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THE INVENTION OF THE *GIUDIATA*

In his article about the role of the Jews in the literary life of the Dubrovnik Republic, the Serbian author M. Pantić was led astray by the frequent and very precise regulations issued by the Dubrovnik authorities concerning the persons disguised as Jews during Easter time. Searching for similar phenomena, he copied some *Carnival* data from the famous book about the origins of the Italian theatre written by P. Toschi, and ascribed them to the Dubrovnik Easter of the 14th century. Pantić applied Toschi's term in Italian, *guidata*, to the fabricated Easter scene of torturing a Jew on a cart, though there was no justification for doing so. Toschi describes the evolution of *guidata* from the grotesque and cruel *Carnival* scene to the elaborated theatrical genre in the 19th century. Pantić's mystification misled S. P. Novak into taking the invented torture as a historical fact, and it was later taken for granted by I. Lozica. In this paper, however, he tries to correct his own mistake and to offer a new interpretation of the Easter masks in the Dubrovnik of the past.

Keywords: *giudiata*, Easter masks, Jews, Dubrovnik

Instead of an introduction, I shall commence this article with part of a brief chapter about the Dubrovnik Jew on an ox-drawn cart from the first volume of Slobodan Prosperov Novak's *History of Croatian Literature* (1996:284):

The cruellest mediaeval processions were organised in Dubrovnik, as early as during the 12th century. They were called *džudijata*. In these theatricalisations, the figure of a Jew dressed in tatters was drawn through the city on an ox-drawn cart, and tormented. The crowd ritually tortured the mask of this miserable creature, baiting it and pelting it with rotten fruit, and, finally, ritually killing it. There is no confirmation that this wretched personage in the ox-drawn cart was in fact done to death on even one occasion, or that he really was a Jew, although, due to certain circumstances, that possibility can not be completely excluded. The tormented figure which was followed on foot by the entire community, giving vent to their basest instincts and cruelly maltreating it, was a prefiguration of all the then more recent ecclesiastic mystery plays and carried within itself all the staging precursors which were to be

incorporated in Jesus Christ in the Passion plays presented during the same period on Croatian squares.

This cruel scene with the anonymous Jew is called the *giudiata* and took place in 12th-century Dubrovnik, while the historical source on which the description rests is the Dubrovnik *Statute* from the 13th century, more precisely, from 1272. Novak concludes that "it is quite logical that the Dubrovnik *Statute* from the 13th century speaks of the *giudiata* solely from the penal aspect" (Novak 1996:284-285). However, it would be fruitless to search for the term *giudiata* in the Dubrovnik *Statute*. I do not know how Novak came by the information on masquerading in the 12th century. If we at least had some information dating from the 13th and 14th centuries about the donning of masks in the Croatian regions, we would find it easier to interpret what was actually in question. Strangely enough, there does exist just that type of information, precisely from 1272 i.e. the year in which the Dubrovnik *Statute* was issued (see Matasović 1930:3; Lozica 1997:43).

During the 1920s, Miho Barada, a parish priest from Seget near Trogir, found in the Trogir City Archive the minutes of a court case conducted in the Trogir bishop's chambers on April 30, 1272. The suit had been brought in connection with injuries inflicted in mock-battle swordplay. The defendant's lawyer mentioned that it was the custom in Trogir for people to chose among themselves kings (*reges*) and lords (*dominos*, which can mean *nobles* but also *emperors*), and to engage in games with weapons at Easter-tide and for several days after the celebration of Easter.¹ The traces of that almost extinct custom (which is also known by its abbreviated name, *biranj* [election]) can be identified in the numerous Carnival armies on the Croatian Adriatic coast, and also in the *Slave-Girl* ensembles on the island of Pag, in the *moreška* customs, and most of all in the Korčula *kumpanija* confraternity customs (Ivančan 1967; Lozica 1997; 1998). The *electing-the-King* custom was pre-Christian in origin and was linked with the *koleda*, the January *kalenda* and Saturnalia customs (Milčetić 1917; Matasović 1930; Gavazzi 1988:196-197; Lozica 1997:43-46). The *election of the King* was usually held on the feast day of St Stephen, on the days between Christmas and Twelfth-day, the Day of the Magi, or, more rarely during Carnival. Other dates have been recorded, not only during the days of winter but even during the summer (e.g. in the Kaštela settlements near Split — see Bačić 1928; Cvitanović 1951). The Korčula *kumpanije* events, which were indubitably linked with the *koleda* and *electing-the-king* customs, were not firmly set in the wintertime or during the Carnival period; nor is the Korčula *moreška* tied to one particular date: it is rarely performed during the winter period. What explains this lack of date definition?

¹ ".../ et dixit quod consuetudo est in Tragurio, quod homines faciunt reges et dominos inter se et ludunt cum armis inter [se in] Pascate et post festum per plures dies" (Matasović 1930:3).

If one compares the Trogir and Dubrovnik sources, it is immediately clear that Easter and not Carnival masks are in question in both cases. Today, the wearing of masks is connected with Carnival and is almost unknown at Easter-time, so that the *koleda* (in other words: the pagan New Year) elements in the Christian Easter of Mediaeval Trogir and Dubrovnik can be confusing at first glance. Still, we must bear in mind that Christianisation was a prolonged process that lasted for centuries — and, in that light, Easter mask-wearing becomes a clearly understandable phenomenon. It is important to remember that the Roman January kalenda merged in a later phase with the Saturnalia festival, which was first celebrated on December 17, and then transferred to New Year Day itself, for its part later moved from March 1 to January 1. As in ancient Rome, the proto-Slavic New Year was probably a pagan holiday that brought February to an end and ushered in March (Belaj 1998:134). Easter, being close in time and also celebrated as the major Christian holiday, definitely has the significance of a new beginning and could have adopted the remnants of the pagan New Year traditions of the Croats in the first centuries of their life as part of Christendom.

It is time for us to return to the issue of the *giudiata*. Neither the *giudiata* nor even the Jewish masks are mentioned in the Dubrovnik *Statute*; the only reference made (in Chapter 97 of the Volume 8) is to certain *karbonosi* (with the alternative *krabanosi*), both of which terms might derive from the word for carbon, but what does stand out is the information that the people of Dubrovnik wrapped themselves in blankets made of coarse fabric called *skjavine*, and that they used diverse objects in order to transform themselves into odious and shameful personages; and that Dubrovnik's Rector Petar Justinijan forbade all types of masquerading at Easter-time and at any other time, under the threat of a fine of 50 perpers, so as to bring to an end the squabbles, outrageous behaviour and fights that often accompanied the custom (*Statut* 1990:254).

Mention of the masks called *Jews* date from only the 14th century in Dubrovnik, in a series of ordinances issued by the Dubrovnik authorities in connection with mask-wearing before Easter. In 1319, 1320, 1323, 1329, and 1335 it was prohibited "to smear oneself with coal or to transform oneself into or present oneself as Jew"; however, such masks were permitted, for example, in 1331. In 1347, masquerading was at first prohibited, but then permitted with a series of limitations; in 1349, mask-wearing was not permitted; just before Easter 1381, the Minor Council strictly prohibited dressing up as *karbonosi* and *Jews* on Easter Saturday, but allowed it on Easter Day and after it, with the limitation that no *karbonosi* or *Jews* were permitted to carry weapons or wooden and stone clubs around the city! (see Tadić 1937:19; Pantić 1971:212-214). For those of us who have just read Novak's description of the miserable role of the anonymous Jew on the ox-drawn cart, this ordinance seems rather strange. It would seem to indicate that there were several Jewish masqueraders, not just one, and that they were inclined to carry arms in the

city. How would it have been possible that creatures that submitted to being tormented would also have been armed? What was the relationship between the *karbonosi* and the *Jews*? Were they from the same camp or were they perhaps two groups in conflict? It also seems strange that the ordinance directly forbids the carrying of arms only in the city, but not elsewhere! That would mean that the *karbonosi* and the *Jews* could, nevertheless, carry arms in some other location, but, if this was so, the question is why and where? Could it have been outside the city walls, or in enclosed places, or even perhaps in church?

If we set aside for a moment Novak's ox-drawn cart from the 12th century and try to solve the riddle of the armed masked personages who represented Jews two centuries later, in the 14th century, their emergence will also confuse us. In other words, what was the source of frequent masquerading as Jews in the 14th century, when in the 13th, 14th, and even up to the end of the 15th century (until 1498), there were no decrees from the authorities to regulate the status of Jews in Dubrovnik? All the indications are that only a very small number of Jews had permanent residence in the City (they were mainly doctors of medicine or very agile business people — see Stulli 1989:18). It was only during the last decade of the 15th century that Jews started to settle in Dubrovnik in any numbers, this having being prompted by their being exiled from Spain (in 1492) and Portugal (in 1498).

The information on masquerading as Jews in the 14th century was also mentioned by Bernard Stulli in his book *The Jews in Dubrovnik*, but he mistakenly situated them during Carnival, and not at Eastertide. He mentioned the rumour that ran through old Dubrovnik chronicles concerning the "plague" epidemic in 1348 having been ostensibly caused by Jewish poisoning of the people (Stulli 1989:18). All this speaks of a certain anti-Jewish sentiment among Dubrovnik's inhabitants during the 14th century. However, it is improbable that rare encounters with actual Jews could have provoked group masquerading as Jews at Eastertide. To me, the explanation given quite recently by Maren M. Frejdenberg, in the book about Jews in the Balkans at the end of the Middle Ages, seems more acceptable. He writes:

The stereotype of the Jew in the conception of the people of Dubrovnik underwent a certain evolution. It is significant that the stereotype had already emerged prior to the appearance of the first Jews and long before the establishment of the Jewish community. The stereotype's creation was not connected with actual Jews, but was prompted by New Testament reminiscences, and particularly by Easter theatre productions on the City's squares. These performances were held on Easter Thursday and Good Friday, and the Jews were represented with the characteristics of "Arabs", as in the "Alka" games of chivalry that are still widespread today — the performers smeared their faces with soot (Frejdenberg 1996:108).

Frejdenberg's interpretation is on the right track when he mentions the New Testament reminiscences of Easter masquerading as Jews, but errs when he assigns face-blackening to the *Alka* games of chivalry (instead of to the *moreška* and to other mock-battle sword-play customs). Frejdenberg also identifies the masked *karbonosi* personages and the *Jews* — of which, in my opinion, there is no proof in written sources. Further on in the text, which I have not quoted here, he equates the Dubrovnik Jewish masks with the problematic *giudiata*, claiming (mistakenly, I believe) that *giudiata* is the Italian term for some of the Venetian masks with beaks (Frejdenberg 1996:108).

So, where did those *guidata* and ox-carts come from, if they are not mentioned in Dubrovnik documents?

Both the *giudiata* and the ox-carts were concocted by Miroslav Pantić in his 1971 article "The Jews in Dubrovnik Literature", which appeared in the first issue of *Zbornik*, collected papers of the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade. There he gave an inadmissibly free interpretation of scant archive data, augmenting it with "creative" reading of the capital work of Italian theatreology, which he duly quotes. The book, of course, was Paolo Toschi's *Le origini del teatro italiano* (Toschi 1955:180, 226-227, 333-340).

Drawing on Tadić's 1937 book, Pantić singles out the above-mentioned information about the 14th century masquerading as Jews in Dubrovnik, giving that custom the term *džudijata*, in its Serbian form — although *džudijata* is not mentioned in the quoted Dubrovnik ordinances. This is a Serbian transcription of the Italian word *giudiata* — in any case, in the Dubrovnik vernacular the word would have been *žudijata*. Pantić adopted the term from Toschi, completely ignoring the meaning of that word in the Italian author's work. In other words, Toschi monitored its development from the grotesque and cruel Roman *Carnival* scene into the comedigraphic theatrical genre that survived in Rome right up until 1871 (Toschi 1955:333-340).

With incredible *sang froid*, Pantić transcribed Toschi and brazenly assigned the *Roman Carnival* data to the *Dubrovnik Easter*:

At the same time, and for a long time after, noisy and colourful processions with Jews as unwilling protagonists were organised in Rome before Easter, on Easter Thursday and on Good Friday; they also served as a model to the people of Dubrovnik. In keeping with a scenario set long before, the Romans dressed up one of their number as a Jew, placed him on an ox-drawn cart and dragged him through the streets of the city, strangling him, hanging him and, in general, torturing him in various ways; finally, done to some shameful death, the "Jew" was forced to dictate his comical testament in his pre-death moments (Pantić 1971:211).

So we have finally located this puzzling Jewish martyr on the ox-drawn cart — not in Dubrovnik, but rather in Rome! Držić would have said: "does

it seem strange to you to watch Rome from Dubrovnik?" (Držić 1930:259). In his text, Pantić inexplicably also counterfeits the time of the event in Rome, moving it to Easter Thursday or Good Friday, although Toschi expressly writes about the *Rome Carnival* scene as follows:

Or dunque; le *guidiate* erano rappresentazioni carnevalesche organizzate dai rioni di Roma, e che si svolgevano su carri tirati da buoi. /.../ La *giudiata*, dunque, vuol essere la rappresentazione dell'uccisione di un Ebreo nell'ultimo giorno di Carnevale (Toschi 1955:334-335).²

The *giudiata* is a particularity of Rome, even within Italy. Even as a theatre genre (on which Toschi reports in detail), the *giudiata* is exclusively Roman — the last noted *giudiata* theatrical performance took place in Rome in 1871.

However, Pantić's recasting of Toschi goes even further: without argumentation, he links that same Rome Carnival *giudiata* with other, Easter masquerading from Toschi's book — with personages from San Fratello on the island of Sicily, called *Giudei*. Toschi (1955:180, 226-227) adopts Pitrè's description of the dressing up and procession of groups of shepherds on Easter Thursday and Good Friday. The *Giudei* are typical manistic masks with covered faces, silent and unrecognisable, with a wild appearance and behaviour similar to the Croatian *didi*, *zvončari*, *buše* and *repaši* from Mokošica (and the *karbonosi* referred to in the *Statute*) — these are the *grube*, or ugly, masks which burst into houses, churches and gardens, making a noise with their chains and trumpets.³

Let us return to the Carnival in Rome. Cesare Poppi recently stressed that the dramatic peak of singling out the human victim at the end of the Carnival was reached precisely in Rome, and that this was the most drastic example in a series of similar procedures connected with masquerades throughout Europe. He described the case in Rome as follows:

In Rome the main events of the Carnival were the *agoni di Testaccio*, a series of prize races involving different classes of participants, both on foot and mounted. The *agoni* of antiquity are the historical antecedents of the modern Carnival. One of the central events of the *agoni di Testaccio* was the hunt of the bear, the bull and the cock, performed in the presence of the Pope. By the thirteenth century the Carnival hunts were given a Christian meaning. However, in Rome, well into the nineteenth century, criminals were executed on the last day of Carnival

² We can gain an inkling to the origins of the custom in Rome from the books by Ivan Ivančan and Violet Alford. Ivančan writes: "One is the *mamuralije*, a few days after the Roman New Year at the beginning of which, and also nine days after it (March 1), Salian brotherhood, groups armed with swords did the rounds of the streets. Then a scapegoat was dressed in skins and answered for the transgressions of others. He represented the Old Year and all its evils. How unusually similar this is to Carnival customs, and even the time corresponds!" (Ivančan 1967:146). Also see: Alford 1962:26.

³ Noise was made by dragging hearth chains (or hoes and mattocks) through the villages in Dalmatia on Ash Wednesday (Gavazzi 1988:20). On maintaining quiet and producing noise on holy days see Čapo Žmegač (1997:68-71).

(*Martedì Grasso, Mardi Gras* or Shrove Tuesday) and before the final masquerade of the year. If they were available, Jewish convicts would be put to death on that day. During Carnival, the Jews of Rome were made the target of insult and abuse by a frenzied crowd during a special foot race organised for them as part of the *agoni*. The Jewish community was also made the financial scapegoat of the feast. Its leader was forced to hand over a large sum of money to enable the Roman Senate to sponsor the Carnival (the practice was abolished in 1848 by Pius IX) (see Popi 1994:210).

To sum up. This cruellest of European Carnival examples was injected into the 14th century Dubrovnik Easter by Pantić in 1971, without any argumentation whatsoever. In Novak's otherwise excellent article, "The Logic of the Body and the Rhetoric of Ideology in the Croatian Religious Theatre", the Roman Carnival ox-cart dragged the concocted Dubrovnik Jew-Martyr into the history of the Croatian Mediaeval theatre in 1985, and then this miserable personage appeared in other papers by Novak and in three of my books about the folklore theatre and Carnival. In 1996, he was even given a separate chapter in Novak's *History of Croatian Literature*, going as far back into the past as the 12th century. It would seem to be time that this hapless *Jew* returns to Rome. Masquerading as *Jews* at Eastertide in Dubrovnik can be explained without him.

Ritual personages and procedures often outlive their original meanings, so we can assume that successors of the Trogir swordsmen and the armed Dubrovnik *Jews* continue to appear on the Croatian coast and on the islands. Even if Christianisation drove them out of the developed urban centres, perhaps they took refuge somewhere nearby. I believe that to have been the case: the armed guards in the costumes of Roman legionnaires who stand guard in church over the Lord's Crypt in Metković before Easter are called *Žudije*, a variant of *Jews*, even today...⁴

Jasna Čapo Žmegač wrote the following about the guards of the Lord's Crypt:

Along the coast, the grave was guarded by *soldati* (soldiers) and sailors in uniform or people dressed in older costume (Braica 1994:171; Milićević 1975:451; Čapo 1983, Bonifačić Rožin 1958:39). In the Neretva River region, particularly in Metković, the guards took part in all the rituals of Easter Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Saturday. They were dressed in special uniforms similar to Roman attire, these being the property of the church (Bonifačić Rožin 1964:64):

"The guards numbered 16 as follows:

2 officers with two types of weapons. One has a double-sided Roman sword, while the other has a dual throwing spear. They have a cockade made of red wool on their helmets, just like Roman officers.

⁴ See the photograph and the caption beneath it in the book *Hrvatski uskrsni običaji* (Čapo Žmegač 1997:40). Roman legionnaires also appear in Vodice — there they are called *Žudije*, too.

They are dressed in lilac-coloured tunics, with a metal Roman officer's helmet. On the left arm, there is a large round shield made of cardboard, painted black, with a gold edge, and the weapon in the right hand.

10 ordinary Roman soldiers, dressed in (bright) red tunics breastplates of metal, metal helmets on the head, in the right hand a lance with a wooden javelin, painted gold, a black staff, with banners in two ribbons around the javelin, red in colour with gold fringes. Wearing a wooden sword taken out with the left hand.

4 lower-ranked officers with special metal helmets, dressed in bright yellow tunics, wearing a wooden sword, in the left hand they hold a cardboard shield, painted the same as those of the officers, elliptical in shape, cut off at the ends. In the right hand they hold a spear with a hatchet, knives painted gold, and a black staff."

On Good Friday and Easter Saturday, various scenes unfold at the Lord's Crypt in Dalmatia, particularly on the central Dalmatian islands, in the Zagora hinterland and in the Neretva River regions (Bonifačić Rožin 1958:39-40 and 1964:64-66, Miličević 1975:451-452, Čapo 1983). In common to them all is that, at the moment when the bells ring out to announce the Resurrection on Easter Saturday, the guards who had been guarding the crypt until that moment collapse to the ground in fear and then run away. (...) Until that moment the guards in Metković had been throwing dice in memory of the dice-throwing for the clothes of Jesus (Bonifačić Rožin 1964:65-66). The scene of guarding the Lord's Crypt and the panic-stricken flight of the guards largely disappeared after World War II, however, they were maintained in the Neretva River and Vrljika regions until the 1960s as described by Nikola Bonifačić Rožin. This is what he noted down in Metković, in which the guarding of the crypt ostensibly dated from the last decades of the 19th century (1964:66):

"At the moment when the priest sings the *Gloria* in the Glagolitic language, all the bells ring out from the bell-tower and the church organ swells to its full capacity, while the guards collapse before the crypt, each in his own way, and they remain in those positions for a few moments. With the rumbling of the organ and the bells, one part of the guards leave the church in mindless fear — they run in all manner of ways, bent over, weapons lifted, and hands, while some of them remain lying there in front of the crypt for the entire duration of the mass. At the end of the mass, they, too, run out of the church."⁵

I conclude, therefore, with the thesis that the Dubrovnik scene with the Jew on the ox-cart could not have been a prefiguration of Christ's Passion in all newer Croatian Passion plays (see Novak 1996:284), for the simple reason that such scenes were never seen in Dubrovnik. Instead of the unprotected Jewish martyr from the 12th century, we catch glimpses of two groups that took part during the 14th century in Easter events: the *karbonosi* with wooden or stone clubs and armed *Jews*. These (opposing?) groups probably were remnants of the pagan New Year, *koleda* customs, and

⁵ On the guards of the Lord's Crypt also see *Folklorno kazalište* (1996:167-170).

perhaps of *electing the king*. The *karbonosi* and the *Jews* were permitted to carry arms only in church, where they (probably) acted the parts of New Testament unbelievers in the Christian scenes (such as the *Žudije* in Metković and Vodice). They were permitted to appear only on Easter Sunday and after Easter, so as not to disturb the people of Dubrovnik with their pre-Christian noise (similar to that made by the *Guidei* from San Fratello on the island of Sicily) in the sombre atmosphere of the Christian Easter Week. The ban on carrying arms in the City was intended to prevent the performance of the pagan sword dances at Eastertide.

All this is mere conjecture, but it seems to me to be more convincing than that ox-drawn cart that Pantić foisted upon us.

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IZUM DŽUDIJATE

SAŽETAK

Miroslav Pantić je u članku o Židovima u dubrovačkoj književnosti zburjen čestim i vrlo preciznim odredbama Velikoga i Maloga vijeća o maskiranju u Židove oko Uskrsa. Potražio je srodne vijesti u Toschijevoj knjizi o izvorima talijanskoga kazališta, ali je bez ikakva oslonca u dubrovačkim dokumentima prepisao Toschija i pripisao rimski karnevalski podatak dubrovačkomu Uskrsu četrnaestoga stoljeća. Preuzeo je i talijanski termin *giudiata*, kojim imenuje izmišljeni *uskrсни* prizor mučenja Židova na kolima, iako ni za to nema nikakve potvrde, jer Toschi prati *giudiatu* u njezinu razvoju od grotesknog i okrutnog *karnevalskog* prizora do kazališnog, komediografskog žanra koji se održao u Rimu sve do 1871. godine. Ta mistifikacija je zavela S. P. Novaka, koji Pantićevu *džudijatu* spominje u mnogim svojim radovima. Od Novaka je *džudijatu* preuzeo i I. Lozica. U ovom tekstu on nastoji ispraviti vlastiti propust novim tumačenjem podataka o uskrsnom maskiranju u starome Dubrovniku.

Ključne riječi: *džudijata*, uskrсне maske, Židovi, Dubrovnik