaginative and aesthetic value of previously negatively marked characteristics such as "extravagance, superstition, fancy and wildness" were recognised. However, in its assimilation with high literature, Gothic writing did not lose all its negative connotations. During the eighteenth century, significant social and political changes separated individuals from the arranged social world, so Gothic works revealed people's anxiety caused by urbanisation, industrialisation and revolution. In the Enlightenment period, rationalism replaced religion as the dominant mode of interpreting the world. Gothic texts tried to resolve "the divine mysteries" that the rationality of the Enlightenment had set aside, so the past preserved in them was more conservative. The ambivalence of Gothic texts was caused by their simultaneous attempts to present the past as brutal in contrast to the Enlightenment age and

to find the continuity of culture that could confirm the existence of stable history. This issue raised awareness that the image of history and contemporaneity depends on ways of their representation. Texts such as romances, magical tales, and exotic adventures that used the motifs of medieval customs and superstitions had hostile receptions from the late seventeenth century. Graveyard poetry condemned human vanity and vices and emphasised morality. Hence, its prevailing motifs were “ruins, tombs and nocturnal gloom” that are on the border with the afterlife and its promise of eternal peace. Since eighteenth-century aesthetics inclined the sublime, it encouraged transcending the limits of the rational. Gothic texts depicted natural and supernatural objects that evoked strong emotions of terror and wonder beyond human understanding. The medieval songs and ballads collected by scholars became “the examples of a romantic and sublime way of writing,” and medieval architecture (cathedrals, castles and ruins) evoked sublimity. The eighteenth-century Gothic novel borrowed the motifs of romances: extraordinary events and chivalry, wild nature, graveyards, ruins, the architectural works of the permanent value and the atmosphere of the sublime, that is expressed as terror and wonder (Botting 2005: 15–16).

Although Brešan’s narrator follows the features of the later Gothic novel from the nineteenth century, whose plot takes place in the city and bizarre phenomena are not caused by supernatural forces, the novel also has the elements of romances: chivalry (Melkior Tavelić’s participation in the war against the Ottomans), graveyard (Ćulinović’s sleep on the grave of his deceased wife), the narrator’s admiration of St. James Cathedral as a superb artistic work, the atmosphere of the sublime that is expressed as terror (the appearance of Klotilda’s ghost over centuries) and wonder (the construction of the cathedral despite all obstacles).

As a term for eighteenth-century fiction, *Gothic romance* is more appropriate than *the Gothic novel* because it indicates “the link between medieval romances, the romantic narratives of love, chivalry and adventure, that were imported from France since the late seventeenth century onwards, and the tales that in the later eighteenth century were classified as ‘Gothic’.” Neo-classical criticism rejected Gothic romances as too imaginative, childish, superstitious and without any useful purpose. Topics taken from real life were recommended as a moral means of suppressing wild imagination. According to the belief of that time, it had an evil influence on readers as it nullified the difference between the supernatural and the real world. Human vices were represented as monsters, but this expression was also used for unnatural and deformed works deviated from moral norms. However, there was a danger in the attractive representing of monsters because vice could thus become more attractive than virtue. Since the influence of fiction on readers was understood as ambivalent, the distinction

between romances and novels was made. Still, romances were “the forerunners of the strange mixture of forms that appeared as Gothic tales later in the century.” Unlike romances, Gothic novels represent their characters and events by creating the illusion of reality. For eighteenth-century criticism, the values represented as natural were most important, so fiction got ideological features and was considered capable of transmitting moral or subverted manners. Regarding works of architecture, the neoclassical aesthetics of the Enlightenment appreciated uniformity and proportion and viewed the distortions of the symmetrical structure as a lack of taste (Botting 2005: 16, 18–20).

Brešan’s novel follows the features of the romance in its fantastic layer – “mistaken identity, disguise, sudden disappearance and coincidental encounter” (Morris 1985: 304), but also the social criticism of human vices.

5.3. THE RELATION OF THE GOTHIC AND THE GROTESQUE

Some episodes, both in the frame and main stories, intertwine the Gothic and the grotesque in a unique atmosphere of horror and laughter. Botting notes that mysterious powers scared people, but they were ridiculous at the same time because of their absurdity (Botting 2005: 6). We can distinguish several functions of such episodes in Brešan’s novel:

1. The Gothic elements of the narrator’s chronicle are understood as a *product of the romanticised vision of history*. The architect Silvija parodies them in her act of disguise. She appears on the sea coast at night, dressed like a female character from the narrator’s story Ante Labor gave her. The city duke’s daughter of the same name was killed by a young man with developmental disabilities, a servant of Matko Svistić. To make a false crime scene, Silvija put the plastic imitation of an axe on her head. The next day Labor introduced her to the narrator, and they admitted to him that the terrifying scene was their idea to joke with him. On the self-referential level of the novel, this episode mocks the cheap effects of Gothic stories and the narrator’s escape from reality.

2. The intertwining of the Gothic and the grotesque is realised as a literary fantasy that analyses *the dimension of repulsion (HRENC)*. This is evident in a dream of the drunk painter Ćulinović, who lost his way home and fell asleep at the graveyard, where he dreamed of the *danse macabre*, whose function in the Middle Ages was to remind people of the transience of life and the annulment of all classes after death. It first represented male dancers, but later also women, who were deprived of their beauty and joy. That image was a warning of *memento mori* (Huizinga 1987: 141–142). In the painter’s dream, such a vision was the consequence of the subconscious guilt

towards his deceased wife Elena, a former nun whom he married and treated badly. After his initial fear, Ćulinović accepted Elena's invitation to join the dance. The Gothic motif of a *danse macabre* has a double role: the painter's fear provokes his repentance, but his wife's invitation and the appearance of her corpse are funny, so the scary dream turns into a grotesque:

At the head of that gloomy procession went the leader, a strange figure cloaked in a black cape, who held the first of the dead men in line with one hand and had a scythe for mowing hay in another. And then he sees his deceased wife Elena Jurjeva among them too; she had not disintegrated yet, although one of her eyes fell out of its socket and it hung on a vein.

When the wave of horror passed over him, the scene seemed very convenient to Ćulinović. (...) At that moment, he sees that Elena has raised her hand and is waving to him as if she were inviting him to a wheel dance. 'And why not, pray tell kindly,' he says to himself in an undertone. 'During your life, you had an aversion to every entertainment, (...) and now, after death, you started to dance without choosing company. If you have become addicted to drinking too, we could have a good time!' (...) (Brešan 2007: 330–331).

3. The parody of a church sermon *ironises people's credulity*. A false preacher visits Šibenik in 1499 and warns people of the need for repentance, showing them Ćulinović's painting of a *danse macabre*:

– Oh, unfortunate sinners, who dress in silk and brocade, throw away those signs of your arrogance, for you will all soon have to bow your neck before death (...) Do you see this wheel on the picture? The poor and the rich are together, notables and scum, masters and servants. Death leads them all in the same direction (...) (Brešan 2007: 345–346).

The grotesqueness of this episode is in an ironic perversion of what is sacred because of the Preacher's hedonistic purposes. In order to achieve efficacy, medieval sermons had particular language patterns. Despite the bans, they were held in the open air: in squares, processions and cemeteries (Kienzle 2002: 91–92). According to Richard Schechner, the aim is ritual *efficacy*, while a theatric play is aimed at *entertainment*, which can be criticised, unlike the ritual (Schechner 2005: 116). A hedonistic preacher in Brešan's novel uses the medieval warning *memento mori* to intimidate credulous folks, who will give him money as a sign of repentance. The Gothic features of this

character are evident in his mysteriousness. After his departure, many deaths followed.

4. The episode of a church mystery play, “Muka sv. Margarete [The Passion of St. Margaret],” *provokes the church moral*. None of the Franciscan sisters wants the role of the devil, so Bishop Ivan II Stafilić Lucić sends them Ciprijan. The Bishop’s approval of the church mystery play was in accordance with the Church of the late Middle Ages, which no longer saw the moral threat in comic elements if used in didactic purposes. However, in order to preserve the dignity of church morality, church mystery plays had to have an introduction and an ending (the appearance of a saved soul, some saint or God’s voice) that remind the audience of God’s law and social order that had to be respected (Žeravica 2011: 253, 255–256). However, Ciprijan’s performance had no moral lesson:

The culmination of everything was when (...), at the last counter-argument, the devil lifted his tail and produced with his mouth a fart-like sound. Sister Leonija almost fainted, but Lucić calmed her down by saying that it was entirely in the spirit of the play, as the devil parted with Virgil and Dante with just such a greeting (...) (Brešan 2007: 362–363).

The comic elements of church mystery plays were not understood as blasphemous, but the spectators freed themselves from their fears (Žeravica 2011: 254). Thanks to laughter, they overcame their fears of God’s punishment and natural powers and overcame their guilt for breaking prohibitions. When laughter appeared as a means of overcoming fears, the Renaissance consciousness was born (Bakhtin 1984: 90–91).

5. The example of the grotesque that is connected with the cathedral is reminiscent of a theatric scene. Ciprijan climbs the cathedral to attach a figure of an angel to its dome. He performs funny acrobatics while people are watching him, but this scene is only a *comic relief before the tragic episode* (Pavis 1999: 69):

It was something apocalyptic in that: a golden angel, all bathed in light, and a devil who leaned over it like a black shadow. (...) And then something unexpected happens. Standing on the smooth surface of the ball, Ciprijan suddenly slips from it (...) (Brešan 2007: 366–367)

The sermon of the Preacher of death is realised as a *minimal parody* (Genette 1997: 16–17) because he almost literally follows the pattern of a church sermon, placing it into a flippant context and thus changing its purpose. However, Ciprijan’s climbing

the dome is grotesque because he forgot to take off his clothes in which he acted as a devil in a church mystery play. When he falls from the dome, the situation is unintentionally grotesque because, while the Preacher is praying over his body, it seems as if he prays for the devil.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The novel *Cathedral* is based on many antitheses: it opposes creation and destruction, talents and perversions, and historiography's traditional and postmodern understanding. The postmodern approach to history also takes into account the experiences of ordinary people. Therefore, the narrator's chronicle is postmodern as historical events are narrated from fictive ordinary people's perspective, not only real artists who were building St. James Cathedral. The narrator's romanticisation of history with the Gothic motifs is ironised in the frame story. Still, it also sends critical messages about the alienation of contemporary social life, the lack of sensibility for the beauty of cultural heritage, and today's people, who lack bravery and defiance, which are the characteristics possessed by the characters in the past. In the narrator's opinion, they did not wage war against the symbols but face to face with a living enemy. Modernist features of the novel are the narrator's view on the ethic of an individual and society and his understanding of artistic work as an individual act of a genius. Using the spatial figure of the cathedral as a lasting value, he links the past and his own time, traditional and postmodern values and two political orders – medieval feudalism and socialism at the time of its collapse. In both social orders, Croats fought to establish their national identity: first under the occupation of the Venetians and other enemies and later in the multinational state of Yugoslavia in the twentieth century. A bureaucratic system of control maintained the uniformity of socialist society. In the postwar period, the remains of that mentality are preserved in architectural uniformity and the functioning of institutions. As in the past, unsuitable individuals are removed from social positions, and the cause of their inadequacy is private but is presented as their political transgression. Spiritual emptiness, previously caused by the imperative of social equality, is now generated by consumerism. However, the reactions of Šibenik citizens after the cathedral's dome shelling showed that the city's soul was not yet disintegrated in a hedonistic way of life. It still had the strength to defend itself. It is not accidental that the cathedral as a superior work of art is connected with Baudelaire's sonnet "Beauty", as the beauty of the sonnet lies in its standard form. The antithetic relation of the frame story and the main story is also crucial in creating the

novel's messages. The Gothic elements of the main story express the criticism of the narrator's time. By depicting the transgressions of the past, they show the boundaries that should not be crossed if we want to preserve the social order. This message about collective awareness seems to contradict the narrator's praise of the individuality of artists and ordinary people who dared to oppose social rules and expectations. However, the characters' destinies show that crossing borders is justified only in the creation of beauty and not in the case of various human perversions that have existed at all times. The final ironisation of the Gothic novels happens at the end when the narrator disappears in his own story. That is contrary to the conventions of the Gothic novels, which bring the solution of mysteries (Botting 2005: 5). The narrator's only stronghold was in art, as the present time could not satisfy him emotionally or intellectually, which gives utopian features to the novel. The past for which the narrator was looking could only be reached by fantasy as a bridge between the distant worlds of today and history that has always been reconstructed differently to satisfy the ideological needs of a particular time.

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SANJA FRANKOVIĆ

SAŽETAK

Rad analizira gotske elemente u romanu *Katedrala* (2007.) Ive Brešana. Okvirna priča, koja tematizira pripovjedačev život i Domovinski rat u devedesetima, prepleće se s pričom koju on piše o katedrali sv. Jakova u Šibeniku. Nakon što je zbog svoje komunističke prošlosti bio prisiljen napustiti Sveučilište u Zagrebu, radi u šibenskome muzeju, gdje prevodi latinske povijesne dokumente. Cijeni izvornost genijā prošlosti te prezire suvremenu duhovnu i graditeljsku uniformnost. Međutim, u romantizaciji moderne kulture služi se postmodernom grotesknom profanacijom svetoga, gotskom dijabolizacijom petrarkističke ljubavi i interpretacijom povijesti kao slijeda neobičnih događaja. Iracionalnost romantičnoga sloja uzrokuje duh nesretno preminule mlade žene Klotilde, čiji je lik postmoderna ironizacija Petrarkine Laure i vide ga mentalno nestabilni muškarci. U povijesnome sloju motiv kanibalizma upućuje na individualnu osvetu mletačkim osvajačima. Pripovjedač nepotpune činjenice nadopunjava fantazijom, naglašavajući da čak ni historiografi ne mogu izbjeći pripovijedanje u svojoj "nekrofilnoj" potrazi za prošlošću. Gotski elementi kombiniraju se s groteskom i karnevalizacijom i očiti su u portretiranju muških likova kao simboličnih androgina koji svojim ženskim rodnim crtama prkose društvenim normama. U Brešanovu romanu oni naglašavaju vječnu antitezu ljepote i ljudskih izopačenosti u etičkoj, grotesknoj i fantastičnoj dimenziji. Međutim, tradicija gotskih romana ironizira se na završetku, u kojemu se misterij ne razrješava, nego se stvara nestankom pripovjedača u vlastitoj priči.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI:

povijesni roman, gotski i groteskni elementi, postsocijalizam, Ivo Brešan

