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**The Experience of a
Frontier Man Who Weaves
into His Historical Literary
Production: the Links
Between the Sixteenth and
the Twentieth Century**

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The Experience of a Frontier Man Who Weaves into His Historical Literary Production: the Links Between the Sixteenth and the Twentieth Century

This paper examines the parallels between two books: *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa* by Fulvio Tomizza. Although the books appear quite distinct at first glance, one being a historical novel and the other prompting discussions among researchers regarding its literary genre, both share a common theme—the experiences of frontier individuals. These works portray Istrian Lutherans from the 16th century and are linked through the character of Koper's bishop Vergerio. Vergerio's life mirrors the plight of twentieth-century Istrians who faced exile. The persecution, imprisonment, and forced exodus endured by Istrian Lutherans echo the trials faced by individuals like the narrator's father in the 20th century, following the Second World War. Set in the Istrian peninsula, a place marked by conflicts between Latins, Slavs, and Germans according to Živko Nižić, the story captures the struggles of these groups. Tomizza, through his micro-history approach, pays homage to minority populations residing in border regions, illustrating the violence they endured across history. As a frontier man himself, Tomizza profoundly comprehends their suffering, skillfully weaving this experience into a tapestry of high-quality literature that has earned international acclaim.

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KEYWORDS:

Fulvio Tomizza, Vergerio, frontier man, Other, Istria, Lutherans, exodus

This paper focuses on two literary works penned by Fulvio Tomizza: *Il male viene dal Nord. Il romanzo del vescovo Vergerio* and *Quando Dio uscì dalla chiesa. Vita e fede in un borgo istriano del Cinquecento*.¹ Tomizza composed these works during a phase of historical exploration, aiming to resolve the conflicts arising from the collision of Italian and Slavic cultures. Later, he delved back into his autobiographical experiences. Despite the differing literary genres of the two works – one a novel and the other still sparking academic debate regarding its genre – this article intends to highlight the similarities between Tomizza's dual creations. The focus will center on Bishop Vergerio of Koper, a sixteenth-century figure who serves as the central character in the novel *Il male viene dal Nord*.

Vergerio's exodus during the sixteenth century finds parallels in the autobiographical experiences of Fulvio Tomizza, the author of the twentieth-century novel. Tomizza's father endured persecution, and imprisonment and was compelled to flee by communist authorities in the aftermath of the Second World War. Subsequently, Tomizza himself followed his family's path of emigration a few years later. Fulvio Tomizza (1935 – 1999) is recognized as a Croatian, Italian, Slovenian, and Mitteleuropean writer, renowned for his internationally acclaimed literary works. He garnered prestigious awards, and his literature has been translated into numerous languages.

At the exhibition held in Trieste in honor of Tomizza on the 10th anniversary of his release, a volume *Fulvio Tomizza. Destino di frontiera* was published, dedicated to the author and citing the most important prizes won by Tomizza, namely the following: *Cinque bettole* (1957), *Premio selezione Campiello* (1965), *Viareggio* (1969), *Fiera letteraria* (1972), *Premio selezione Campiello* (1974), *Monza* (1974), *Sterga* (1977), Austrian State Prize for European Literature (1979), *Laurea honoris causa* for Literature (1984), Vilenica International Literary Prize (1986), *Ascona per la narrativa Edita* (1987), *Hemingway* (1988), *Civiltà veneta - Masi* (1989), *Prize latina* (1990), International Press Prize *Alpe Adria* (1991), *Sezione Campiello* (1992), prize named *Premio del tascabile* (1992), prize named *Premio dai Grandi* (1993), *Boccaccio* (1994), *Amelia* (1995), *Allassio. Un autore per l'Europa* (1998), and National Youth Prize *C. Pavan* (1999).² According to Stella Rasman and Patrizia Vascotto, translations of Tomizza's literary work are available in the following countries: United States of America, Brazil, Spain, France, Norway, Sweden, Poland, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, the Netherlands and Russia. His works are also available in Esperanto.³

Fulvio Tomizza was born in a northwestern Istrian village called Materada. The village became known through Tomizza's first literary work, a novel that made him famous and bears the name of his home village. At the

¹ The title of the novels could be translated as follows: *Evil Comes from the North. The Novel of Bishop Vergerio* and *When the God Abandoned the Church. Life and Faith in a Sixteenth-century Istrian Village*.

² A. A., "Principali premi conferiti a Fulvio Tomizza," in *Fulvio Tomizza. Destino di frontiera*, ed. E. Guagnini, G. Cimador, and M. A. A. Moretto (Trieste: Comune di Trieste – Civici Musei di Storia ed Arte, 2009), 73.

³ Stella Rasman and Patrizia Vascotto, *Itinerari Tomizziani a Trieste - Tomizzove poti po Trstu* (Trieste: Gruppo 85, 2009), 20.

age of nine, Tomizza departed Materada and pursued further education at the Catholic seminary in Koper/Capodistria. During that period, Koper was under the control of the fascist Kingdom of Italy and later occupied by Nazi Germany from 1943 to 1945. Presently, Materada lies within Croatia's borders, while Koper is situated in Slovenia. Tomizza's life dramatically changed after the Second World War, when his native Istria became part of the Yugoslavian state. The Yugoslav communists persecuted and imprisoned Tomizza's father twice because he was a wealthy Italian who, to maintain his trading business before Istria became part of Yugoslavia, joined the fascist party even though he did not subscribe to this ideology. Tomizza's father fell ill due to arrests, and to save his life he chose exodus in Trieste, which is now part of the Italian Republic. Unfortunately, his health deteriorated and he died at the age of 47.⁴

A young Fulvio Tomizza was deeply upset by these events. He did not follow his father into emigration and remained in Yugoslavia to continue his education, first in Ljubljana, the capital of today's Republic of Slovenia, and then in Belgrade, the capital of today's Republic of Serbia, before returning to his native Materada. It was not until the second wave of the exodus, when most of the people he knew left Istria, that the young Tomizza joined his mother and brother in Italy. Although Fulvio Tomizza was with his father in his final moments, he carried deep feelings of guilt that inspired his literary work.⁵ His guilt included his initial attraction to the communists. We know that later the members of the party persecuted and imprisoned his father. His guilt also included the fact that he decided to stay in the Yugoslav state while his father was living in exile in Trieste, so he felt he was on the opposite side of his father not once but twice, and then his father died, still young. In summary, the emigration and the subject of the frontier man link not only the Sixteenth and Twentieth centuries but also the narrative and autobiographical experiences of its author.

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Historical background of the Italian and Yugoslavian conflict after the Second World War

Fulvio Tomizza's literary works *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa* represent an important homage by the author to suffering people. Although they are mainly set in the past, these works are an important reminder of peace. To understand these literary works, which are of great cultural importance because they connect the persecutions of the common people in the 16th century with the Istrian exile in the 20th century, we will give a brief overview of the Second World War, the Istrian exile, the importance of Tomizza's autobiographical experience, the term "frontier writer," the Reformation in Istria, and the concept of Otherness.

According to Tonko Maroević, *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa* are among the most famous Tomizza books. Both are dedicated

⁴ Diana Njegovan, "Death and the Dervish by Meša Selimović and *The Tree of Dreams* by Fulvio Tomizza as novels inspired by the authors' personal experiences" (unpublished manuscript)

⁵ It is worth mentioning that Ida Marinzoli wrote her doctoral thesis on Tomizza's guilt. Ida Marinzoli, "Fulvio Tomizza's Unresolved Conflicts: Identity, Guilt, and Betrayal and Developmental Stages of His Literary Characters" (PhD diss., Graduate School-New Brunswick Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2016).

to the Istrian peninsula and show the male protagonists and stories of marginalized groups, in both cases Istrian Lutherans, that faced important historical movements. Giving tribute to marginalized people is, according to Maroević, one of the dominant topics in Tomizza's literary production, as well as the other important topic in his literary production which is related to people on the margins of society, those who are "humiliated and offended."⁶ The appreciation for marginalized and "humiliated and offended" people enables a discussion about otherness. Otherness, in our opinion, has a double effect. It characterizes someone or something "different and contrary" to the characteristics of the observed character, and it also indicates that these characters have "an attitude that is contrary to what is common, spontaneous and expected for the majority." This definition of Otherness is confirmed by the explanations in the Encyclopedia Britannica, the Croatian Encyclopedia, the Treccani Vocabulary, and the Cambridge Dictionary.⁷ The otherness is connected to the relationship between Tomizza and his father, which inspired his literary work. In one of his interviews, Tomizza explained the reason for the possible comparison between his father and Dostoyevsky's characters, because the father was "incredibly generous" and felt that he had to ask forgiveness for his wealth:

La nostra casa era aperta a tutti, mio padre era veramente una figura di una generosità incredibile, era quasi una figura di Dostoevski, un uomo che dava via il suo, quasi per farsi perdonare uno stato di prestigio e di possesso di proprietà, di ricchezza maggiore. Quindi, anche lui era un uomo molto combattuto.⁸

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Tomizza's books *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa* deal also with the otherness of Istrian Lutheran priests or those priests who have accepted the Reformation.

Maja Ćutić Gorup researched the Reformation in Istria and found it difficult to give an exact date for the Reformation in Istria, as the reformers were persecuted and had to work in secret due to persecution and fear of inquisitions. On the other hand, the suppression of the Reformation and the trials against the Reformation are important evidence of the existence of the Reformation on the Istrian territory.⁹ According to Ćutić Gorup, the

⁶ Tonko Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj: portreti i prikazi* (Zagreb: Izdanja Antibarbarus, 2005), 165, 175, 181, 186; Tonko Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," in *"Tomizza i mi" - susreti uz granicu 2 / "Tomizza e noi" - incontri di frontiera 2 / "Tomizza in mi" - obmejna srečanja 2*, ed. Neda Fanuko (Umag-Koper: Pučko otvoreno učilište "Ante Babić," 2001), 87, 92; Tonko Maroević, "Od Miriam do Franziske: Jedan karakterističan aspekt opusa Fulvija Tomizza," in *"Tomizza i mi" - susreti uz granicu 1 / "Tomizza e noi" - incontri di frontiera 1 / "Tomizza in mi" - obmejna srečanja 1*, ed. Neda Fanuko (Umag: Pučko otvoreno učilište "Ante Babić" 2000), 91, 112-13, 116.

⁷ See Diana Njegovan, "Death and the Dervish by Meša Selimović and *The Tree of Dreams* by Fulvio Tomizza as novels inspired by the authors' personal experiences" (unpublished manuscript).

⁸ Tomislav Marijan Bilosnić, *Razgovor s Fulviom Tomizzom. Materada mojih uspomena. / Colloquio con Fulvio Tomizza. Materada dei miei ricordi* (Zadar: Udruga 3000 godina na dar, 2003), 41-42.

⁹ Maja Ćutić Gorup, "Dekret nadvojvode Ferdinanda iz 1599. o izgonu protestanata," *Croatica Christiana Periodica* 33, no. 63 (2009): 77-85; Maja Ćutić Gorup, "Protestanti u austrijskoj Istri: odjeci ili pokret," *Časopis za povijest Zapadne Hrvatske* 4/5, no. - (2010): 174-84.

Reformation spread to the Istrian territory from several directions, the areas that are now part of the following republics: Germany, Austria, and Italy. When explaining the Reformation in Istria, Čutić Gorup emphasizes that there is a difference: the part of Istria that was under the Republic of Venice had a less strong influence on the Reformation because the Republic did not immediately accept the Pope's order to hand over the reforming priests and believers to the Inquisition, while the part of Istria that was under the Habsburg monarchy immediately persecuted the reformers and threatened to hand them over to the Inquisition.¹⁰ Čutić Gorup also explains why reformism was so well received in Istria in the 16th century. It was a time of uncertainty, economic decline, and depopulation of Istria, caused by the wars between the Republic of Venice and the Habsburg monarchy and the Ottoman conquests. To find hope, people began to read the Bible in their mother tongue, or more precisely, they read reformist publications.¹¹ This period was also a time of Slavic revival when Slavic priests in Istria tried to spread the Slavic language and the Glagolitic alphabet, but there were no liturgical books in their language, so the Glagolitic priests of Istria accepted the Reformation.¹² The Reformation in Istria ended at the beginning of the 17th century due to the influence of the Habsburg monarchy, which had a strong Catholic orientation and was under the influence of the Pope.¹³

Živko Nižić has noted that *Il male viene dal Nord* could be seen as a key to interpreting all of Tomizza's works because it presents a frontier man from Istria,¹⁴ and Nižić sees Istria as a place of conflicts between Latins, Slavs, and Germans, who tried to dominate the area.¹⁵ Maroević sees Istria as a "stage," a place where encounters and conflicts between Slavs, Italians, and Germans took place.¹⁶ According to Federico Tenca Montini, the intense tensions between the Italians and the Yugoslavs, as well as between the Eastern communist bloc and the Western democratic bloc, were so severe that they had the potential to trigger the Third World War.¹⁷ These tensions started at the end of the First World War. Italy, or more precisely Kingdom of Italy, by the end of the First World War, joined the Allies, the victors of the war, so it was expected that the Kingdom would spread the territory in the direction of Yugoslavia, called at the time the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats,

¹⁰ Maja Čutić Gorup, "Članovi obitelji Barbo kao zaštitnici reformacije u Pazinskoj knežiji," *Povijesni prilozi* 35, no. 50 (2016): 71-96; Čutić Gorup, "Dekret nadvojvode Ferdinanda," 80; Čutić Gorup, "Protestanti u austrijskoj Istri: odjeci ili pokret," 57-58.

¹¹ Čutić Gorup, "Članovi obitelji Barbo," 73-74; Čutić Gorup, "Protestanti u austrijskoj Istri: odjeci ili pokret," 54, 57.

¹² Čutić Gorup, "Članovi obitelji Barbo," 74-75, 91; Čutić Gorup, "Dekret nadvojvode Ferdinanda," 80; Čutić Gorup, "Protestanti u austrijskoj Istri: odjeci ili pokret," 57.

¹³ Čutić Gorup, "Članovi obitelji Barbo," 91.

¹⁴ Živko Nižić, "Pier Paolo Vergerije il Giovane apostata rinascimentale e Fulvio Tomizza legittimista dell'istirogeocentrismo," in *Rileggendo Fulvio Tomizza*, ed. Marianna Deganutti (Rome: Aracne, 2014), 97, 105.

¹⁵ Nižić, "Pier Paolo Vergerije," 97; Živko Nižić, *Fulvio Tomizza - pisac osobne granice / Fulvio Tomizza - lo scrittore e i suoi confini* (Rijeka: Edit, 2003), 91, 99.

¹⁶ Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 183-84; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 86, 89.

¹⁷ Federico Tenca Montini, *La Jugoslavia e la questione di Trieste: 1945-1954* (Bologna: Mulino, 2020), 7. See also Montini, *La Jugoslavia e la questione di Trieste*, 48; <https://www.britannica.com/place/Free-Territory-of-Trieste>.

and Slovenes.¹⁸ It is known that from 1941 to 1943 Italians ruled the former Yugoslavian territories, and fascist concentration camps were set up there,¹⁹ and from the 1st of May 1945 until the 13th of June 1945 Yugoslavs dominated over Trieste, and surrounding areas.²⁰

With the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 the largest part of Istria ceded to Yugoslavia. Tensions around the newly established Free Territory of Trieste were calmed by the London Memorandum in 1954, when Trieste became part of Italy, while the North-Western part of Istria was given to Yugoslavia, i.e. Slovenia and Croatia. The border and other issues between Italy and Yugoslavia were finally confirmed and solved by the Treaty of Osimo in 1975.²¹

Darko Dukovski examined the relations between the Yugoslav and Italian communist parties between 1942 and 1945 and found that all parties involved in the war wanted to create conflicts and misunderstandings between the three communist factions. The relations between the Italian and Yugoslav factions between 1941 and 1943 were characterized by misunderstandings and no formal relations, which was due to the status of Istria, and the fact that both sides wanted to dominate the region. The collision between the two factions reached its peak in 1943, while in 1944 both sides promised cultural and economic rights but failed to deliver on that promise.²² As Katja Hrobert Virloget noted, the Yugoslav authorities promoted the "brotherhood" and the legal rights of the Italian minority in Istria and emphasized their right to education in the Italian language until 1948, but the Italian minority was not equally represented in government committees, and the use of Italian in public offices was restricted, and there were unequal rights, false accusations, arrests and punishments that were politically motivated.²³ Natka Badurina also pointed out the dichotomy in the Yugoslav treatment of the Italian minority in Istria: although they were guaranteed legal rights, they were often suspected of possible collaboration with the fascists.²⁴

The tensions between the Italians and the Yugoslavs caused the Istrian exodus, massive immigration to Italy, and overseas countries from

¹⁸ Katja Hrobert Virloget, *Silences and Divided Memories: The Exodus and its Legacy in Post-War Istrian Society*, European Anthropology in Translation Book 12, trans. Matko Petrović (Berghahn Books, 2023), loc. 461 of 6475 (Kindle version).

¹⁹ Badurina, Natka. *Strah od pamćenja, Književnost i sjeverni Jadran na ruševinama dvadesetog stoljeća* (Zagreb: Disput, 2023), 144.

²⁰ Natka Badurina, *Strah od pamćenja*, 195; Hrobert Virloget, *Silences and Divided Memories*, loc. 1483 of 6475; Pietro Spirito, *Gente di Trieste* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2021), 18; Tenca Montini, *La Jugoslavia e la questione di Trieste*, 39.

²¹ Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris, *Trieste: Un'identità di frontiera* (Torino: Einaudi, 2015), 149; 182-83.; Badurina, *Strah od pamćenja*, 101; Spirito, *Gente di Trieste*, 18, 240; Tenca Montini, *La Jugoslavia e la questione di Trieste*, 10-11, 39. See also Ara and Magris, *Trieste*, 152, 158, 161, 174-181; Sanja Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," *Književna smotra* 49, no 186 (2017):91; Spirito, *Gente di Trieste*, 5. As Karl-Markus Gauss has noted, the German version of *La miglior vita* (*The better life*) by Fulvio Tomizza provides a brief explanation of Istrian's history. Karl-Markus Gauss, *Uništenje srednje Europe* (Zagreb: Durieux, 1994), 83-84.

²² Darko Dukovski, "Odnos hrvatskih, slovenskih i talijanskih komunista prema NOP-u i državno-pravnom statusu Istre (1941. - 1945.)," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 41, no. 2 (2009): 417-46.

²³ Hrobert Virloget, *Silences and Divided Memories*, loc. 2094 of 6475, and 3041 of 6475.

²⁴ Badurina, *Strah od pamćenja*, 195.

Yugoslav territory.²⁵ It is estimated that from a minimum of 200,000 to a maximum of 350,000 people left Istria, Rijeka, and Dalmatia.²⁶ The Paris Peace Treaty in 1947 and the London Memorandum in 1954 formally offered the people to choose between Italy and Yugoslavia, which started massive immigration on both sides and was concluded only by the 1970s.²⁷ Katja Hrobert Virloget states that from the end of the war until 1957, 24,000 people left what is now the Republic of Slovenia, which is half the population of 1945.²⁸ On the other hand, according according to Mila Orlić, in the inter-war period of fascist Italy, during the first Istrian exodus, 70,000 Croats and Slovenes emigrated to Yugoslavia, while 30,000 others went to America and 5,000 to other Western European countries such as France and Belgium.²⁹

Natka Badurina examined the ideological implications from an Italian and a Slavic perspective³⁰ and concluded that the wounds are still deep and open and that the common people suffered from these events, which Badurina explained with the following words: the waves of migration were “painful and tragic from the perspective of the individual, but from above, from the political, diplomatic and cynical perspective of real politics, a certain balance was thereby established between the western and eastern Adriatic coast.”³¹ The existence of different terms such as “exile,” “exodus” or “emigration” has different political and ideological implications.³² Here we will focus on the suffering of the common people, on both sides. We will call the feeling of otherness the unjust treatment of the exiles and those left behind which the studies show.³³

In the discussion of *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*, Slaven Bertoša sees people on the margins of society, the newcomers to Istria, who are different from the locals. The newcomers are poor and have a different origin, mentality, and religion. Their diversity has provoked hatred among the locals. Bertoša therefore sees this case as a frequent motif in Tomizza’s depiction of border conflicts.³⁴ Sanja Roić stated that Tomizza is a writer who can be identified with a borderline case.³⁵ We will call it “border conflicts” here. Maria Cristina

²⁵ More information about Istrian exodus, could be find at Živko Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture u prozi Fulvija Tomizze* (Rijeka: Edit, 1996), 12-17, and also at Slobodan Prosperov Novak, *Povijest hrvatske književnosti: Od Bašćanske ploče do danas* (Zagreb: Golden marketing: 2003), 534; Slobodan Prosperov Novak, *Povijest hrvatske književnosti Vol. III: Sjećanje na dobro i zlo* (Split: Marjan tisak, 2004); 285-86.

²⁶ Badurina, *Strah od pamćenja*, 195-96; Hrobert Virloget, *Silences and Divided Memories*, loc. 180 of 6475, 484 of 6475, 501 of 6475, 1543 of 6475.

²⁷ Hrobert Virloget, *Silences and Divided Memories*, loc. 65 of 6475, 3270 of 6475, 4260 of 6475, 4982 of 6475.

²⁸ Hrobert Virloget, *Silences and Divided Memories*, loc. 1589 of 6475.

²⁹ Mila Orlić, *Identità di confine. Storia dell'Istria e degli istriani dal 1943 a oggi* (Roma: Viella, 2023), 21.

³⁰ See Badurina, *Strah od pamćenja*, 197, 199.

³¹ Badurina, *Strah od pamćenja*, 200.

³² See Badurina, *Strah od pamćenja*, 132, 191; Hrobert Virloget, *Silences and Divided Memories*, loc. 132 of 6475, 155 of 6475, 404 of 6475.

³³ See Badurina, *Strah od pamćenja*, 194, Orlić, *Identità di confine*, 189, 184; Hrobert Virloget, *Silences and Divided Memories*, loc. 732 of 6475; 2322 of 6475: 3779 of 6475, 3832 of 6475, 3956 of 6475, 4061 of 6475: 4240 of 6475.

³⁴ Bertoša, Miroslav, *Izazovi povijesnog zanata*, 131.

³⁵ Sanja Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza i sudbina granice* (Zagreb-Umag: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada

Bellucci sees in these conflicts the dramatic fate of the Istrian exiles and the regrets of those who decided to remain on Yugoslav territory.³⁶ Carmelo Aliberti saw a conflict between Western and Eastern culture, more precisely between Italian and Slavic culture, in which the common people were the victims, as did Tomizza himself, who wrote about these dramatic events.³⁷ We can conclude that the term “frontier writer” can easily be applied to Fulvio Tomizza, who realistically depicted the events of the war and the suffering of marginalized ordinary people divided by the frontier. Fulvio Tomizza himself has said that he does not like the term frontier writer, but he can identify with it.³⁸ He dreamed of territories without borders:

Ecco, se io ho un è questo: che arrivi un giorno in cui non si debbano più passare confini.³⁹

Tomizza saw the borderline as a sign that was erected during the war and continues to hurt people because it is a symbol of “ideology, preference, power, military occupation:”

La frontiera è qualcosa di immanente che persiste, che non ha termine dopo una guerra, anzi che si accentua. La frontiera porta con sé ideologia, tendenze, poteri, occupazioni militari e di confini e quindi divide forzatamente le popolazioni a esclusivo vantaggio di un ceto potere politico e militare.⁴⁰

He also regrets the loss of identity that the border often entails, although it can be an enriching element when people combine “two or more educational backgrounds, cultures, languages, experiences and sometimes even religions:”

Da una parte la frontiera può essere motivo di arricchimento: si può disporre di due o più educazioni, culture, lingue, esperienze, a volte anche religioni. Quindi si dovrebbe essere in una condizione di privilegio, sul dislivello di due o tre mondi. In realtà questa situazione si risolve spesso in una perdita di identità.⁴¹

And finally, he promoted peace. He believed that each individual must have the courage to make moral and reparative decisions, because the wounds were deep for all involved, and only in this way could the border become an “oasis of peace:”

and Gradska knjižnica Umag, 2019), 24; Sanja Roić, *Istočno i zapadno od Trsta: Interkulturalni dijalozi* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2013), 206.

³⁶ Maria Claudia Bellucci, *La produzione letteraria dei primi quindici anni di Fulvio Tomizza* (Salò: Tipografia Bortolotti Arti Graffiche, 2000), 3.

³⁷ Aliberti Carmelo, *Fulvio Tomizza e la frontiera dell'anima* (Foggia: Bastogli, 2001) 7, 28, 90, 118-20; Marianna Deganutti, *Fulvio Tomizza: Writing the Trauma of Exile* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2018), 22-23, 43-44, 70.

³⁸ Aliberti, *Fulvio Tomizza e la frontiera dell'anima*, 8. See also in Fulvio Tomizza, *Alle spalle di Trieste* (Bologna: Tascabili Bompiani, 2009), 195; Fulvio Tomizza, *Destino di frontiera: Dialogo con Riccardo Ferrante* (Genova: Marietti, 1992), 48.

³⁹ Tomizza, *Destino di frontiera*, 34.

⁴⁰ Aliberti, *Fulvio Tomizza e la frontiera dell'anima*, 8.

⁴¹ Tomizza, *Destino di frontiera*, 48.

Soltanto così [facendo una scelta soprattutto di carattere morale e riparatore, sul piano in primo luogo individual] da luogo di congeniti attriti, la frontiera può rovescarsi in oasi di pace, un una piega di territorio non omologato, dove accanto alle reliquie di antichi idiomi persistano la lealtà e il rispetto dell'altro.⁴²

A brief overview of the novel *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio usci di chiesa* di Fulvio Tomizza

Il male viene dal Nord was first published in 1984, while *Quando Dio usci di chiesa* was published in 1987 and won the Hemingway Prize. According to Živko Nižić, *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio usci di chiesa* are books that reflect a conflict between authorities and minority groups, where the authorities forbid their emancipation if they are different,⁴³ and this paper will analyze the two Tomizza's books with special emphasis on concepts of Other and Otherness.

Literary criticism presentation of *Il male viene dal Nord*

Fulvio Tomizza has invested seven years to write *Il male viene dal Nord*.⁴⁴ Before writing the novel, Tomizza had done extensive research. According to Sanja Roić, Tomizza has studied sources from twenty libraries and historical archives.⁴⁵ Tonko Maroević writes that Tomizza has used around a hundred resources.⁴⁶ Živko Nižić believes that historical research served Tomizza to find the answers to conflicts that have repeated.⁴⁷ The consulted sources are presented in the form of a novel that shows what has motivated the protagonist's action.⁴⁸ The result is a detailed historical novel that, for the first time in history, gives a complete and true profile of Pier Paolo Vergerio, a historical figure.⁴⁹

⁴² Tomizza, *Alle spalle di Trieste*, 144.

⁴³ Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 125.

⁴⁴ Tomizza, *Destino di frontiera*, 73. See Sanja Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza i sudbina granice*, 180.

⁴⁵ Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 95. Živko Nižić, Stella Rasman, Patrizia Vascotto, and Tonko Maroević have also written about Tomizza's detailed research of historical documents. See Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 164, 180-81; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 86-88; Nižić, *Fulvio Tomizza*, 70, 105; Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 8, 29, 122, 125, 132, 136; Nižić, "Pier Paolo Vergerije," 97-99; Stella Rasman and Patrizia Vascotto, *Itinerari Tomizziani a Trieste / Tomizzove poti po Trstu* (Trieste: Gruppo 85, 2009), 142; Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza*, 147-48, 153-55, 162, 180. According to Tonko Maroević, Tomizza rarely presents invented stories; his books are result of research of existing documents and facts. Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 176; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 87; Maroević, "Od Miriam do Franziske," 109.

⁴⁶ Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 167; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 88; Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 168-69; Fulvio Tomizza, *Le mie estati letterarie: Lungo le tracce della memoria*. With an introduction by Cesare De Michelis (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2009), 137-38, 143-45.

⁴⁷ Nižić, *Fulvio Tomizza*, 92; Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 132.

⁴⁸ Aliberti, *Fulvio Tomizza e la frontiera dell'anima*, 81. For more information about the importance of Tomizza's archival studies, see Aliberti, *Fulvio Tomizza e la frontiera dell'anima*, 78-79.

⁴⁹ Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 94; Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza i sudbina granice*, 150; Tomizza, *Destino di frontiera*, 85; Deganutti, *Fulvio Tomizza: Writing the Trauma of Exile*, 37; Tomizza, *Destino di frontiera*, 86-87.

Pier Paolo Vergerio, or in English Pietro Paulo Vergerio, also known as Vergerio il Giovane or Vergerio the Younger (1497/1498-1564/1565)⁵⁰ is a famous religious reformer and before that a Catholic bishop, jurist, university professor, diplomat and also translator and writer. He came from a famous family and had obtained a doctorate in law in Padua, where he had taught at the university for eight years. As a jurist, he was active in Padua, Verona, and Venice. After the death of his wife, Diana Contarini, he became the Pope's nuncio to fight the Lutherans. But when he met Martin Luther, he gradually became more and more attracted to the reform. He became a bishop, first in Modruš on the territory of today's Republic of Croatia, then in Capodistria on the territory of today's Republic of Slovenia, to become the Pope's diplomat again. His attraction to reform grew, and the Catholic Church took notice. As a result, he had to answer to the Inquisition twice, the first time in 1544 and the second in 1549, which declared him guilty and stripped him of his episcopal honor. Vergerio left the Italian peninsula and settled on Swiss territory. He was an active reformist priest who promoted the new religion and traveled widely, through areas of present-day Germany, Poland, France, and Italy. He wrote firstly his Christian-influenced works, and then Reformation propaganda literature in Italian, Latin, and German, while his literary works were translated into French and Polish. Furthermore, he translated other Reformation publications and wrote polemics against banned books. Together with Primož Trubar, he initiated the project of translating the Bible into Slavic languages and translated several religious books into Croatian. He was also active in numerous correspondences with important personalities of his time. He died in Tübingen in 1565, at the age of 67.

As Tonko Maroević notes, the novel's protagonist - Pier Paolo Vergerio is a "frontier man" who is portrayed realistically thanks to historical sources that serve as the basis for the psychological characterization.⁵¹ These sources prove the truthfulness of the events narrated, which is emphasized by the direct speech or original words of the 16th-century Istrian Lutherans.⁵² We therefore agree with Živko Nižić's statement that historical documents and objective narratives dominate the novel.⁵³ Maroević sees the fact that Lutherans who were persecuted by the Catholic Church corresponded to

⁵⁰ Various sources give different birth and death dates. According to Slaven Bertoša, he was born in 1498 and died in 1563, while the Encyclopedia Britannica gives the years 1497/1498 and 1565, the Croatian encyclopedia (Hrvatska enciklopedija) the years 1498 and 1565 and the Encyclopaedia Treccani 1498 and 1564. Vergerio also used a large number of pseudonyms: Don Giovanni da Cremona in 1549, Valerius Ohikargus in 1552, Hieronumis di Pola da Capodistria in 1553 and Anastasio in 1553 and 1554. For information regarding Vergerio see Slaven Bertoša, *Il vescovo riformatore Pier Paolo Vergerio il Giovane (1498-1565) - la vita e l'opera*, *Atti XLI*, no. 1 (2011): 153-69. See also: Tomizza, *Destino di frontiera*, 85-87; Čutić Gorup, "Članovi obitelji Barbo," 74; Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pietro-Paulo-Vergerio>; Petar Pavao, ml., *Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža*, 2021. Accessed on November 25, 2023 <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=64324>.

⁵¹ Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 167; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 88. Look at Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 168-169.

⁵² Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 95. Look at Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 132, 136; Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza*, 153-55.

⁵³ Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 137.

victims in the Twentieth century who were oppressed by the Yugoslavian communist regime.⁵⁴ Carmelo Aliberti, Tonko Maroević, Živko Nižić, and Slobodan Prosperov Novak have noted the parallel between the reality of Sixteenth-century Istrian heretics, and the Istrian exodus after the Second World War,⁵⁵ Sanja Roić points out that both Vergerio and Fulvio Tomizza have experienced exodus.⁵⁶

While analyzing literary book reviews dedicated to *Il male viene dal Nord*, Živko Nižić has noted that critics, thanks to this novel, define Tomizza as a Mitteleuropean writer. The novel is set in Central Europe, thanks to Vergerio's trips, and exodus.⁵⁷ On the other side, the Istrian exiles who were living in Trieste, after the book's publication started writing offensive articles about Tomizza, because Tomizza's publication did not offend the Yugoslavian communist regime, as the Istrian exiles wanted.⁵⁸ Tomizza wrote about the exodus when the wounds and memories were still fresh. Mentioning the Istrian exodus is still a very sensitive topic today because it triggers memories and reopens wounds on both sides. In this context, we support Tomizza's idea of peace and forgiveness, and we appreciate Tomizza's efforts to be apolitical. We also appreciate that Tomizza pays tribute to the ordinary people who did not have the choice to decide, but are victims of history, or more precisely, the choices of others, as a clear warning that wars and suffering can unfortunately repeat themselves.

Roić has noted two main frontiers in the novel, the frontier between the countries, and the time frontier – the protagonist's reality is placed in the Sixteenth century, while the narrator's reality is in the Twentieth century.⁵⁹ She has also stated that the entire novel named *Il male viene dal Nord*, or *The Evil Comes from the North*, can be explained in terms of the "diversity" of Istrian Lutherans which is perceived as "the evil" by Catholic authorities of the time.⁶⁰ As already mentioned, the Istrian Lutherans or the Istrian reform priests were not welcome by the Catholic Church because they represented a different religious approach; they wanted the Bible to be translated into the native language of the faithful and did not believe in certain Catholic dogmas, which is why they were regarded as the Other and persecuted.

⁵⁴ Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 166; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 88.

⁵⁵ Aliberti, *Fulvio Tomizza e la frontiera dell'anima*, 78-80; Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 166; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 88; Novak, *Od Bašćanske ploče do danas*, 535; Novak, *Sjećanje na dobro i zlo*, 286; Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 125, 132, 135, 141-42; Nižić, "Pier Paolo Vergerije," 95, 99, 101, 104.

⁵⁶ Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 93, 95. See Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 132, 136; Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 97; Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza i sudbina granice*, 147-48.

⁵⁷ Nižić, "Pier Paolo Vergerije," 104, 110-11; Tomizza, *Destino di frontiera*, 73, 78-79.

⁵⁸ Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 142-43; Nižić, "Pier Paolo Vergerije," 105; Tomizza, *Destino di frontiera*, 87-88.

⁵⁹ Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 93-94; Sanja Roić, *Istočno i zapadno od Trsta*, 237; Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza i sudbina granice*, 147-48, 151.

⁶⁰ Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 94, 100; Roić, *Istočno i zapadno od Trsta*, 242; Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza i sudbina granice*, 152.

Interpretation of Il male viene dal Nord

Il male viene dal Nord followed the Koper's bishop Pier Paolo Vergerio il Giovane until his death on 4th October 1565. The novel also emphasizes the importance of the destiny of Vergerio's followers and family. At the beginning of the novel, Tomizza presents the importance of Vergerio's family and his education. Vergerio has had an important diplomatic role in representing and defending the Catholic Church during its conflicts with Lutherans. To prepare himself for the debates with Lutherans, he started reading Lutherans' books, which were forbidden by the Catholic authorities. The new religion started to attract him, and when he was finally defeated and disappointed by the Catholic Church, he became a Lutheran.

Despite his efforts and contributions in support of the Catholic Church, he consistently faced financial difficulties, even during his tenure as a bishop. His diocese in Koper was financially strained, being considered a provincial diocese. As a Lutheran, Vergerio was imprisoned and persecuted by the Catholic authorities, which forced him to exile, where he continued to promote Lutheranism.⁶¹ His home became a school. He wrote books about Lutheranism, tried to translate the Bible into Slavic languages,⁶² and had public speeches to promote his new religion. *Il male viene dal Nord* also mentions the Lutherans from Istria, who will be presented in detail in the book *Quando Dio usci di chiesa*, written by Fulvio Tomizza.

The relevance of the narrated story is emphasized by the *Prologue*, where Tomizza offers some biographical details that connect Vergerio's time - the Sixteenth century to Tomizza's time - the Twentieth century, and the events that followed the Second World War. After the Second World War, when Koper was part of the Yugoslavian state and the young Fulvio Tomizza was studying in a Catholic seminary in Koper, he⁶³ heard about Pier Paolo Vergerio and recognized his importance. This motivated him to look for the first sources about the famous bishop in a local library.⁶⁴

Tomizza immediately notices that Vergerio was born in 1498, in "the unfortunate zone B",⁶⁵ and after around twenty years, Tomizza returned to Vergerio. He will do detailed research and write a complex novel about Vergerio, a frontier man and exile, like him. Vergerio's story shows that history after four hundred years has repeated itself.⁶⁶ In *Destino di frontiera* Tomizza

⁶¹ For more information about the topic see Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 168; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 88-89; Nižić, "Pier Paolo Vergerije," 97; Rasman and Vascotto, *Itinerari Tomizziani*, 142; Fulvio Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord: Il romanzo del vescovo Vergerio* (Milano: Mondadori, 1984), 5, 172, 191, 203.

⁶² For more information see Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 91; Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 150; Nižić, "Pier Paolo Vergerije," 106; Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 94, 388, 389, 390, 392.

⁶³ In this interpretation, Tomizza is identified with the narrator who has explicit autobiographical references. That is proven by Tomizza himself in some of his writings and interviews, like *Destino di frontiera* and *Le mie estati letterarie*. See also Gauss, *Uništenje srednje Europe*, 85-88; Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 93; Roić, *Istočno i zapadno od Trsta*, 238; Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza*, 147-48, 160.

⁶⁴ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 55-58, 61.

⁶⁵ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 61.

⁶⁶ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 62-63; Tomizza, *Destino di frontiera*, 85-86; Tomizza, *Le mie estati letterarie*, 139; Nižić, "Pier Paolo Vergerije," 105; Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 95.

states that Vergerio's story has contemporary implications because Tomizza himself experienced "mandatory steps of the frontier man: betrayal by fellow countrymen, the persecution of your people, exodus, being attacked from the right and left [wing]:"

La vicenda del Vergerio ha un epilogo che io ho vissuto quattrocento anni dopo. Vi sono dei passaggi obbligatori dell'uomo di confine: il tradimento da parte dei conterranei, la persecuzione della propria gente, l'esodo, l'essere attaccati da destra e da sinistra.⁶⁷

Marianna Deganutti in her monograph *Fulvio Tomizza. Writing the Trauma of Exile* has cited and translated Tomizza's words from *Le mie estati letterarie* which indicate that Tomizza himself in real life was defined as the Other:

I loved my father, who in his heart had always opted for Italy, and I suffered to see him persecuted by Yugoslavs... I went to Trieste with a pass and there I was considered Slav because I came from the interior, I came back to Materada and I was considered Italian. It was like skidding from one to the other, it was the drama of the frontier lived to full.⁶⁸

The relationship between Fulvio Tomizza and his father is one of the important and constant topics that inspired his literary production. In this novel, we can analyze the relationship between the father and son, where the son sees the father as the Other. Lately, because of the political situation after the Second World War, and the communist regime in Istria, the father became the Other for the communists. The father was a rich Italian, and he refused to join the Communist Party, and he became their enemy. They have persecuted him, imprisoned him, and forced him into exodus, because "They want[ed] him dead and that is all: Lo vogliono morto e basta, a incominciare dai parenti."⁶⁹

Regarding the relationship between the father and son, the father saved a young Fulvio Tomizza from all the dangers that the Second World War brought to Istria, made his son skip the last grade of elementary school, and enrolled him in a seminar in Koper to become a priest.⁷⁰ The actions of his father distinguished young Tomizza from his friends, leading him to a sense of difference and "Otherness," so he "rebelled."⁷¹ Tomizza's family was rich, and that fact has distinguished them from the others in the village because his friends were poor and were hungry, so they had to steal to feed themselves.⁷² On the other hand, his father was imprisoned and released by Yugoslav communists, he went directly to Fulvio Tomizza's school. He wanted to see the son, who was ashamed of him, because of his appearance, and felt his father was the Other:

⁶⁷ Tomizza, *Destino di frontiera*, 86.

⁶⁸ Deganutti, *Fulvio Tomizza*, 25.

⁶⁹ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 44. Look also at Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 17.

⁷⁰ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 12.

⁷¹ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 16.

⁷² Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 17.

Mio padre fu rilasciato. Al riposo delle dieci me lo trovai nel cortile del ginnasio e lo sentii due volte estraneo, all'ambiente della scuola e a quello della cittadina con cui stavo per mimetizzarmi. Lo abbracciai non come avrei desiderato (mai era avvenuto ma stavolta ero ancora più impedito) e lo tirai nell'atrio concesso alle visite, quasi una capella dedicata allo studioso di storia patria che dava il nome all'istituto. Per poco non mi fondevo dentro dall'imbarazzo e la vergogna, più irragionevolmente acuti di quando veniva mia madre a trovarmi. Pallido, incerto e con l'abito squalcito, l'uomo invidiato al paese, e il cui l'imprigionamento garantiva per me presso insegnanti e condiscepoli, poteva venir scambiato per uno degli occupanti. Avrei voluto di nuovo lontani quel volto e quella voce che con spasimo aveva cercato di riconoscere dall'ultimo corridoio del tribunale e dall'angolo fetido della via retrostante. E per deviare il rimorso che me ne veniva recriminavo contro i miei compagni, così fieri in quella specie di assedio da loro accettato con sfida, ma ai cui padri nessuno aveva torto un capello.⁷³

When he arrived at the seminar, a young Tomizza tried to "distinguish in devotion to God" and "respect discipline", while the other seminarists made fun of him, they beat him „as soon they were alone and with the same race [the same age]:“

Cercavo pertanto di distinguermi in devozione, profitto a scuola e rispetto della disciplina. I paesani col fratello in testa mi compativano, i condiscepoli mi deridevano (e uno di essi mi picchiava non appena ci trovavamo soli e della stessa razza); agli adulti in veste e ai superiori ordinati non restava che coccolarmi.⁷⁴

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After the Yugoslav domination of Istria, Tomizza felt different from his Slavic colleagues because he could no longer identify with them and felt like the Other. They "behaved religiously," and were "more united than ever", while he began to care more about the Italians:

Allora [gli slavi] mi riuscivano più estranei degli italiani, anche perché li conoscevo meno: nessuno dei compagni di mio fratello mi avrebbe picchiato con l'accanimento perfido del condiscipolo Pamich. Pensavo e pregavo in italiano; come avrei legato dei fedeli le cui ansie più intime s'intonavano con le modulazioni segrete di un'altra lingua?⁷⁵

Vergerio can also be seen as the Other, and we can notice a twofoldness in presenting Otherness in Vergerio's character. Initially, Vergerio sees Lutherans as the Others. He believed that Martin Luther was a heretic inspired by the devil,⁷⁶ and also attributes this to Lutheran offensive names.⁷⁷ But when he converts to Lutheranism, he becomes the Other, the man who is persecuted, imprisoned, and forced into exile by Catholic authorities, the class to which he does not belong any longer. He became one

⁷³ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 32-33.

⁷⁴ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 12.

⁷⁵ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 22.

⁷⁶ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 140.

⁷⁷ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 96; Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 168; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 88.

of the marginalized people, one of the Lutherans whose trials were done in "complete illegality."⁷⁸

Finally, the fate of the father, the Istrian exodus, the anti-war message, religion, otherness, and the appreciation of the common people, the victims of historical movements, are important motifs in Tomizza's literary work, which remind us of his novel "L'albero dei sogni," or in English: "The Tree of Dreams." The novel is dedicated to "conflitto intimo di padre e figlio, travolti dai fatti, da situazioni storiche e politiche, veramente molto crude."⁷⁹ which means in English: "intimate conflict between father and son, overwhelmed by facts, historical and political situations that were very hard." *L'albero dei sogni* and *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa* have the following motifs in common: otherness, religiosity, and the fate of the father. The novel *L'albero dei sogni* is written in diary form and has Latin, Italian, and Slavic inspiration.⁸⁰ The diary begins in July 1953, with the death of Tomizza's father, and ends fifteen years later. The novel was awarded the Viareggio Prize in 1969 and is autobiographically inspired, focusing on the fate of the father, who is persecuted, imprisoned, and forced into exodus by the Yugoslav communists. In the second part of the novel, which contains dream-like scenes, the narrator imagines that he has the opportunity to reconcile with his father and God. The son-father relationship is also characterized by otherness here, because, on the one hand, Tomizza's autobiography reveals that he rejected his father because he did not choose to emigrate when his father was still alive; on the other hand, his father was an important figure in Istrian society before the Second World War, and this fact distinguished the narrator from the other children in the village, so that he felt himself to be the Other, to be different. It can be seen that the narrator's religiosity is strongly dependent on his relationship with his father. This is underlined by the biblical inspiration of the exodus from Istria.

In conclusion, Vergerio from the novel *Il male viene dal Nord* and Tomizza are both frontier men from Istria, who have been seen as the Others and experienced exodus. Vergerio has been persecuted, imprisoned, and forced into exile, as Fulvio Tomizza's father, and later young Tomizza followed the family in emigration. The "trauma of exodus"⁸¹ inspired Fulvio Tomizza's literary production, while Vergerio wrote about the Lutheran religion he accepted. Tomizza's trauma is related to his father's suffering and death. If we take into consideration Živko Nižić's conclusion that for Fulvio Tomizza, his father is the Christ,⁸² we can conclude that religion is an inspiration for both Tomizza's and Vergerio's writing and that Tomizza, in describing Vergerio, is describing himself. Tomizza was initially attracted to communist ideas, and Vergerio was Catholic. But later Vergerio discovers the reform, and Tomizza

⁷⁸ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 290.

⁷⁹ Bilosnić, *Razgovor s Fulviom Tomizzom*, 43.

⁸⁰ Diana Njegovan, "Death and the Dervish by Meša Selimović and *The Tree of Dreams* by Fulvio Tomizza as novels inspired by the authors' personal experiences" (unpublished manuscript).

⁸¹ The term is borrowed from Marianna Deganutti's monograph: *Fulvio Tomizza. Writing the Trauma of Exile*.

⁸² Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 138-39; Nižić, "Pier Paolo Vergerije," 108-09.

loses his father and leaves Yugoslavia. So they both change their views, or metaphorically "their religion."

Literary criticism presentation of Quando Dio usci di chiesa written by Fulvio Tomizza

Miroslav Bertoša and Tonko Maroević have noticed that Fulvio Tomizza has dedicated eight years to writing *Quando Dio usci di chiesa*,⁸³ a book that followed *Il male viene dal Nord*, where Tomizza has used the same archival material.⁸⁴ Slobodan Prosperov Novak and Živko Nižić consider the discussion about the literary genre of *Quando Dio usci di chiesa* inspiring and not definitive.⁸⁵ Jelka Vince-Paulla notes that the book cannot easily be assigned to a specific genre, as it is a narrative that focuses on marginalized groups of the 16th century and is based on historical documents that Tomizza studied in archives, which Tomizza lists at the end of the book.⁸⁶ Nižić explains that the book has sparked many discussions about its literary genre, because on the one hand, it is a work of art, but on the other hand it also has a strong historical motivation. It is based on Fulvio Tomizza's research, which is why Nižić sees the book as a biographical novel.⁸⁷ Tonko Maroević defines it as a historical chronicle, based on historical documents,⁸⁸ and Miroslav Bertoša writes about novel-truth,⁸⁹ while Sanja Roić believes that the book is a documentary novel.⁹⁰ Marianna Deganutti defines both *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio usci di chiesa* as "historical novels that combine

⁸³ Miroslav Bertoša, *Izazovi povijesnog zanata: Lokalna povijest i sveopći modeli* (Zagreb: Izdanja Antibarbarus, 2002), 129; Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 170; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 90.

⁸⁴ Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 165, 170; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 87. For archival sources that Fulvio Tomizza has used while writing *Quando Dio usci di chiesa* see Bertoša, *Izazovi povijesnog zanata*, 129; Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 165, 170; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 87; Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 95, 99; Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza*, 167; Roić, *Istočno i zapadno od Trsta*, 239-40; Tomizza, *Le mie estati letterarie*, 143-44; Jelka Vince-Paulla, "Fulvio Tomizza: Quando Dio usci di chiesa - Vita e fede in un borgo istriano del Cinquecento." *Studia ethnologica Croatica* 1, no 1 (1989): 217, 219; Sanja Roić has noted that the direct speech that the book contains is directly taken from seventeenth-century copies of the Sixteenth-century manuscripts. Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 95, 99; Roić, *Istočno i zapadno od Trsta*, 240; Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza*, 167. Fulvio Tomizza does not hide the fact that he has used the same sources to write *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio usci di chiesa*, as you can see at Fulvio Tomizza, *Quando Dio usci di chiesa: Vita e fede in un borgo istriano del Ciquecento* (Milano: Mondadori, 1987), 9-10, 165. Also, Vergerio is explicitly mentioned in *Quando Dio usci di chiesa*. The fact that Tomizza has used the same documents to write *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio usci di chiesa* inspired Živko Nižić's theory that the two books could be written as one novel, with "interesting results." But Tomizza has created two literary works because he preferred to realize a detailed literary and scientific presentation of the narrated events. Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 151.

⁸⁵ Novak, *Od Bašćanske ploče do danas*, 535; Novak, *Sjećanje na dobro i zlo*, 286. For a discussion about the literary genre of *Il male viene dal Nord* see Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 139-40, 144; Nižić, "Pier Paolo Vergerije," 100-01.

⁸⁶ Cfr. Vince-Paulla, "Fulvio Tomizza," 217-19.

⁸⁷ Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 145-48.

⁸⁸ Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 170; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 87, 90.

⁸⁹ Bertoša, *Izazovi povijesnog zanata*, 129-31.

⁹⁰ Roić, *Istočno i zapadno od Trsta*, 242.

extensive documentation with the ability to fascinate through an imaginative narrative.⁹¹

Bertoša believes that Tomizza has chosen a certain "leitmotif" while composing the book, and that is a frontier issue, burdened with cultural, political, and/or ideological matters.⁹² The protagonists are immigrants from the very beginning who were placed on the margins of society.⁹³ Vince-Paulla recognizes the importance of Tomizza's work in giving tribute to Balkan immigrants who arrived in Istria to save themselves from the Ottomans.⁹⁴ Maroević writes that the tensions between the native people, and the Dalmatian, Albanian, and Greek immigrants are created by the strengthening ethnicism of the native inhabitants. The Venetian Republic wanted to repopulate the Istrian territory after the Sixteenth-century plague that reduced the population of the peninsula because at that time Istria belonged to the Republic.⁹⁵

Bertoša states that the described events illustrate the daily life of protagonists, Istrian Lutherans from the Sixteenth century.⁹⁶ They are, according to Roić, described in the book as common people. Although they were a united group of people, a marginalized group, Tomizza was able to attribute them a name and surname, thanks to his extensive research.⁹⁷ According to Vince-Paulla and Roić, Tomizza describes Lutherans with sympathy and compassion,⁹⁸ while Nižić and Maroević emphasize the truthfulness of narrated events.⁹⁹

Interpretation of Quando Dio uscì di chiesa

The plot summary is offered by Tomizza himself at the beginning of this literary work: "Le vicende che mi accingo a narrare sono state desunte dagli atti di una serie di processi susseguitisi quasi senza interruzione dal 1580 al 1586 contro uomini indiziati di eresia, in specie luterana, del borgo di Dignano d'Istria."¹⁰⁰ The translation of this Italian sentence could read as follows: "The story, that I am about to narrate, was derived from the records of a series of trials which followed one another without an interruption from 1580 to 1586, and they were against men accused of being heretics, especially Lutherans, from an Istrian village Vodnjan."

Tomizza with his literary production gave importance to these figures, who were mainly former Catholics. In the Sixteenth century, as shown by documents Tomizza has studied, the heretics were often given the same name or surname, had confusing nicknames, and have been identified

⁹¹ Deganutti, *Fulvio Tomizza*, 37.

⁹² Bertoša, *Izazovi povijesnog zanata*, 131-33.

⁹³ Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 165; Maroević, "Heretici i bjegunci," 87.

⁹⁴ Cfr. Vince-Paulla, "Fulvio Tomizza," 217-18.

⁹⁵ Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 171-72; Maroević, *Heretici i bjegunci*, 90.

⁹⁶ Bertoša, *Izazovi povijesnog zanata*, 129, 131.

⁹⁷ Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 99-100; Roić, *Istočno i zapadno od Trsta*, 240; Roić, *Fulvio Tomizza*, 167; Maroević, *Borgesov čitatelj*, 189.

⁹⁸ Cfr. Roić, "Drugi na sjevernoistočnoj granici talijanske književnosti," 100; Roić, *Istočno i zapadno od Trsta*, 242; Vince-Paulla, "Fulvio Tomizza," 218.

⁹⁹ Maroević, *Heretici i bjegunci*, 90; Nižić, *Kolizijske kulture*, 147.

¹⁰⁰ Tomizza, *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*, 9.

with their profession. Tomizza had to study "case by case, and its context" to understand the singularity of every man, and only after that, he was able to reconstruct individual stories shown in the *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*.¹⁰¹

It is interesting that Fulvio Tomizza also in *Il male viene dal Nord*, a novel with Vergerio as a central protagonist, tributes oppressed people, in this case, former Catholic priests, who broke their celibacy and were defined by the Church as "heretics," and Tomizza has retained and written their names: Misarich, Petrovich, Gorgovich, Juretich, Caligarich, Zorcovich, Dragonich, Pengar, Boiaz, Scuriza, and Greblo.¹⁰² Tomizza in *Il male viene dal Nord* also mentions minority communities that arrived in Istria, to escape from Ottomans and did not recognize the superiority of the Catholic Church.¹⁰³ They are the protagonists of the book *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*. The narrator stated at the beginning of the *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa* that the interesting documents and sources of the Sixteenth century were so important to inspire him to do detailed research of the era. The invitation to deep research is also offered by "conterraneità"¹⁰⁴ or "the sense of belonging to the same land". The protagonists, the narrator and Fulvio Tomizza are from Istria.

Tomizza also shows another relation between the narrated events, and his reality, where the past reflected his experience. In the Sixteenth century, Istria was characterized by a "delicate and complex ethnic situation,"¹⁰⁵ and in the Twentieth century, Istrian people were forced into exile. The Ottomans' conquest has caused immigration. From 1540 Greek families from Malvasia, Napulion, and Cyprus arrived in Istria. They were followed by Dalmatian Morlachs. Immigration created conflicts not only between natives and immigrants but also between immigrants themselves, for example, between Greeks and Morlachs. Also, there was a trial because two men from Cyprus had murdered a married couple, who originated from the same country.¹⁰⁶ The exact opposite behavior was among Lutherans. They did not bother about their origin and occupation, being united to read and comment on the Bible translated into the vernacular.¹⁰⁷ In describing the heresy trials, Tomizza notes that "Anziché placarsi, l'odio del bergamasco ne è rinfocolato e sprigiona, forse per la prima volta sotto il cielo di Dignano, una vampata di razzismo."¹⁰⁸ The phrase could be translated as follows: "perhaps for the first time under the skies of Vodnjan, a hint of racism arose." In this sentence, "racism" refers to the hatred of the Catholic Church of the time towards the Lutherans, triggered by the behavior of the Lutherans and

¹⁰¹ Tomizza has written: "and here emerge these names, never mentioned before": Mango, Tonin, Ligo, Andreuccio de Manchario di Peloso, Paulo Pavion, Pizzo Manzin and his son Pizzotto, Matteo, son of blacksmith Moscada, Pasquin Bradanichio, Giacomo Batizza, Tonin Rota. They have been Heretics, students of Marco and Andre Callegaro. Tomizza, *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*, 9, 119; Bertoša, *Izazovi povijesnog zanata*, 133.

¹⁰² Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 488.

¹⁰³ Tomizza, *Il male viene dal Nord*, 265.

¹⁰⁴ Tomizza, *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*, 10.

¹⁰⁵ In describing the Istrian population in the sixteenth century and the people from Kosovo who came there, Tomizza mentions the complex relations between Serbs and Albanian Muslims in Kosovo in the twentieth century. Tomizza, *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*, 15, 25.

¹⁰⁶ Look at Tomizza, *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*, 16-17, 20, 22.

¹⁰⁷ Look at Tomizza, *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*, 27-28.

¹⁰⁸ Tomizza, *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*, 119.

their interpretation of the Bible. Some Lutherans publicly questioned the authority of the Pope and some Christian dogmas, such as the communion wafers being the body of Christ. Some Lutherans had lovers and children. Their behavior is defined as a “rebellion” against the “despotic and corrupt” Catholic authorities, which lasted for more than thirty years in the territory of Istria despite constant oppression. The statement could be confirmed by the following sentence from Tomizza’s book:

Pur assumendo spesso carattere di protesta sociale e politica, rimaneva in sostanza una contestazione in ambito religioso, mirante al sovvertimento del sistema cattolico accusato di aver tradito la chiesa degli apostoli, falsato la parola rivelata, per darsi un potere dispotico e corrotto.¹⁰⁹

On the other side, heretics, due to their behavior and beliefs, were described as “complete idiots”¹¹⁰ persecuted and treated as the Others. For Tomizza, these historical events could represent analogies to contemporary events, where he could have written about the persecution of the Croatian and Slovenian people during fascism on the Istrian peninsula, as well as the persecution of Lutherans under the Catholic authorities, which contains the message that history has repeated itself.

Conclusion

Although *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa* at a glance seem to be very different, they overlap quite a bit. *Il male viene dal Nord* is a historical novel, while *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa* still inspires discussions about its literary genre. When reading the books, one can see that they have the same historical inspiration, because both are based on the same historical materials, and quotations from documents are used in the direct speech of the protagonists. *Il male viene dal Nord* is focused on Pier Paolo Vergerio, and mentions some other Istrian Lutherans analyzed in detail in *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*. Both books are a tribute to oppressed people, persecuted for their beliefs. The persecuted Lutherans are united, and the Catholic Church that treats them as the Other brings division and puts them on the margins of society. The desire to pay tribute to marginalized and suffering people can be seen as the inspiration of Fulvio Tomizza to compose these literary works. He noticed the importance of the story of the Istrian heretics of the Sixteenth century. The divisions, persecutions, and exodus that they suffered have analogies to the reality of the Istrian people after the Second World War when many Istrians were forced to leave their homes because they did not fit into the frame of the Yugoslavian communist regime, which presented them as the Other.

Fulvio Tomizza does not hide his motivation to write *Il male viene dal Nord* and *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*. Both books have a narrator that explains his motivation. Tomizza gives his autobiographical experiences that emphasize the actuality of the narrated events to the narrator of *Il male viene dal Nord*. Tomizza followed his family in exodus, and during his life was

¹⁰⁹ Tomizza, *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*, 30.

¹¹⁰ Tomizza, *Quando Dio uscì di chiesa*, 35

seen as the Other. That did not stop after his emigration and has followed him despite his successful literary career. Tomizza, as a frontier man, was able to understand Pier Paolo Vergerio and Istrian heretics of the Sixteenth Century, and he created quality literature that still corresponds to current events. Centuries and centuries have passed, but there are still marginalized and persecuted people. The relation to immigrants and their suffering is an actual topic, and unfortunately, with current wars and crises in Europe, we can notice a huge number of suffering people.

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