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## SAINTLY LOVE OF SAINT CATHERINE IN A MYSTICAL POEM BY JUNIJE PALMOTIĆ

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**ABSTRACT:** Written by the Ragusan poet and playwright Junije Palmotić (1607-1667), religious poem *Sveta Katarina od Sijene* has hitherto been neglected by Croatian literary historiography. This article aims to show that, classified as a Baroque religious poem, *Saint Catherine* leans on the tradition of mystical literature, which distinguishes it from the representative tear poems of this period written by Ivan Gundulić, Ivan Bunić Vučić and Ignjat Đurđević. Similar to many literary texts composed during Catholic Renewal, the poem thematises the experience of the higher, divine love, here also examined from the emotional perspective in terms of both particular representation of this type of love and the reception, i.e., the emotions 'expected' to be aroused in the audience. In addition, the article addresses the question of the religious emotional regime and emotional style characteristic of the period of Catholic Renewal, also pursued in the female convents of Dubrovnik.

**Key words:** Junije Palmotić, *Sveta Katarina od Sijene*, Saint Catherine of Siena, Baroque religious poem, emotions and literature, mystical literature, mystical poem, *barokni plač* (poetry of tears), Dubrovnik literature, 17th century.

### *Introduction*

*Sveta Katarina od Siene* (*Saint Catherine of Siena*) by Junije Palmotić belongs to an opus of religious poems which as a new Baroque genre marked Ragusan

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literature of the seventeenth century. The poem thematises one of the episodes from the hagiography of this fourteenth-century Dominican tertiary, a saint and mystic who distinguished herself not only by her ascetic and contemplative life but also by her public, charitable and political activities.<sup>1</sup> Fairly soon after her death Catherine was canonised (1461), and what especially contributed to her veneration and popularity throughout Europe was her biography *Legenda maior* written by the Dominican Raymond of Capua. This text served as a reference for *Perivoj od djevstva ili životi od djevica* (*Virginal Garden or the Lives of Virgins*) written by Palmotić's contemporary, Jesuit Bartol Kašić, who intended it for the Ragusan nuns.<sup>2</sup>

Although St. Catherine of Siena did not enjoy the status of prominent state saints (either major as St. Blaise, or minor as St. Catherine of Alexandria), whose feast days were publicly commemorated in Dubrovnik in accordance with the calendar of state holidays,<sup>3</sup> undoubtedly, she was venerated in Dubrovnik. In addition to Palmotić's poem and Kašić's text, her status in Dubrovnik is also confirmed by a manuscript of her biography preserved in the Library of the Order of the Friars Minor,<sup>4</sup> as well as a poem by Ignjat Đurđević from the turn

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that she belonged to a lower middle-class family and was never formally educated, Catherine Benincasa (1347-1380) was already publicly acknowledged during her lifetime. She was respected not only among the people from the margins of society but also by the nobility and state elite of the Republic of Siena and beyond, having distinguished herself in the political sphere through her diplomatic activities. Moreover, she mediated in the peace treaty between the Republic of Florence and the Pope in 1378, served as advisor to two Popes, Gregory XI and Urban VI, and prompted Gregory XI to return to Rome from Avignon. During the Great Schism of 1378, when Clement VII was elected anti-pope in Avignon, she protected the interests of Pope Urban VI. A legacy of more than 380 letters bears witness to her epistolary activity, while among her correspondents were numerous church and political authorities. Apart from *The Letters*, two more works are attributed to Catherine's opus—*The Dialogue of Divine Providence* and *Prayers*—both classified as ascetic prose in Italian literary historiography. Catholic Church celebrates St. Catherine, together with St. Francis of Assisi, as the patron saint of Italy, but also as patron saint of Europe and as a Doctor of the Church. For the historical reception of Catherine of Siena, different aspects of her spiritual and political activities, see *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, George Ferzoco and Beverly Mayne Kienzle. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Bartol Kašić, *Perivoj od djevstva ili životi od djevica*. Venetia: Presso Marco Ginammi, 1628.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the calendars of state feasts in the Ragusan Republic in the sixteenth and eighteenth century in: Nella Lonza, *Kazalište vlasti: ceremonijal i državni blagdani Dubrovačke Republike u 17. i 18. stoljeću*. Zagreb–Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2009: pp. 394-398.

<sup>4</sup> *The Lives of Saints*, a manuscript which contains the *vitae* of St. Lucia and St. Catherine of Siena, is preserved in the Library of the Order of the Friars Minor under the *signatura* (shelf mark) AMB 555.

of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Owing to the Dominicans who continually popularised their saint,<sup>6</sup> St. Catherine is frequently present in sacral art as evidenced by the paintings in Dubrovnik,<sup>7</sup> among which are *St. Catherine of Siena* from the 1630s in the Bishop's Palace,<sup>8</sup> an altar painting *Holy Conversation* in the church of St. Dominic, and *Our Lady of the Rosary* in the Dominican monastery.<sup>9</sup> At the end of the seventeenth century St. Catherine also figured as a patron saint of the *Akademija ispraznijeh (Accademia Otiosorum Eruditorum)*, for this cultural and literary institution gathering Ragusan poets celebrated the saint's feast day as its own.<sup>10</sup> Saint Catherine's image is further confirmed by a nunnery established in her name in 1706, although the funds for its construction had already been secured by the end of the sixteenth century, while the planning started after the Great Earthquake in 1667.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, Palmotić's poem had a share in the construction and perpetuation of the religious cult of St. Catherine of Siena in early modern Dubrovnik. The poem moreover reveals itself as a stimulating subject for analysis from the perspective of Croatian literary historiography that has so far not paid too much attention to it, but also as a cultural document, or as a product of the post-Tridentine atmosphere in which the Ragusan literature of the seventeenth century was created.

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<sup>5</sup> Several versions of the poem are extant, and they are classified among the "Pjesni bogoljubne" ("Spiritual poetry") in *Djela Inacija Ćorġi*, ed. Milan Rešetar [Stari pisci hrvatski, 24]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1918: pp. 238-240. With regard to the poem's central motif, saint's reflections over the miraculous displacement of her heart, Đurđević's poem may also be read as an echo of that by Palmotić.

<sup>6</sup> In this sense, it is worth mentioning that the Florentine Serafino Razzi (1531-1611), who served as prior of the Dominican monasteries in Dubrovnik and vicar of the Ragusan Bishopric in the last decade of the sixteenth century, was the author of three Italian lauds and the translator into the vernacular of three Latin hymns dedicated to St. Catherine (cf. Eliana Corbari, »Laude for Catherine of Siena.«, in: *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*: pp. 227-258).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Sanja Cvetnić, »Dominikanci u hrvatskim krajevima i ikonografija nakon Tridentskoga sabora (1545-1563).« *Croatica christiana periodica* 66 (2010): pp. 1-30.

<sup>8</sup> The painting is attributed to Matteo Ponzoni-Pončun. See Joško Belamarić, *Biskupska palača u Dubrovniku*. Dubrovnik: Dubrovačka biskupija, 2018: p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> *Holy Conversation* was painted by Francesco di Maria, and is dated before 1690 (see S. Cvetnić, »Dominikanci u hrvatskim krajevima«: p. 22), *Our Lady of the Rosary* was painted at the turn of the seventeenth to eighteenth century, attributed to Tripo Kokolja of Perast (Kruno Prijatelj, »Barok u Dalmaciji.«, in: *Barok u Hrvatskoj*, ed. Anđela Horvat, Radmila Matejčić and Kruno Prijatelj. Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada Liber, 1982: pp. 841-842).

<sup>10</sup> See Mirko Deanović, »Održi talijanske akademije degli Arcadi preko Jadrana.« *Rad JAZU* 248 (1933): p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> For details on the construction of the nunnery of St. Catherine, see Minela Fulurija, »Utemeljenje ženskoga samostana Sv. Katarine Sijenske u Dubrovniku.« *Povijesni prilozi* 45 (2013): pp. 115-134.

The reasons that Palmotić's *Saint Catherine of Siena*<sup>12</sup> has remained beyond the attention of literary scholars are manifold, some of which justified and some not. This is a text that certainly does not attain as high an aesthetic value and stylistic refinement when compared to the canonical texts of the Baroque poets such as Ivan Gundulić, Ivan Bunić Vučić or Ignjat Đurđević. Also, this verse text—as implied by literary historiography's marginal interest in it—reveals itself as doubly “non-representative”, both within the entirety of Palmotić's opus as well as within the genre of the Baroque poem. If one takes into account that Palmotić entered the canon of older Croatian literature primarily as a prolific playwright whose numerous works marked the golden age of Ragusan Baroque tragicomedy, but equally so as an author whose texts promote *slovinstvo*<sup>13</sup> (Slavic/Ilyrian ideology), it becomes quite clear why *Saint Catherine*, neither a tragicomedy nor a text possessing a *slovin* ideological component, remained on the margins of scholarly research. On the other hand, the study of the religious poem<sup>14</sup> as a prominent literary form in the Ragusan Baroque literature has focused mostly

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<sup>12</sup> See »Sveta Katarina od Sijene.«, in: *Djela Gjona Gjora Palmotića*, ed. Armin Pavić [Stari pisci hrvatski, 14]. Zagreb: JAZU, 1884: pp. 231-237. All verses have been quoted from this edition, accompanied by line numeration given in brackets.

<sup>13</sup> For Junije Palmotić's canonical status in Croatian literature, see the chapter on this author in: Ivana Brković, *Političko i sveto: identitet prostora i prostori identiteta u dubrovačkoj književnosti 17. stoljeća*. Zagreb–Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2018: pp. 129-133.

<sup>14</sup> The term Baroque poem, as shown by Dunja Fališevac, has been used in literary historiography since the 1960s, in the texts by Renate Lachmann and Ivan Slamnig (see »Poema, epilij, pjesan, spjev – neka terminološka pitanja u hrvatskoj znanosti o književnosti.«, in: *Komparativna povijest hrvatske književnosti. Poema u hrvatskoj književnosti: problem kontinuiteta*, ed. Cvijeta Pavlović, Vinka Glunčić-Bužanić and Andre Meyer-Fraatz. Zagreb–Split: Književni krug Split and Odsjek za komparativnu književnost Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2015: pp. 9-19). Today, the term is practically self-explanatory, most frequently used in accordance with the definitions provided by Pavao Pavličić (compare his texts »Žanrovi hrvatske barokne književnosti.«, »Neke zajedničke crte baroknih plačeva.«, »Parodijski aspekti baroknih komičnih poema.«, in: *Rasprave o hrvatskoj baroknoj književnosti*. Split: Čakavski sabor, 1979: pp. 9-29, 105-128, 129-144). In this respect, Pavličić's entry in the *Croatian Literary Encyclopaedia* defines the Baroque poem as an umbrella term for the lyric-epic texts characterised by a monologic, lyrical mode of narration, retrospective mode of narrative exposition and a rudimentary plot with a small number of characters. Arguing that this is a specific, new genre in Ragusan literature, Pavličić classifies as Baroque poems both religious and comic poems (»Poema.«, in: *Hrvatska književna enciklopedija*, vol. 3, ed. Velimir Visković. Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod Miroslava Krležu, 2011: pp. 392-393). By contrast, Zoran Kravar connects religious and comic poems to older traditions and points to their different origins, thus considering them as two separate genres and not one (see chapter »Duhovni plač.«, in: *Das Barock in der kroatischen Literatur*. Köln–Weimar–Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1991: pp. 192-198).

on *barokni plačevi* (Baroque tear poems)—not only because they (or some of them) have been considered aesthetically more valuable, but also because they have been assessed as representative in terms of genre. Thus Pavao Pavličić identifies three Baroque “tear poems”—Gundulić’s *Suze sina razmetnoga* (*Tears of the Prodigal Son*), Bunić’s *Mandalijena pokornica* (*Penitent Magdalene*), and Đurđević’s *Uzdasi Mandalijene pokornice* (*The Sighs of Penitent Magdalene*)—as a specific sub-type of the Baroque religious poem. However, he leaves Palmotić’s *Saint Catherine* without a more distinct (sub)genre label, as well as some other texts which, with regard to their theme and structural characteristics, are not fully in tune with the Baroque poetry of tears.<sup>15</sup> Taking a different approach in his literary-historical synthesis, Zoran Kravar focuses on *duhovni plačevi* and their echoes in later authors, completely ignoring Palmotić’s poem. In a more recent text, Lovro Škopljanac, like Pavličić, considers *Saint Catherine* as a Baroque religious poem, yet following the general features of the genre as expounded by Tomaševski and Pavličić, he does not offer a significantly different analysis from Pavličić. Nor does Škopljanac refer to Kravar, hence overlooking the poem’s particularities and the tradition in which it was written.<sup>16</sup> Bearing all this in mind, a more comprehensive analysis of *Saint Catherine* in this article will contribute not only to filling a lacuna in the study of Palmotić’s opus so far, but also to shedding light on the still unsolved issue of the origins of the Baroque religious poem. Or, as Dunja Fališevac would put it, it will contribute to providing the answer as to whether the Baroque poem is “innovative or whether it perpetuates certain more traditional, Renaissance and even medieval genres”.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, unlike the tear poems that through thematic focusing on the protagonists’ processes of knowledge of God and repentance of their sins clearly point to a link with the Italian genre of *lagrime*,<sup>18</sup> this paper will aim to show that *Saint Catherine* relies on a different literary tradition—that of mystical

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<sup>15</sup> While in terms of its other two characteristics (lyrically intoned narration; a small number of characters and a superficially developed plot) Palmotić’s poem fits into the definition provided by Pavličić, it departs from it in terms of the retrospective method of exposition, implying that the “protagonist always speaks of something that had happened to him before the beginning of his monologue as he reconstructs the previous event and comments on it” (P. Pavličić, »Poema«: p. 392).

<sup>16</sup> Lovro Škopljanac, »Sižejna izgradnja poeme u starijoj hrvatskoj književnosti.«, in: *Komparativna povijest hrvatske književnosti. Poema u hrvatskoj književnosti: problem kontinuiteta*, ed. Cvijeta Pavlović, Vinka Glunčić-Bužanić and Andre Meyer-Fraatz. Zagreb–Split: Književni krug; Odsjek za komparativnu književnost Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2015: p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> D. Fališevac, »Poema, epilij, pjesan, spjev«: p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Z. Kravar, *Das Barock in der kroatischen Literatur*: pp. 172–173.

literature. Through various forms, both prose and verse, this tradition was continually present in European literature from the Middle Ages onwards, witnessing a new impetus in the post-Tridentine period in the Catholic and Protestant communities alike, though with a somewhat different emphasis.<sup>19</sup> Since women's mystical poetry, as far as we know, was not produced in the literature written in Croatian language prior to the seventeenth century, Palmotić's poem is important because it testifies to the reception of this tradition, albeit relatively late.

Focusing on the topic of the experience of higher love, similar to many texts written in the age of Catholic Renewal, Palmotić's poem may just as equally be analysed from the emotionological standpoint in terms of both specific representation of this type of love and the reception, that is, the emotions "expected" to be aroused in the audience. Furthermore, the paper aims to show that the articulation of higher love as a particular manifestation of emotional experience in Palmotić's *Saint Catherine* on the one hand points indirectly to the links with women's mysticism of the late Middle Ages. On the other, it points to the post-Tridentine religious poetry which adopted Petrarchan rhetorical models, and which cultivated the "intensely emotional style" aimed to stimulate the affections but also intellect, the style adhered by numerous sacred rhetorics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such insights, from a broader cultural and social perspective, also pose questions about the pragmatic function of the work intended for nuns with the purpose of eliciting particular "religious" emotions, in addition to those regarding the religious emotional regime and emotional style cultivated in the Ragusan nunneries during Catholic Renewal.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> This new ascent as regards Catholic Renewal is especially related to the activities, spiritual practices and the texts of Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and John of the Cross (1542-1591), who were canonised as saints shortly after their deaths.

<sup>20</sup> In accordance with the consensus in contemporary sciences by which emotion is a universal phenomenon but also a cultural product, this analysis starts from the assumption that every emotion can be religious, where upon the attribute of religious points to the fact that it occurs in a certain religious context, that is—as Ole Riis and Linda Woodhead emphasise following in the footsteps of William Reddy—in the context of the religious emotional regime. In this sense, one may conclude that emotion in general is generated through interactions between individuals, society and objects, where the religious emotion differs "by its place within a religion's emotional programme, and hence by its relation to the symbols, persons, and practices that constitute such a programme" (Ole Riis and Linda Woodhead, *A Sociology of Religious Emotion*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2010: p. 93).

*Mystical poem*

The subject of the poem *Saint Catherine of Siena* is mystical rapture, that is, the saint's spiritual ecstasy: yearning for Christ, the saint prays that he give her a new, pure heart, freed from the shackles of the flesh. Christ, moved by her supplication accompanied by a river of tears, opens her chest, takes the heart out and carries it to heaven. He then places it into his own sacred heart and ennobles it with divine ardour, after which he returns it to the saint's chest. Through this miraculous act, which invokes *unio mystica* or mystical union with Christ, a process of spiritual but also physical transformation is achieved: for, having died for this world, Catherine receives "holy wounds", stigmata, and her penitent tears are replaced by the tears of joy, suggesting the transformation of emotional state. Overwhelmed by the experience of divine love, at the very end of the poem Catherine remains unconscious in the lap of her divine lover. Underlying the narrative is a popular episode of the exchange of hearts from the saint's life, here expanded by reflexive expressions of the narrator and the saint, along with the utterances through which, in accordance with the tradition of mystical literature, the saint addresses not only Christ but also her own soul and heart (body). In this element the poem departs from hagiographic sources.<sup>21</sup>

By evoking the mystical experience of Saint Catherine's love, Palmotić's poem reveals its links with a particular love pattern that is believed to have emerged in the thirteenth century, and is related to the beguine orders and their mystical practices and texts.<sup>22</sup> Considering that the beguines were predominantly illiterate or semi-literate, these texts were mainly vernacular and often written by male tutors, the priests who looked after their spiritual lives, or male students.

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<sup>21</sup> A comparison of the poem with its possible sources shows that Palmotić must have read Kašić's *Virginal Garden*, in which the episode in question is depicted in several sentences only (cf. *Perivoy od dievstva*: p. 83), but also *Legenda maior* by Raymond of Capua in which it is described more extensively (see chapter »Ecstasies and Revelations.«, in: Raymond of Capua, *The Life of St. Catherine of Siena*, trans. by Harvill Press and P. J. Kenedy & Sons [E-Book]. Charlotte, North Carolina: TAN Books, 2011). It is likely that Palmotić was familiar with the texts written by the saint herself, *Il Dialogo della Divina Providenza* and *Lettere* which, from the end of the fifteenth century, were already in circulation in different editions.

<sup>22</sup> For informal and lay, notably women's religious movements in the late Middle Ages that first emerged in the Low Countries and later elsewhere in Europe, see Walter Simons, »New Forms of Religious Life in Medieval Western Europe.«, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012: pp. 80-113.

The representations of mystical experiences of devout women, as medievalist Barbara Newman has shown on numerous examples,<sup>23</sup> draw attention to a specific combination of, on the one hand, bridal mysticism (*Brautmystik*) which relied on “the eroticized contemplative practice based on allegorical reading of the Song of Songs and popularized by Bernard of Clairvaux”,<sup>24</sup> and on the other, on courtly love discourse, widespread in the secular love poetry and romances of the time. In this sense, Newman sees the beguines not only as a religious but also as a literary movement that pursued a specific *dolce stil religioso* or *la mystique courtoise*.<sup>25</sup>

By choosing the theme and composition characteristic of a mystical experience as well as the motifs of mystical literature, Palmotić’s poem unavoidably—at least in a manner allowing us to use Bakhtin’s term *genre memory*—adopts indirectly the ethos of mystical romance, too. The echo of *la mystique courtoise* may be exemplified by the main motif of Palmotić’s poem—the exchange of hearts between Christ and Catherine—related to Christ’s great commandment of love (cf. Mt, 22:37). Revealed as a topos in the texts of medieval women mystics—employed by Saint Catherine herself in one of her letters as well as the author of her hagiography, Raymond of Capua—this motif of romance provenance, which in a given case evokes devotion to the Sacred Heart, testifies to the fusion of the Biblical tradition and the discourse of courtly love.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the poem’s internal communication frame, in which the female narrator—like the fiancée in the *Song of Songs* who is expecting her fiancé—expresses her desire for Christ indicates an analogous yet in a gender sense reversed situation from secular love poetry, in which the lyrical subject is most commonly a man

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<sup>23</sup> See Barbara Newman, »*La mystique courtoise: Thirteenth-Century Beguines and the Art of Love*«, in: *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995: pp. 137-167), in which the author analyses the texts by Mechthild of Magdeburg, Hadewijch of Antwerp and Marguerite Porete.

<sup>24</sup> B. Newman, »*La mystique courtoise*«: p. 138.

<sup>25</sup> Despite the fact that many church and secular authorities argued that God’s love is incomparable to *fine amour* in any form, and condemned erotic love as well as courtly love poetry, this poetics is being established following the attempts of those authors who fused eros and agape and who, like Gérard of Liège (thirteenth century), combined “passages from Augustine and Bernard, vernacular love poems, and the *Song of Songs* into a single *ars amatoria*”. Such a synthesis of various types of love is the main characteristic of the Parisian Beguine rulebook from the beginning of the fourteenth century (*Règle des Fins Amans*), in which the ideals of the beguine community are articulated and its rules promulgated (see B. Newman, »*La mystique courtoise*«: p. 140).

<sup>26</sup> B. Newman, »*La mystique courtoise*«: p. 141.



and the object of desire a woman.<sup>27</sup> However, unlike the frequently cold-hearted ladies in courtly love poetry who remain mainly inaccessible to the lyrical subject, Palmotić's poem—which invokes a romantic situation of love from afar characteristic of the texts by women mystics—features the divine lover who (under certain circumstances) is occasionally accessible.<sup>28</sup> Such faithful service to the lady by a secular enamoured lover in medieval courtly poetry often remains unrewarded, causing his frustration and even anger; contrary to this, the female protagonist of Palmotić's poem who claims that she is Christ's "faithful slave" (378) and whom she will "for ever serve" (405), gains special privileges with respect to the other mortals. Her servitude includes constant yearning, accompanied by prayers and contemplation, gestures of obedience and detestation of the earthly (body), but also community work.<sup>29</sup> It is a means of obtaining love that finally leads to its consummation, including an "ecstatic fusion and dissolution of boundaries", also glorified in troubadour poetry, *Minnesang* and romance.<sup>30</sup>

Yet Palmotić's Baroque poem, created in different circumstances and written from a different perspective, cannot be directly related to the poetics of the mentioned mystical literary tradition. For while this tradition, having emerged at the end of the Middle Ages, implies a "thorough going, unabashed translation

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<sup>27</sup> On the characteristics of medieval semantics of courtly love in secular love poetry, see Tomislav Bogdan, *Ljubavi razlike*. Zagreb: Disput, 2012: pp. 133-137.

<sup>28</sup> Namely, according to B. Newman, the situation in which a beguine *fin amant* is in constant longing because of the distant love, to whom she has access only in short and clandestine meetings in the moments of ecstasy, points to a romanticised reshaping of an old monastic topos of earthly life as exile from God (see B. Newman, »*La mystique courtoise*«: p. 141).

<sup>29</sup> Although the aspect of public action is not specifically emphasised in Palmotić's poem, it is understood, as indicated by the narrator's utterance at the beginning of the poem by which Catherine is "a mother, of whose pure maidens / she established an order dear to God" (21-22). The attribution of motherhood here evokes the fact that the disciples and followers addressed the saint using this term (Karen Scott, »St. Catherine od Siena, "Apostola"« *Church History* 61 (1992): p. 37). Moreover, being a common topos in mystical literature, this attribution implies that God's fiancée is "the mother" to virtues and spiritual children, who may include the poor and sick for whom she cares, the disciples who entrust themselves to her guidance, and the beneficiaries of her prayers". From the perspective of bridal Biblical discourse, the spiritual motherhood of this kind is the fruit of the "marriage" with Christ, and in the context of *fine amour*, "with the addition of ascetic exercises", it is the means of obtaining love, which in Palmotić is a strongly accentuated component (cf. B. Newman, »*La mystique courtoise*«: p. 144).

<sup>30</sup> However, this "pursuit of amorous fusion through abjection" as well as the "representation of Beloved as a mirror of the self", also stressed in Palmotić was, according to B. Newman, present in mystical literature even before the thirteenth century (see »*La mystique courtoise*«: p. 164).

of monastic teaching into the idiom of secular love poetry” in the sense of the synthesis of agape and eros,<sup>31</sup> Palmotić’s worldview—as will be shown—corresponds more to the post-Tridentine atmosphere characterised, in the words of Virginia Cox, by a *poetics of conversion*.<sup>32</sup> Its result was similar, but it developed with a contrary aim, in accordance with which the vernacular secular love poetry popular at the time tried to adapt to the needs of a new spiritual era. Namely, (religious) authorities maintained that the canonised poetry of Petrarch, who was considered an indisputable literary authority, could be adequately understood only by mature readers, while for the youth it represented a moral danger.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, in the last quarter of the sixteenth century new spiritual poetry adopts Petrarch’s amorous discourse, that is, the style of secular love poetry yet with the goal of celebrating the divine.<sup>34</sup> Seen in this light, it does not surprise that Palmotić’s *Saint Catherine* inherits the rhetoric of secular love poetry, like the other religious poems and Baroque religious poetry in general created under the influence of Italian literary trends.

Similarly, an attempt to mediate a spiritual event in religious poetry through the familiar, that is, emotional language may be observed as an echo of the numerous contemporary sacred rhetorics. These texts can be linked with the religious renewal in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of the Catholics and the Protestants alike, based on Renaissance Augustinism.<sup>35</sup> Holding that

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<sup>31</sup> B. Newman, »*La mystique courtoise*«: p. 140.

<sup>32</sup> For more detail, see Virginia Cox, *The Prodigious Muse: Women’s Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011: pp. 32-44.

<sup>33</sup> An eloquent testimony in support of the argument that Palmotić was primarily guided by the concern that youth not be “corrupted” rather than the ideas on the basis of which mystical poetics is established, among others, is the saint’s utterance in which secular (male) love poetry is condemned: “Impetuous young men, who are seduced / into the web by blind love / and ephemeral beauty, / that is your desire and greed, / and you say that opportunity, / your youth beguiles, / forces you to die without cure / and steals your heart!” (273-280).

<sup>34</sup> Although the signal of such poetic conversion, as Fox points out, appears already in Petrarch himself in the last *canzone* of his *Scattered Rhymes*, and the fact that from the 1530s one can already trace the continuous efforts to “translate” Petrarch into religious verses, critical for the development of this tradition of religious poetry were the clerics such as Gabriele Fiamma (*Rime spirituali*, 1570) and Angelo Grillo, but also secular poets Torquato Tasso and Giovan Battista Marino, who earned a prominent place in the anthologies of religious verses of the early seventeenth century. Cf. V. Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*: pp. 34-35.

<sup>35</sup> According to Debora K. Shuger, in the period from 1500 to 1700 a total of 504 rhetorics were published, including reprints and new editions (»The Philosophical Foundations of Sacral Rhetorics.«, in: *Religion and Emotion*, ed. John Corrigan. Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2004: p. 116).

the process of rational apprehension is related to emotions, or rather that the cognitive and emotional experience interconnect,<sup>36</sup> sacred rhetoricians emphasised affectivity as a key component of spiritual experience, thus advocating a profoundly emotional and rich figurative style.<sup>37</sup>

### *The emotional sequence of love*

The experience of divine love, represented in Palmotić from the saint's perspective, is shaped as a strong emotional experience whereby every narrative move, in accordance with the poem's genre tenets, is followed by lyrical passages in which the protagonist expresses her emotions. A closer view, however, reveals that no other but the emotion itself, Catherine's love/desire for Christ, is the motivational trigger for the development of the whole narrative episode. In this respect, Palmotić's mystical romance may also be read from the perspective of premodern theories of passions, among which that of Thomas Aquinas is most thoroughly expounded, and which directly or indirectly echoed in the representations of mystical emotional experiences.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> This was based on Augustine's "denying reason's exclusive property rights to truth", that is, in rejecting classical intellectualist tradition and conforming to the mental model in which "feeling, willing and loving" are closely intertwined. Shuger stresses: "For Augustine, love and knowledge are tightly interconnected, as the noetic quest begins from and is propelled by love, yet we can love only that which, in some sense, we already know. Rather than undermining rational judgment, love wings the mind's search for God and truth" (D. K. Shuger, »The Philosophical Foundations of Sacral Rhetorics.«: pp. 121, 123).

<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, many of those rhetorics contained detailed lists of emotions designed to emphasise the passion discourse. These lists—starting from an Augustinian thesis that there are no evil or good emotions, but that the difference between the secular and sacred lies only in the nature of the object—almost always begin with God's love and emphasise spiritual joy, repentance and desire for God, along with less uplifted emotions like anger and shame (D. K. Shuger, »The Philosophical Foundations of Sacral Rhetorics.«: p. 121).

<sup>38</sup> Historian Barbara H. Rosenwein draws attention to the links between Thomas's theories of passions (see *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae 22-48: <https://www.corpusthomicum.org/iopera.html>, accessed Dec. 2019) and representations of emotions in late medieval *emotional communities* in: Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600–1700*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016: pp. 144-168. On passions in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, see Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003: pp. 26-61. Thomas's theory of passions is elaborated in detail in: Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions. A Study of Summa Theologiae 1a2ae 22-48*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

According to the theory of Thomas Aquinas, drawn on Aristotle, Saint Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius, passions belong to the powers of the soul, more precisely, to the appetitive power, and are represented as a type of motion (*motus*). Thomas distinguishes two types of appetite: intellectualive/will, which does not include bodily changes, also referred to as affects, and sensitive, which includes bodily transformations and is the seat of passions. In this respect Thomas points to the idea of the unity of body and soul (*compositum*). Among the passions that Thomas discusses,<sup>39</sup> love has a special place because as a divine principle it lies in the foundations of every appetite to gain the good. The movement of the passions is here shown in sequences that include a characteristic order of passions, so that a sequence of love may be observed, as Rosenwein argues, as a kind of a struggle to acquire the good, that is, the love object, or to surmount obstacles, in this way creating a dynamic narrative.<sup>40</sup> At the beginning there is love, directed at the acquisition of the good/love object, and is followed by desire, important for making movement towards the goal; in the case of obstacles, there appear irascible passions, hope and/or despair, and finally, when the love object is reached, pleasure and joy.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Thomas points out the effects that ensue after the love object is obtained, and they are union, mutual indwelling (*mutua inhaesio*) and ecstasy.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> His list consists of eleven passions, among which, occurring in pairs, concupiscible and irascible are distinguished: concupiscible are love (*amor*) and hate (*odium*), desire (*desiderium*) and avoidance (*fuga*), pleasure or joy (*delectatio* or *gaudium*) and pain or sorrow (*dolor* or *tristitia*), and irascible are hope (*spes*) and despair (*desperatio*), boldness (*audacia*) and fear (*timor*), while anger (*ira*) has no pair (*Summa Theologiae*, 1a.2ae.25.2 and 25.3). Cf. the table in Barbara H. Rosenwein, «Who Cared about Thomas Aquinas's Theory of the Passions?» *L'Atelier du centre de recherche historique* 16 (2016) = *Histoire intellectuelle des émotions, de l'Antiquité à nos jours*: <https://acrh.revues.org/7420> (accessed Dec 2019): 2–4; R. Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*: pp. 82-87.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. B. H. Rosenwein, «Who Cared about Thomas Aquinas's Theory of the Passions?» pp. 11-12.

<sup>41</sup> When speaking of hate, it stimulates repulsion towards the object and the struggle of boldness and fear or the arousal of anger, finishing, if the evil has become present, in pain and sorrow. The two sequences of love and hate frequently occur side by side, whereby love precedes hate as, according to Thomas, “love of one thing is the cause of one's hating its contrary” (29.2 ad 2m). See R. Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*: pp. 141-142.

<sup>42</sup> See B. H. Rosenwein, «Who Cared about Thomas Aquinas's Theory of the Passions?» pp. 14–17. For more details on the effects of love here discussed and others, see R. Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*: pp. 132-139.

The movement of passions in the described sequence corresponds to the movement of the narrative of “love” in Palmotić’s poem: Saint Catherine’s love towards Christ, as has already been mentioned, is a trigger of desire, whereby the saint seeks the union and mutual indwelling: concretely, with her “sweet God / she looks to [...] desirously unite” and all in him “reside” (see 43-46). At the moment when her appetite encounters an obstacle, or when her heavenly lover, having taken her heart, becomes (temporarily) inaccessible, the protagonist laments tearfully, suggesting despair. Addressing the “sweet Lord” (153) with a question: “Why do you leave me alone?” (156), she stresses that she cannot live without him (159-160) and that she would be happy if she was “deadened” by death (166-167). Then despair turns into consolation in that, when she herself cannot, at least her heart will experience “divine joys”. At the end of the poem, the saint’s obtaining of the love object is presented in a detailed description of her ecstasy as a joyous spiritual and bodily experience.

Yet while the narrative line follows the Thomist “love” sequence of the passions, Palmotić’s poem, on the other hand, reveals that the love for Christ is at the same time a trigger for a parallel sequence of hate, that is, of repulsion and detestation of her body and her own human nature embodied by Catherine’s heart, and which the saint wishes to discard, crying a river of tears. Moreover, the basic motivation of the saint’s prayers for a new, divine heart comes from her disdain for her own heart bound by the flesh. For, while the “burning” soul “rushes / towards Jesus Christ who represents all of its pleasure” (73-74), as does her intellect/will through prayers that are the fruit of her “mind pure as snow” (114), on the other hand her heart, “the soul, oh, does not obey” (39) and resists “the soul’s desire” (76) because it, following “the nature of its body / feels the low desires” (43-44). Suggesting in this way that the attaining of divine love at the same time includes the cultivation of disdain for corporeality, the poem also points to a radical, Platonic dualism present in Christianity since the early Middle Ages, which is in contradiction to the Aristotelian dualism found in Thomas that presupposes the harmony of body and soul.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For a detailed and instructive account of Christian Platonic dualism, by which the body is understood as an origin of sin, and which has been circulating in Christianity from the early centuries to the present, see Dolores Grmača, *Nevolje s tijelom. Alegorija putovanja od Bunića do Barakovića*. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2015: pp. 16-19. On differences between medieval Platonism and Aristotelianism regarding the dualism of body and soul, see Peter King, »Body and Soul.«, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John Marenbon. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2012: pp. 505–523, notably pp. 505-512.

*Paradox of the heart—“troubles with the body”*

The paradox of the heart may, moreover, be explained from the rhetorical perspective as well, as the basic figure on which Palmotić builds his poem. For, while on the one hand the saint’s utterances emphasise the corporeal “nature” of the heart, which, as such, connotes “sinfulness” of sensitive love and desire for earthly lovers, they also indicate that the heart is not merely the centre and medium of sin but also the “seat” of divine love. This paradox is directly articulated in the question that Catherine asks herself—how to love if she is left without a heart, evoking the great Biblical commandment according to which man should love God with all his mind, soul and heart: “What am I saying? Who can love without a heart, / when nature has made it / the home of love?” (85-88). Moreover, “Lover [...] almighty / demands only the heart, / not caring/ for other gifts” (89-92).

This contradiction, therefore, is the result of the fact that the heart, besides its literal meaning of an organ and bodily “pump” as the source of life, is in the first case represented exclusively from the aspect of the flesh as a metaphor of human corporeality and secular love, while Catherine’s question points to the (Aristotelian) theological tradition, according to which body/heart is the seat of the soul<sup>44</sup> and, correspondingly, a metaphor for human spirituality and higher love. Thus, the paradox of the heart is the result of an *aporia* created by the confrontation of two different perspectives, and related to the status of corporeality itself. Corporeality, in the first case, contrasted to the spiritual and identified with the secular/earthly love, carries only the negative connotations of human sexuality and is the medium of sin. In the second case, in which the harmony of body and soul is invoked, it is the medium of knowing God and attaining higher love. In other words, heart/body as the “seat” of the soul and the “home” of love, in accordance with the theology of embodiment, implies alongside the spiritual also the sensitive component of divine love,<sup>45</sup> while the heart, represented from the perspective of radical dualism as a body confronted to the soul, excludes it.

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<sup>44</sup> Among others, this is made explicit by Catherine’s utterance that the soul lives “in the middle of the chest” and that the heart is its “birthplace”. Cf. verses 185-192.

<sup>45</sup> The notion of the heart, widespread in medieval and early modern religious literature, was used metaphorically as the “chief repository of the knowledge of God and the chief instrument of the higher love”, but also in its literal, physical meaning. The physical aspect of the heart is evidenced, for example, by the devoutness to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which Bernard of Clairvaux established in the twelfth century in the prayers *Cor Jesu dulcissimum*, as well as the written and iconographic

As exposed in Catherine's question at the beginning of the poem, the paradox of the heart remains to hover till the poem's end, failing to provide either a concrete or a clear-cut answer. Thus, playing with the motif of the heart—represented on the one hand from the perspective of the opposition of body and soul, and on the other from the aspect of their unity—seems like an impetus for a concettistic procedure in the poem rather than an introduction into the poetic elaboration of the theological or philosophical theme on the nature of the heart, i.e., love. In this sense, the rhetorical play may merely be viewed as a suggestion for the limitation of the intellect to conceive what love is, as well as the fact that in its essence love is contradictory.

However, the initially outlined dichotomy of heart and soul, following the mentioned paradox of the heart, is continually brought into question and undermined by different textual strategies. Thus, for example, the poem represents the vision of the miraculous displacement of the saint's "fleshly" heart:<sup>46</sup> through divine intervention it reaches heaven, the lap of the "immortal lover", while the soul that aspires to the heights remains on earth. Observed from the rhetorical perspective, the example shows that the initial antithesis of body and soul is again the starting point for the establishment of the paradox, implying in a broader sense an oxymoronic relationship. It is now the heart/body that through miraculous displacement obtains a quality of the heavenly and becomes a "spiritual body", while the soul, remaining on earth, gains the connotation of the corporeal and may thus be likened to the "bodily soul".<sup>47</sup> This argument is in turn strengthened by the statements which signalise the reversal of the initial antithesis, namely the substitution of body and soul: Catherine thus complains of a "lazy" soul which she had previously praised

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tradition depicting the Sacred Heart as wounds during crucifixion, suggesting it to be the place of explicit physical suffering. In this respect, the devout practice of kneeling before the crucifix and Christ's wounded heart is not merely a stimulus for spiritual contemplation but also a means of entering into the divine body (W. E. Slights, »The Narrative Heart of the Renaissance.« *Renaissance and Reformation*, N.S. 26 (2002): p. 7).

<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the whole episode of the exchange of Catherine's heart may be observed as a literal realisation of the metaphor of stolen heart characteristic of secular love poetry.

<sup>47</sup> This is also shown by Catherine's utterance whereby it is explicitly stated that the soul now suffers pains of the mortals bound by their bodies, while the heart, freed of the body, enjoys the heavens: "My heart is the happiest of all, / over my miserable soul! /It suffers mortally, / and you enjoy divine joys." (193-196). Also, in Catherine's utterance the given situation is interpreted as a miracle, a paradox: "[...] do too miraculous / events occur to me: / leaving my bodily clothes behind / my spirit stays on earth, and heart is in paradise?" (205-208).

and orders it to follow the heart's example, while envying her displaced fleshly heart which she had previously despised.<sup>48</sup> Eventually the situation in which Catherine, having obtained a new, Jesus's heart, becomes an opportunity for a new paradox because the saint is privileged by loving her heavenly lover with his own heart, namely, with his own goodness.<sup>49</sup>

In this sense, the very theme of the poem, the exchange of hearts between Catherine and Christ, and the rhetorical play with the basic motifs tend to loosen and reverse the initial antithesis of body and soul, thus signalling that love cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy of the carnal and spiritual. This may further be supported by the fact that the saint's vision, by mediating the motif of the union of Catherine's and Christ's hearts, represents *unio mystica* and the transformation of the saint's "fleshly" heart. The physical aspect of the union of lovers, typical of mystical literature, is reflected in the appearance of the stigmata which imply the penetration of Christ's body into Catherine's: namely, Christ takes into his "glorious [...] hands" Catherine's heart and on her body "the signs of his suffering, / holy wounds he marks" (303-304). The spiritual dimension, on the other hand, includes the ennobling of Catherine's heart through three Pauline theological virtues, as indicated by the scene in which Christ in a miraculous way "combined through his almighty power / constant faith, true hope, / pure and burning love / and of it made a heart" (306-308). Finally, after Christ returns to Catherine her heart ennobled with his love, the poem delivers a description of the saint in ecstasy represented as a spiritual and bodily experience through the implication of the utter openness of her intellect/will but also of all of her senses. In this way the indescribable force of divine love embodied in the saint is invoked through the motif of a stunned, pure soul that is by "the holy fire" prompted to burn with "a pure flame" as well as through the description of Catherine's bodily reactions. Catherine, completely overwhelmed by the force of love stoked by the Holy Spirit, remains speechless,<sup>50</sup> while "she feels all over her body" the "enjoyment" and heavenly love, all her senses "feel unexpected joy" and are inhabited by "sweetness", her

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<sup>48</sup> "How I envy you, my heart, / for your righteous path / as soon as I see you inhabiting / the most luxurious habit [Christ's lap]!" (197-200).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. the verses in which, after the exchange of hearts, the saint, apostrophising Christ, states: "I will live with thine life / and thus spend days in peace / I will love you with your goodness, / with all my heart, with all my awareness." (401-404).

<sup>50</sup> As explicitly stated: "She wishes to speak, / but from great joy / she cannot open her mouth, / the word dying on her tongue." (353-356).



glances are “burning”, her face glows in “heavenly love” and down it “happy tears fall” (cf. vv. 341-368).

This sensual description of Catherine’s body in rapture, which could in part be compared to Bernini’s famous representation of the ecstasy of St. Teresa of Avila, is in accordance with the endeavours of sacred rhetoric to make accessible, through lively and sensory images, both literal and metaphorical, that which the human intellect has difficulty conceiving.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, the description also faithfully follows the mystical tradition and in line with it the usual mystical topos of the saint’s speechlessness, suggesting the inexpressibility of the given experience of love, as well as the fact that it surpasses intellectual comprehension and human limits in general. In this respect, both the sensitive and sensory reactions that are represented through characteristic synesthetic metaphors, as well as the stigmata, do not point to the body as a “most referent” but, in accordance with mystical theology, to the body emptied of the flesh, the body as a sign that should therefore be read and understood as external, physical symptoms of the internal, spiritual experience.<sup>52</sup> In Palmotić’s poem, however, the given description functions as merely another argument in favour of the initial paradox of the heart derived from the fundamental idea of dualism by which the uplifted soul is counterpointed with the sinning body/heart. Accordingly, Catherine concludes that “both spirit and blood” obtain divine “sweet chastity” precisely because “the heart gives / both spirit and blood to the whole body” (cf. vv. 449-452).

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. D. K. Shuger, »The Philosophical Foundations of Sacral Rhetorics.«: p. 127.

<sup>52</sup> This kind of reading and understanding of the body as a sign, as Patricia Dailey argues, stems from a Christian tradition which does not represent the body as a unified whole but approaches it in its multiple nature. Thus, for example, Origen and Augustine, following Paul’s distinction between the exterior human being (represented as a temporary earthen vessel that operates by observable things) and interior human being (which includes that aspect of the being that is renewed in eternity), distinguish the “outer person” (shaped out of earthly mud) and “inner person” (made in God’s image). Correspondingly, mystical theology and practice, directed towards achieving a closeness or unity with the divine, point to a coordination of the outer (physical) body with the inner (spiritual) by means of imitation. Hence the body should be read as “something other than its most referent, in a way designed to cultivate its spiritual form”, and such reading is often the key moment of mystical experience (Patricia Dailey, »The Body and its Senses.«, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, ed. Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012: pp. 265-266). Starting from the fact that the production of the body plays a key role and following similar arguments, Michel de Certeau discusses in detail the language of mysticism, referring to it as *corpus mysticum*, “the missing body” (*The Mystic Fable: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, vol. I, trans. Michael B. Smith. Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992: pp. 75-150).

Palmoć's perception of the higher love implies, therefore, that it does not differ from the earthly in terms of the category of carnality as suggested at the beginning of the poem, but—evoking Augustinian and Thomasian theory of emotions<sup>53</sup>—in the focus of intellect/will. This may also be gleaned from the vocabulary and topics employed to represent the two kinds of love and which, as has been mentioned, lean on the rhetoric of secular love poetry. The difference lies in the axiological prefix only: the heart is thus a symbol of love but also a metaphor for both secular and spiritual love; further, in both cases love is conceptually metaphorically connected to the notion of fire/warmth/heat, but the “evil flame” (312) that is situated “in the deep” (5-6) is contrasted to the “paradisiacal” (320), the “pure” (352) and the “heavenly” (469). Longing or desire, as the basic instigator of love has positive connotations when “the burning soul rushes / towards Jesus Christ who represents all of its pleasure” (76-77) or when “faithful soul / yearns [...] to enjoy” (37-38), but is at the same time both “mortal and angry” (65) or “evil” (312); love's arrow by which God shoots Catherine is “famous” (424), while earthly love shoots “vain arrows” (271); finally, the most frequent notion—*love*—apart from the positive attributes of “Godly” (9), “pure” (117, 308), “paradisiacal” (294, 320), “heavenly” (341) “almighty” and “dear” (462), bears also the negative ones such as “human” (257), “secular, evil” (270) or “blind” (274). As can be seen from these examples, the higher love, in accordance with the Christian cosmological vertical, spatially strives for heights and points to virtue, while the earthly one, directed at “the deep”, carries the connotations of sin such as vanity and anger, invoking at the same time the moral category of evil.

Consequently, it becomes clear that the higher, divine love is a force indescribable in words and incomprehensible to the mind, moving and suffusing the entire human being spiritually and bodily, leading to the transcendence of man's

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<sup>53</sup> As B. H. Rosenwein has shown, Augustine did not insist on a clear distinction between the notions *dilectio* (rational love), *caritas* (perfect love) and *amor* (sensitive love), holding that all of these words, due to same virtue, are synonyms if the will is directed towards God; accordingly, “if it was directed away from God, they were vices”. On the other hand, drawing on Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas argues that passions, i.e., the sensitive appetite, are characteristic of human nature as created by God, and as such are incorporated among human virtues. Unlike Augustine, he distinguishes different notions of love, whereby *amor*—as sensitive love, but also as an umbrella term that includes the other two—is not inferior to rational love (B. H. Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*: pp. 157-159).

human nature. However, the experience of such love, mediated through vision and presented in ecstasy, as suggested in Palmotić's poem, is accessible only to those who incessantly and "over measure", with their soul and intellect and in their prayers yearn for the heavenly lover and cultivate disdain of their own corporeality. And while in this poem intended for nuns the mentioned situation is on the one hand explicitly brought to attention only as a paradox beyond the grasp of human mind, on the other hand, by inheriting the mystical discourse, it points to the echoes of mystical theology that offered a rational interpretation to those familiar with it.

### *Post-Tridentine emotional regime and the disciplining of the body*

Representing the mystical experience of the saint as an emotional event, Palmotić's poem must have aimed at inspiring religious emotions in the targeted audience. Considering its theme, the intention of the poem must have been to elicit the reader's love/longing for God as it was understood in contemporary religious literature and pursued in different religious practices. At the same time, as the analysis has shown, Palmotić uses the motif of the exchange of hearts from the hagiographic episode of Saint Catherine's life to prove himself as a Baroque poet. The dualist concept of body and soul here emerges as an appropriate introductory antithesis on the basis of which the paradox of the heart is construed, and with it also the idea of the paradoxical nature of higher love. The shaping of this paradox, besides demonstrating the poet's *ingegno*, had a function to stimulate wonderness and awe for the divine, hardly conceivable by the mind—both of which may be singled out as characteristic religious emotions.

As testified by the nuns' apostrophe at the beginning of the poem, Palmotić uses the mentioned concept with a clear pragmatic purpose—to remind the targeted audience of its sinful flesh. As shown above, on the internal communicational level the emotional sequence of the poem points to the equation of longing for God with the repulsion towards (one's own) body, whereas on the external level on which the narrator addresses the nuns implies the arousal of the feeling of self-deprecation, and with it indirectly the feeling of *a priori* (human) guilt because, as the narrator warns in the opening lines, "the maidens dedicated to God", despite the fact that the "ghost spreads their wings heavenwards", should be aware of their "human heavy [sinful] body" even when "it is attired in a habit" (1-4). It may thus be argued that this preventive arousing of the

awareness of the sinfulness of one's own human nature with the goal of increasing self-control and preventing sin is one of the foundations of the Catholic emotional regime in general, both in the Middle Ages as in the early modern period, especially in the period of Catholic Renewal.<sup>54</sup> This is attested to not only by religious literature, e.g., sermons, catechisms or mediational manuals such as *Spiritual Exercises* by Ignatius of Loyola but by the Baroque religious poems themselves. Therefore, it does not surprise that this aspect in Palmotić's poem, unlike in Raymond's *Legenda maior* and Kašić's *Virginal Garden*, is especially prominent in the character formation of the saint herself. In this way Saint Catherine, as an exemplary figure, does not only embody the spiritual role model that is difficult to attain; she is also depicted as a weak woman who by her own self cannot escape her own nature, namely the temptations of "earthly" love, offering thus a functional model for the targeted audience to identify with. Moreover, the poem indirectly offers instructions for controlling one's own nature, as the saint opposes the temptations of the flesh with a well-known repertory of penitent procedures: abandoning "the thoughts of the world", bitter tears of (self)deprecation, devoted prayer, renouncement of desires and finally of her own self.

Consequently, it is also possible to distinguish the gendered connotations of the given dualism in Palmotić's poem, that is, the traditional identification of the body with mortality and woman, and the spirit/intellect with eternity and man, and with it, indirectly, the stimulation of the feeling of disdain towards one's own femininity.<sup>55</sup> Palmotić's poem, from this perspective, points to the contradictions regarding the Christian perception of woman, for while Catherine

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<sup>54</sup> Susan C. Karant-Nunn analyses the ways in which religious authorities (Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist) shaped religious feelings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Focusing especially on Passion homiletics, she stresses that it was the Catholics alone who relied on the rhetoric of judgement—both in condemning Christ's tormentors as well as in condemning man for his ineradicable sinfulness. The goal of Catholic preachers was to arouse not only compassion and empathy, but also the feeling of guilt and repentance in order to rectify the life of the believers, in a way that the "penitent contemplator of the suffering Christ could reflect the love of God in her life as lived". This view gained special prominence in the post-Tridentine, missionary age of the unfolding Catholic Renewal. In Karant-Nunn's words, "a new utopian spirit reigned in princely, magisterial, and ecclesiastical hearts—whether also secretly motivated by hopes of political and economic gain—and it was not inclined to compromise" (Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2010: p. 32).

<sup>55</sup> On the origin of "gendered" dualism, see R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991: p. 73.

is celebrated as a role model, the poem simultaneously invokes premodern misogyny related to the discourses of medicine, society and religion. For centuries, from the ancient Greeks onwards, they strived “to explain and justify” different social positions and cognitive capabilities of the two sexes, whereby it was understood that the woman represented an imperfect version of man.<sup>56</sup> Her own “natural” given condition—unlike man’s who is in his nature closer to God—woman could surpass, like Saint Catherine, merely as a tool in God’s hands, in which case her weakness of the flesh is transformed into virtue, and consequently into an advantage when compared to man.<sup>57</sup> Kašić’s hagiographic collection *Virginal Garden* confirms this way of thinking: it stresses that “female weakness when leaning on God [...] is stronger than male strength that relies on itself”.<sup>58</sup> A similar concept may be seen in Palmotić as well: the transformation of the saint during the divine intervention includes an overall loss of her own (human) identity; it is only with the “death” of her body, suggested through the vision of the exchanged hearts, that her body becomes a divine “vessel”, a medium.

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<sup>56</sup> Shaped between two extremes, contradictory Christian perceptions of the woman may be correlated with the issue of corporeality and sexuality, which has occupied the minds of Christian authorities since the early Middle Ages, along with the ideology of virginity, cultivated by early ascetic orders and advocated by theologians such as Augustine. On the one hand, the woman, because of her weak flesh, is the source of evil and inferior to man, and on the other, she is Christ’s fiancée or Virgin Mary, or, in other words, “a mediator and even more, the symbol of the union of the soul with Christ, a source of redemption” and in that case equal or superior to man. A twofold perception of this kind may already be traced in the earliest centuries of Christianity, in the church fathers from Paul and Tertullian. On different religious, cultural and social factors that contributed to this controversy, see R. H. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*: pp. 65-92.

<sup>57</sup> In accordance with premodern medical tradition, weak bodily constitution and with it the passive and inferior female body against that of man were emphasised as arguments in favour of women’s susceptibility to various influences, notably those of the spirit—whether good or bad. As a result, it was believed that, because of the given physical characteristics, the woman had the privilege of direct interaction with the divine, which may be used to explain the fact that the sensitive mystical experiences such as visions, elation or ecstasy tended to be associated with devout women rather than men. Yet at the same time, this kind of “interiorized spirituality” was extremely suspect especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the fear of possession by evil spirits and “clericalization of exorcism” gave way to an increasing publishing of exorcism manuals. Cf. Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit. Possession, Mysticism & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism*. Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007: pp. 1-12, 97-136.

<sup>58</sup> B. Kašić, *Perivoj od djevtva*: p. 170.

Therefore, the concept of the female body as a dangerous force that requires strict social disciplining, as also evidenced in the particular emotional regime, is continually present in Christian religious discourse of the early modern period. However, in the post-Tridentine period, as V. Cox argues, it was recharged: sexual morality was one of the more relevant preoccupations within the project of Catholic Renewal, and connected to it was the dominant rhetoric that represented woman as a means of temptation, conscious or unconscious. As a consequence, the Tridentine reforms resulted, among others, in a greater ecclesiastical surveillance of marriage, as well as in a significantly stricter regime of monastic life and imposition of claustration.<sup>59</sup>

Palmočić's poem on Saint Catherine may, accordingly, also be analysed in a narrower, Ragusan context, in which nunneries were an important and distinctive segment of the social cityscape of Dubrovnik. The cultivation of chastity as the greatest female virtue, especially among the nobility, was one of the major social goals in a small and closed Ragusan community of the early modern period.<sup>60</sup> This is exemplified by the pragmatic religious literature such as *Libarce od djevstva* (*Book on Virginity*), published by Bazilije Gradić shortly after the Council of Trent, or Kašić's hagiography from the beginning of the seventeenth century,<sup>61</sup> by sermons and numerous literary texts. In other words, the honour of Ragusan society was measured in the chastity of women. This went so far that the Ragusan authorities—under the pretext of chastity surveillance well before Tridentine reforms—were known to intervene in the monastic but also private life and impose disciplinary measures regardless of the church laws and rules, as Zdenka

<sup>59</sup> Cf. V. Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*: pp. 19-21.

<sup>60</sup> Among other sources, Slavica Stojan's book (*Vjerenice i nevjernice. Žene u svakodnevnici Dubrovnika (1600–1815)*). Zagreb–Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2003) draws attention to this fact. See the study by Zdenka Janeković Römer, »Nasilje zakona: gradska vlast i privatni život u kasnosrednjovjekovnom i ranonovovjekovnom Dubrovniku.« *Analiza Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 41 (2003): pp. 9-44.

<sup>61</sup> With regard to Kašić's hagiographies, it is interesting to note that apart from *Virginal Garden*, his lives of the newly canonised male saints Ignatius of Loyola and Franjo Ksaverski were intended for a female audience. As Lahorka Plejić Poje argues, this is directly proven in the dedication of "The Life of Saint Frančesko Saverija" (*Život svetoga Frančeska Saverije*) to the three Sorkočević sisters, in which "the life of this male saint-missionary is connected to the young Ragusan women through the theme of the preservation of chastity" (L. Plejić Poje, »Kako jedno zrcalo pričisto: Bartol Kašić i poslijetridentska prozna hagiografija.«, in: *Tridentska baština: katolička obnova i konfesionalizacija u hrvatskim zemljama*, ed. Zrinka Blažević and Lahorka Plejić Poje. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2016: p. 372).

Janeković Römer has shown.<sup>62</sup> In this light, Palmotić's poem, intended for the nuns, along with the other, mostly religious and hagiographic literature available to them, reveals itself as one of the media of the centuries-long continuous social disciplining of unmarried Ragusan daughters who, figuring symbolically as guardians of honour and faith and advocates of the City, by entering the convent either voluntarily or frequently involuntarily, ensured the economic survival of their families, and with it the economic stability of the Republic of Dubrovnik.

Translated by Vanja Polić

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<sup>62</sup> For the examples of the intrusion of authorities into married life, marriage chamber and surveillance of the privacy of monks and nuns, see: Z. Janeković Römer, »Nasilje zakona«.

