This paper analyses the iconography of the scenes of pain of non-Biblical mothers for their deceased children, which was used as one of the mechanisms of Catholic propaganda in the struggle against the Schism and infidels and exercised through sermons and propagation of the faith in the power of the Eucharist. Local examples (from Split, Dubrovnik and Kotor) are examined in a broader European context. Firstly, an example from the cathedral of Split is analysed. The *Miracle in the fiery furnace* (better known as *The Miracle of the Jewish boy of Bourges*) was painted around 1635-1640 by the Venetian painter Matteo Ponzone as a part of a larger cycle composed of ten canvases, which is now placed above the main altar. It is a depiction of a medieval legend, which can be encountered in the collections of *Exempla*, didactic tales for use in sermons, and has thus had several literary and visual interpretations which are analysed in this paper. The second example refers to the miracles of Saint Vincent Ferrer. While preparing for canonization, Pietro Ranzano of Palermo wrote the *vita* of Vincent Ferrer, in which the centerpiece of which is occupied by two consecutive and psychologically powerful stories. The first story deals with a mother who had killed, chopped-up and cooked her own child (a version of the story of Mary of Bethzeba by Flavius Jospehus), thereby appalling the child's father upon his return from Ferrer's sermon. The topic of the second miracle is a grieving mother who is carrying her dead child in her arms and seeking help from Ferrer. In both cases the powerful Dominican preacher has restored the children to life. Their stories became instantly popular and received their iconographic expression with an explicit depiction of parental pain.

**Keywords:** pain, miracle scenes, iconography, medieval, painting, exempla, sermons

The aim of this paper is to explain the basic framework of the relationship between iconography, hagiography, sermons and exempla through the mode of representing the pain of non-Biblical mothers. The selected examples of iconography (*Miracle in the fiery furnace, The Miracle of the Jewish boy from Bourges*) and two miracle scenes in which St. Vincent Ferrer restored children to life, differ according to the protagonists, the theme and the place of origin, but then converge on one level – the representation of maternal pain and/or eliciting painful emotions in the observer. By way of an iconological analysis primarily based on the comprehension of the place and time in which the above-mentioned iconographies occurred and are used, we shall point to their possible interpretations. The etymology of written sources will be analysed, followed by an examination of the migration of long-standing motifs such as the *Miracle of the Jewish Boy* or Cannibal Mary from the *History of the Jewish war*. The appearance of their iconographic variant in the local context, their use in exempla, sermons, hagiography, and visual narratives will be further compared and considered in relation to European examples as well as in their historical and religious context. Analyses of both the images and texts will be carried out in order to examine how and why these powerful emotional stories appeared.
**Miracle in the fiery furnace or the Miracle of the Jewish boy (from Bourges) in the cathedral of Split**

The first example is a painting known in Croatian historiography as the Čudo u užarenoj peći (Miracle in the fiery furnace),¹ painted by the Venetian painter Matteo Ponzone (Venice, 1583–1663/1675) around 1635-1640, as a part of a cycle of ten canvases, which can currently be found on the vault above the main altar of the cathedral in Split.² The left side of the painting features an open, vaulted furnace in which a fire is blazing. In it, a boy wearing a dark green tunic is sitting calmly, while the lower part of his body is covered by a blue mantle. His hands are crossed on his chest, with the Holy Eucharist painted in the middle of it. The right half of the painting is occupied by a heterogeneous group of people expressing amazement and astonishment by means of vigorous gestures and commenting on the event amongst themselves. The foreground is dominated by a kneeling woman wearing a white shirt and a bright red dress, staring at the child in horror with both of her arms open (fig. 1).

It is a depiction of a medieval legend which was rather popular at the time, and which generated several literary and, hence, also painted versions of the event, whose various renderings often bore local features. Even though the legend could have originated earlier, the first known and preserved version was the one recorded by Evagrius Scholasticus (around 536 – 600) in his Historia Ecclesiastica,³ while the first Latin version of the story, based on Evagrius', was written by St Gregory of Tours (Clermont, November 30, 538 – Tours, November 17, 594) in his book De gloria martyrum.⁴ While Evagrius Scholasticus sets the narrative in Constantinople, Gregory of Tours is not specific about the setting, placing it somewhere “in the East”. Here we shall present Tours’ entire legend translated into English: “The son of a Jewish glass-worker was studying and learning the alphabet with Christian boys. One day while the ritual of Mass was being celebrated in the Church of the Blessed Mary, the Jewish boy approached with the other young boys to partake of the glorious body and blood of the Lord. After receiving the holy (Eucharist), he happily returned to his father’s house. His father was working, and between embraces and kisses the boy mentioned what he had so happily received. Then his father, an enemy of Christ and Lord and his laws, said, ‘If you have communicated with these boys and forgotten your ancestral worship, then to avenge this insult to the law of Moses I will step forward against you as a merciless murderer’. And he seized the boy and threw him into the mouth of a raging furnace; he was persistent and added wood so the furnace would burn hotter. But that compassion that had once sprinkled the dew of a cloud on the three Hebrew boys who had been thrown into a Chaldaean furnace (cf. Daniel 3:8-30) was not lacking. For it did not allow this boy, even though lying on a pile of coals in the middle of the fire, to be consumed in the least. When his mother heard that the father had evidently decided to incinerate their son, she hurried to save him. But when she saw the fire leaping from the open mouth of the furnace and flames raging here and there, she threw her barrette to the ground. Her hair was dishevelled; she wailed that she was in misery and filled the city with her cries. When the Christians learned what had been done, they all rushed to such an evil sight; after the flames had been beaten back from the mouth of the furnace, they found the boy reclining as if on very soft feathers. When they pulled him out, they were all astonished that he was unhurt. The place was filled with shouts, and so everyone blessed God. Then they shouted that they should throw the instigator of this crime into these flames. Once he was thrown in, the fire burned him so completely that somehow scarcely a tiny piece of his bones was left. When the Christians asked the young boy what sort of shield he had had in the flames, he said, ‘The woman who was sitting on the throne in that church where I received the bread from the table and who was cradling a young boy in her lap covered me with her cloak, so that the fire did not devour me’. There is, hence, no doubt that the blessed Mary had appeared to him. Then, having acknowledged the Catholic faith, the young boy believed in the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit. After he and his mother had been been baptized in the waters of salvation they were reborn. In that city many Jews were saved by this example”.⁵

The story was modified from the 9th century onwards, resulting in numerous versions,⁶ and particularly important for the dissemination of the legend in the centuries to come was its inclusion in the collections of Marian stories and miracles. Thus, for example, in his collection Miracula Sanctae Dei Genetricis Virginis Mariae, Nigel of
Canterbury (also known as Nigel of Longchamp and Nigel Wireker, c. 1130-c.1200) set the story in Pisa, emphasizing the Eucharistic moment within the miracle and granting the Jewish mother a prominent role by stressing her reaction to the father’s violent act. In this short overview of the story’s reception, the Les Miracles de Notre-Dame collection, is especially significant, compiled around 1223–1227 by Gautier de Coinci (1177–1236). He, however, moved the setting to the French town of Bourges, which is why the legend is best known as The miracle of the Jewish boy of Bourges. In Coinci’s version of the story, the mother’s reaction to the father’s violent act was one of despair; she wailed crying out for help and tore her hair out. Instead of Christians, numerous Jews appear as witnesses to the miracle, and they subsequently converted to Christianity. De Coinci’s version was immensely popular and influential, which is evidenced by dozens of preserved manuscripts, and it was also the first version of the story that received a visual narrative form. Therefore, we will use four selected examples to analyse the manners in which different illuminators shaped the legend of the Jewish boy. The authors will focus on decoding the visual lexis determining the identity of the protagonists, their mood and emotions, with special emphasis on the depiction of the boy’s mother.

The first example is kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France under catalogue number BnF, fr. 22928 (f. 75r) and can be broadly dated to the 14th century (1301-1400). The illuminator portrayed the legend of the Jewish boy in a sequence of four images (fig. 2). The first depicts the Jewish boy receiving Communion. The priest is offering the child the Eucharist, which he accepts with his mouth open and hands clasped in prayer. Behind the priest is the altar featuring the Virgin and Child in her arms. Next is the scene depicting the father’s violent act of throwing the child into the burning furnace, and the reaction of the appalled mother gathering a crowd of people. The following image shows the vengeful act of the mob pushing the Jewish father into the blazing furnace, and the last scene is the one in which the boy recounts the miraculous event of the Virgin Mary intervening in his salvation. Especially interesting for our topic is the second scene, which synthesizes the two successive events that can be read from left to right. The illuminator clearly portrays the father’s negative personality by means of external features: depicted in profile, he has a stern facial expression, and his pointy headgear and a yellow badge, which also characterizes the mother and the child, undoubtedly representing attributes whose aim is to indicate his negative role and distinguish Jews from Christians. The child turns his head to face his father, while his hands are again clasped in prayer. According to our knowledge, the clasped hands gesture was also known to the ancient

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1 M. Ponzone, Miracle in the fiery furnace (The miracle of the Jewish boy of Bourges), Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Split (photo: I. Čapeta Rakić)

2 The miracle of the Jewish boy of Bourges, Miracles de Notre-Dame et autres poésies de Gautier de Coinci, 14th c., BNF, fr. 22928, f. 75 r (© BNF, Département de la Reproduction)
world. Captives, submitting to their conqueror, would stretch out their hands to be bound. Originally only barbarians were represented in this shameful posture, while in the medieval world the gesture is associated with a ritual of vassals placing their hands in the hands of their liege lords while swearing their loyalty. It was only during the late Middle Ages that the gesture was introduced in Christian iconography, where it is usually encountered in the scenes of donors kneeling before the saints. Due to the close connection between a prayer and a request to a divinity, in Central Europe the gesture has assumed the meaning of imploration, as concluded by Ernst Gombrich. Therefore, there are two ways in which we can interpret it in this context: as the boy’s plea to his father to refrain from his vicious intent, and his conversion to Christianity, resulting from the previous scene. The mother has turned her back to the scene and is standing in front of the gathered crowd with both hands in the air and her palms outstretched, thus indicating the urgency of the situation as well as her own misery. Namely, here her grief is not expressed by means of facial gestures and expressions, but only by the movement of her body, i.e. her hands. A similar rendering of the mother’s reaction was depicted by Fauvel Master in 1327, in the Jewish boy from Bourges scene, which can be read in the reverse order from the one in the previous example, and which can be found in a manuscript kept at the National Library of the Netherlands under catalogue number The Hague, KB, 71 A 24 f. 10v (fig. 3). The illuminator has summarized the legend into a single scene, focusing on the father’s murderous act and the mother’s reaction. Here, however, the mother is turning away from the scene in which the father is pushing the child into the furnace, and she is depicted in a semi-profile, with both of her arms straight up in the air with palms stretched out and turned upwards. The gesture of arms lifted in the air with the palms stretched out has been used to express pain ever since ancient times. Probably the most famous example from that period is the depiction of Dido’s death from the Aeneid in the so-called Vatican Vergil, in which a handmaiden standing behind the pyre lifts her hands in lamentation, and there are countless similar examples in medieval painting, especially in the depictions of Biblical scenes of the Massacre of the Innocents and the Lamentation of Christ.

The illuminations of a manuscript written between 1328 and 1332 have been attributed to Jean Pucelle. As with the manuscript from Hague, the illuminator had encapsulated the legend of the Jewish boy into one scene, focusing on the father’s murderous act and the mother’s reaction (fig. 4). In the process of transforming words into a painting, the illuminator provided an extremely dramatic and faithful depiction of the mother’s mental state. In doing so, Pucelle used body language and introduced a facial expression as well: the mother is pulling at her hair while her face is contorted with pain. The gesture in which her eyebrows are turned downwards, which is further complemented by the movement of her hands pulling at her hair, represents a strong emotional reaction: an explosion of grief at its peak. As Moshe Barasch explains, these gestures are traditional mourning gestures connected with self-inflicted injury as an expression of grief, and they have also been adopted from ancient and early Byzantine sources.

Pucelle’s rendering of the mother’s dramatic gesture of grief is most likely influenced by Italian, especially Sienese painting, as are several other examples from his opus, considering that it was believed that he had stayed in Florence and Siena around 1320. It was precisely during the second decade of the 14th century (sometime around 1324) that Simone Martini painted the polyptych of the Blessed Agostino Novello for the Sant’Agostino church in Siena. Along with the central figure of the beatus, Martini’s polyptych features four smaller panels depicting his miracles. Especially relevant for our topic is the lower panel on the left-hand side of the painting, which depicts the Balcony Miracle (fig. 5). It is a visualisation of Novello’s posthumous miracle, based on the text of an unknown Florentine author. The anonymous author relates how a Sienese boy fell off a balcony that needed repair, and how a large plank from the balcony fell down on top of him. His mother, anticipating the worst, prayed to Agostino Novello, who faithfully intervened by causing the plank to hover in mid-air, thereby enabling the boy to escape unharmed. However, as emphasised by Cathleen Sara Hoeniger, the task of invoking the beatus was assigned to a young man in the background of the painting, whom we recognize by his hands clasped in prayer, while in response to the shock of her son’s fall, the mother in Simone’s story pulls at her hair and wails with her mouth fully open. The mourning gesture could have been copied by Simone Martini from the Assisi fresco en-
titled *The Death of the Child from Sessa*, attributed to Giotto's workshop and dated at around 1300-1310 (fig. 6). It is a visual representation of another miraculous story set in the town of Sessa where a house had fallen down, killing a young man. In this fresco, a number of female mourners adopt gestures of self-inflicted injury, including a woman in the background shown pulling at her hair and wailing.\(^{22}\) Subsequently, at the invocation of the name of the Holy Father Francis, the boy not only revived, but even appeared to be unharmed.\(^{23}\)

Among the manuscripts depicting the legend of the Jewish boy, we would also like to emphasise the grisaille illumination painted by Jean Miélot in the *Vie et miracles de Notre Dame* collection, which he compiled for his patron Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, around 1456 (fig. 7). The legend is depicted by means of one painting containing several scenes. The scene on the left offers an open view of the interior of the church in which the boy is receiving the Eucharist. On the right we can see the father to whom the painter attributed a money lender's purse, unmistakeably marking him as a Jew throwing the boy into the furnace. Again, we find the mother’s reaction interesting: her facial expression is that of anguish – her eyebrows are turned downwards, tears are rolling down her cheeks, but there are no dramatic gestures of self-inflicted injury. She is kneeling before a church in which the boy is receiving (has received) Communion, with her hands folded in prayer. In this context, the gesture can be interpreted in several ways: as a plea for help, a sign of her submission, and as a hint to the outcome of the story, i.e. intimation of her conversion to Christianity.\(^{24}\)

The Marian story had gradually spread beyond the monastic context and became an *Exemplum* in the collections of *Exempla*, short moralistic narratives incorporated into preaching with the aim of holding the attention of the audience and making the sermon’s lesson memorable, and with a clear purpose of enlightening and converting as many ‘new members’ as possible.\(^{25}\) In this context it is necessary to mention the late medieval collections such as the *Alphabetum narrationum*,\(^{26}\) which was compiled by the Dominican priest Arnoldus of Liége around 1308-1310.\(^{27}\) The compilation was extremely popular, which is evidenced by more than fifty preserved copies,\(^{28}\) and our theme can be found under the title *Eukaristia sumpta ab infideli a combustione eum protexit*.\(^{29}\)

Unlike the extremely popular written and narrated version of the story, there are only a few examples in which the theme of the Jewish boy appears in monumental fresco paintings or easel paintings. We are personally familiar with examples of fresco paintings in the Eton College Chapel in Windsor and the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Winchester Cathedral,\(^{30}\) but the figure of the mother has been omitted from both of these examples in order to place more emphasis on the Virgin’s role as a saviour. A remarkable example is the fresco painted by Ugolino di Prete Ilario on the northern wall of the Chapel of the Corporal in the Cathedral of Orvieto\(^{31}\) between 1357 and 1364, in which the painter had divided the story chronologically in three sequences (fig. 8).

After the invention of the printing press, the legend started to appear in numerous book editions, among which we would like to highlight the following title: *Miracoli della Gloriosa Vergine Maria Nostra Signora, Tratti da diversi Catholici, & approvati Auttori* dal R.P. Don Silvano Razzi, Monacho Camaldolense, which has been printed in several consecutive editions by publishers in Florence, Brescia, Venice, Mantua, Rome, Treviso and Viterbo. The story can be found under the title *Un Putto hebreo in compagnia di alcuni fanciulli Christiani prende la Santa communione, e per ciò, messo dal padre in una fornace ardente, è liberato dalla Vergine.*

As we have seen from the selected examples, the majority of painted versions of the story focus on the father’s murderous act and the mother’s response to it. In them, the painters have clearly indicated the father’s negative personality by attributing some of the recognizable features to him, which had by then become attributes of Jews.\(^{32}\) Apart from the example from Split, we are not familiar with any other painting depicting the legend of the Jewish boy which features only the child’s mother, while the father is omitted from the scene.

The author of the iconographic programme of Ponzone’s cycle from Split has incorporated the legend of the Jewish boy into the much broader context of a ten-painting polyptych, which most likely served as the *pala feriale* for the large silver Gothic altarpiece of Johannes Gerardini of Pesaro, which was placed on the main altar of the Cathedral of Split, and temporarily next to the altar of St. Domnious during the Baroque modifications in the cathedral.\(^{33}\) The polyptych most likely consisted of two horizontal sequences of symmetrically arranged paint-
ings: its lower part comprised a series of scenes from the Old Testament, with the central axis featuring a painting of the Last Supper, while its upper part comprised a series of five paintings of the Eucharist exempla, amongst which the Miracle in the fiery furnace (The Miracle of the Jewish boy from Bourges) painting was most likely the fourth painting in the upper sequence. In this way, the selected subjects from the Old Testament would have prefigured the doctrine of transubstantiation and consequently a series of Eucharistic exempla – illustrative, didactic stories whose task was to teach and consolidate the mystery of the Eucharist by mediating sermons and visually rendered miracles. This revival of medieval themes and concepts in the post-Tridentine Restoration of the Church, which among other things uses as a method of communication the story of the intense pain experienced by the Jewish mother, had as an aim of encouraging piety among the believers and of propagating conversion of the schismatics and infidels. This example is directly linked to a crisis within the Catholic Church and the emergence of heresy and Protestantism within the metropolitan Church of Split. The dogmatic issue of transubstantiation, especially in relation to Luther and the Reformers who rejected the belief that Christ was present in the Eucharist in the Catholic sense, was solved by resorting to an ‘external enemy’. This was aptly found in the Jews in the collections of exempla and their visual narratives, which in the 17th century became a metonymy for the Protestant identity, since both rejected belief in transubstantiation and every manifestation of the actual presence of Christ’s body in the host.

The example from Split is neither an exception nor a coincidence as we shall see in the following examples in which the miracle stories and their visual renderings containing the iconography of pain were used to promote the ideas of Catholicism.

Two miracle scenes of resuscitation of children in the context of the spreading of the Saint Vincent Ferrer cult in Dubrovnik and Kotor

The topic of the second case study belongs to the same circle of ideas, but the actors are different. It involves the activities of Vincent Ferrer during the Western Schism, as well as the canonization and expansion of his cult in the time after the union between the Latin and Greek churches at the Council of Basel - Ferrara – Florence (1431-1449).

It will elaborate how and why official hagiography and newly established iconography represented pain in the two famous miracles of Saint Vincent Ferrer. While preparing for the canonization of Ferrer in 1455, the humanist and Dominican from Palermo, Pietro Ranzano (1426/27–1492/93) wrote the vita of the Dominican apocalyptic preacher who had great success in conversio Judaeorum, Saracenorum, et aliorum. In his miracles, two consecutive and psychologically powerful stories hold the focal point. The first story, in which Ranzano recounts the miracles of Ferrer, imparts the tale of a mother who had killed and cooked her own baby. In short, there was a young woman, a woman with many virtues when her madness was not upon her. Her husband listened to Ferrer’s preaching, became close with him and invited him to be their guest. In the meantime, the mother suffered from temporary insanity, butchering and partially cooking her child to prepare a meal for the guests. Realizing what had happened, the father was terrified: Me miserum! and in tears (cum multa lacrymans) turned to Ferrer, who then revived the child. The narrative had another, post mortem, version which had originally appeared in the preparatory material for the canonization of the new Dominican preacher (the Brittany and the Naples inquests), and then in the vita of Ferrer written by Castiglione: there was a pregnant mother with a desire to eat meat and she cut her child in two parts. This version was iconographically represented in the Griffoni polyptych painted by Ercole de’ Roberti (1472–1473). The setting with the theme of infanticide is presented with no strong gestures expressing pain. The mother is sitting on the floor of the house and quietly expressing sorrow with her head in her hands. The entire scene is moved to the depths and behind open doors; the dead child is barely visible on the table. The father comes out of the house and carries the murdered child to Ferrer’s tomb in Vannes, in front of which he prays. In the next scene, the baby, restored to life, is depicted standing on a tomb that has the form of a ciborium and thus shows a clear Eucharist allusion.
The full iconography of Ranzano’s story is presented on the Saint Vincent Ferrer altarpiece, painted by the Erri family workshop in the 1460s, commissioned by the Dominican friars in Modena. Ranzano’s story of the miraculous healing of a child (he shifted the time of the miracle after Vincent’s death to the saint’s own lifetime) is presented in full detail, from the process of killing the child and preparing lunch, to Ferrer, who comes to the house as a guest with other Dominicans, then prays and revives the child (to life) to the joy of the father (fig. 9). In the hagiography Ranzano makes no mention of the mother’s remorse or her pain. In the iconography that soon followed, the same thing can be seen: the mother with long, blond, loose hair, habuit dementiae intervallum, shows no pain or any other kind of emotion while dismembering her child. Instead, the story and iconography have a strong effect on the emotions of the public. Here we come up with several key questions on this topic: Why does Pietro Ranzano set the story of infanticide as the central wonder of the new Dominican saint? How was pain used to achieve the goals of the Dominican mission? Let us start from the author of the story according to which the iconography came about - Ranzano was a humanist as well as being very familiar with history, and thus his choice of the variation of the motif of Mary of Bethezuba’s cannibalism from Flavius Josephus’s History of the Jewish War is not surprising. Mary of Bethezuba was a symbol of the unnatural cruelty of the Jews. In the late 13th century, the story was included into popular vernacular written works, as well as into sermons, exempla, and homilies. Ranzano transformed the Jewish infanticide story to the miraculous act of reviving a baby by a powerful Dominican preacher. We need to reiterate that Christian authorities increasingly vilified Jews with accusations of host desecration or the ritualistic murder of Christian children. Ranzano sets the miracle at the time immediately after Ferrer held a sermon and after his vigorous conversion of Jews, indicating the need for the repentance of the infidel. One detail on Erri’s altarpiece indicates the origin of the narrative, or rather its anti-Jewish connotation. Namely, there is a representation of a monkey sitting on the window, which cannot be explained as a mere display of domestic life, but rather his presence seems to be the key to understanding what is presented in the scene. A monkey was regarded not only as a symbol of bestial behaviour beyond the norms of society, but was also a symbol of a naturae degenerantis homo - one not humanized by baptism in the specific anti-Jewish context. The visual message of this scene becomes even clearer since the monkey looks towards the mother who kills her child, emphasizing the medieval belief that neither monkeys nor Jews were human in either deed or heart, as they acted inhumanly against their own flesh and blood. This meaning is enhanced by the Oriental carpet on which the monkey sits. It is a famous pattern of the dragon and the phoenix (as the same one from the mid-15th century from Anatolia in the Berlin Museum). By comparing the composition of this scene with the miraculous healing of the sick Ferrer from the same polyptych (fig. 10), we can certainly strengthen the assumption that the presence of the monkey should additionally emphasize and explain the story. Namely, it is almost identical to the composition with a very similar architecture as the scene, but shown here is a Dominican reading a book with his habit thrown over the wall (instead of a monkey sitting on an oriental rug). This iconographic motif emphasizes that this is a sacred place, the Dominican convent, in which Christ miraculously healed Ferrer by touching his cheek. Conversely, the monkey as an anti-Jewish symbol is sitting on the window of a house staring at the horrific scene of the murder of a child. Ranzano built Ferrer’s character with a subtle combination of two themes: the conversion of the infidel and the ability of Ferrer to lead the public to a painful confrontation with sin and ad lacrymandum. The penitential process of curing from sin was always tearful. Tears of contrition were seen as the road to salvation, a sign of sincerity and are praised especially in the exempla. Vincent Ferrer himself, in his Tractatus vitae spiritualis, wrote about “dolore acutissimo e amarissimo che ti faccia piangere ed eplorare i tuoi peccati”. Very important for the propaganda Vicenziana immediately after canonization was the Dominican observant Frater Iohannes de Pistorio, optimus et elegantissimus predictor. In 1463, Ranzano sent him a piece from the hagiography, as well as a poem he wrote in honour of Ferrer to help him spread the cult of Ferrer. Especially intriguing for our topic is the fact that it was said that Giovanni da Pistoia was the miraculously resuscitated child from the post mortem version of Ferrer’s famous miracle. Giovanni strongly embraced the basics of the belief of the apocalyptic preacher Ferrer, according to which the second coming of Christ is to follow only when the Jews


5 S. Martini, *The Balcony Miracle, Blessed Agostino Novello Altarpiece*, c. 1324, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena (Wikimedia Commons)


7 J. Miélot, *The miracle of the Jewish boy of Bourges*, c. 1456, *Vie et miracles de Notre Dame* collection, BNF, Français 9198, f. 68r (© BNF, Département de la Reproduction)
Čapeta Rakić-Živković, Maternal Pain in Miracle Scenes

8 U. di Prete Ilario, *The miracle of the Jewish boy of Bourges*, 1357-1364, The chapel of San Corporale, Orvieto Cathedral (photo: M. Roncella)


10 Agnolo and Bartolomeo degli Erri, *Christ Appears to a Sick Ferrer from the Saint Vincent Ferrer Altarpiece*, 1460s, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna (from: Benati, 1988)

11 Anonymous, *Saint Vincent Ferrer polyptych*, early 16th c., Saint Dominic Church (Cappela di San Vincenzo), Castelvetrano, Sicily (Wikimedia Commons)
and all the other unbelievers and schismatics are converted. He carried out such a mission in Sicily where he demanded that the Jews attend his conversionary sermons. Dominican Serafino Razzi pointed out how Giovanni spread the cult of his beloved predecessor in Kotor and Dubrovnik as well. These missions had some success, as evidenced by the polyptychs of which only the wooden Ferrer sculptures have been preserved. The Kotor one dates back to 1495, according to the year of the contract, in which Božidar Vlatković made a commitment to the Dominican convent in Kotor that it should be made according to the model – the painting on the altar of St. Vincent in Dubrovnik, which was commissioned in 1487 by Stjepan Zornelić-Ugrinović and Marin (di Lovro) Dobričević. Both altar paintings had the predella with the scenes from the hystorie di san Vincentio. In Dubrovnik, we have a written trace of the existence of an iconography hitherto unmentioned in historiography, the variation of the topic of the second Ferrer miracle which Pietro Ranzano placed immediately after the story of the insane mother. This story belongs to the usual repertoire of saintly deeds. A grieving mother (Mulier tantarum lacrymarum) is carrying her dead child in her arms and seeking help from Ferrer, who has later restored the child to life. Unlike the insane mother, the mother in this story (and every other mother with a sick child from the vita of Ferrer) is presented as kneeling and sometimes crushed with pain holding her child in her arms in front of the preacher (the polyptych by an anonymous artist painted for the Dominican church in Castelvetrano, early 16th century; Degli Erri polyptych from Modena circa the 1460s; or Sebastiano Devita for the Dominican church in Split from the 18th century). Namely, Ambrogio de Gozze (Gučetić) (1563-1632), the Dominican from Dubrovnik and the bishop of Mercana and Trebigna, wrote about this painting. Since these works written by Gučetić were not preserved, we gain knowledge about this episode from the writing of the Italian Dominican, Antonio Teoli, in his work on the Ferrer cult from 1735. According to Teoli, Bishop Gučetić recorded the following story: in the mid-16th century, Pietro Bicich (Petar Bičić), then a young boy, fell seriously ill. Approaching death, his dolente madre made a vow before the Ferrer statue in the Dominican church in Dubrovnik asking the saint to help her son survive. However, shortly after her prayer, the boy died. This, however, in no way diminished the faith of the mother, crushed with pain. While carrying the body of the child to bury him in a Dominican church, full of tears and full of faith she threw herself before the statue of Ferrer begging him to restore her son’s life ("piena di fiducia si prostrò avanti la sopraccennata statua di S. Vincenzo pregandolo a restituirle la vita del figliuolo a lui invotito"). While the mother prayed and the friars began the funeral rite, the boy opened his eyes to the amazement of all and the great joy of the mother, thus magnifying the power of St Vincento ("magnificicando tutti la potenza della intercessione di S. Vincenzo"). Petar Bičić lived until 1611 and after his death the bishop recorded a remembrance of this miracle. According to Teoli’s writing, this miracle was given its iconographic representation - in the picture that was in the niche of the altar dedicated to Ferrer, about which Teoli gives a detailed ekphrasis: the mother is expressing pain with her arms stretched wide in front of a statue, and the boy is raised from the grave surrounded by Dominicans ("Un quadro in cui viene con tutta particolarità dipinto; vedendosi la statua sull'altare e la madre col braccio aperto davanti, la bara col fanciullo che si alza vivo e le trocie tenute da persone vestite di sacco come si accompagnano i defonti, la sepoltura aperta e cose simili"). Then Teoli explains how this miracle has enhanced the devotion to Ferrer, and that he was venerated as a protector of children. Also, after this miracle, the citizens of Dubrovnik began to bestow the statue of Ferrer (before which the mother prayed) with a number of bequeathed gifts: "Le grazie poi che tuttavia ricevono i ragusei nel ricorrere al santo avanti la detta sua statua sono quasi quotidiane; e massimamente grandi sono quelle che Iddio ivi opera per i meriti di questo suo taumaturgo a pro de’ fanciulli; tantoché comunemente è chiamato: San Vincenzo de fanciulli. ... E presentemente veggonsi attorno alla prodigiosa statua molti di ciocche di ricchi voti che giornalmente si portano da devoti. Evvi memoria nello archivio di quel convento che anticamente vi erano tanti voti di argento, che tutta la cappella veniva da essi coperta, ed i padri fecero del medesimo argento una gran croce due turriboli, ed altre argenterie per la Chiesa").

For an understanding of the religious and historical context in which the cult of Vincent Ferrer spread in Dubrovnik (and Kotor, since the Kotor Dominicans were under the custody of Dominicans from Dubrovnik) it should be emphasized that the spread of the cult was an integral part of the Dominican Observant mission. The first one
was in the second half of the 15th century with the preaching of Giovanni da Pistoia, and the second was by the end of the 16th century with Serafino Razzi. This Dominican friar from San Marco in Florence was sent with the task of "completely carrying out a mission" in the places surrounded by schismatics (Serbian and Greek Orthodox Christians) and Muslims: "Io Schisma de Serviani, et di Greci, et dalla terra la setta di Maoma". In the same context, the ambition of Bishop Ambrogio Gozze should be seen as emphasizing the might of Ferrer, who was the symbol of the Dominican fight against infidels. Namely, Gozze briefly taught theology in Naples where the cult of Ferrer was particularly powerful, and in 1609 he was consecrated in Rome by Pope Paul V, as the bishop of Mercana and Trebigna, the territory where numerous schismatics (Orthodox) and Muslims (Turks) lived, with the task of actively implementing the Propaganda Fide ideas in this particularly vulnerable area.

Conclusion

The analysis of three different, emotionally powerful, inspiring as well as morally uplifting stories which share the theme of presenting maternal pain and/or causing the observer painful emotions have depicted one of the methods which the church used for propagating Catholic ideas. By using a visual narrative of pain iconography as a powerful didactic means in the service of sermons and hagiography, the Church endeavoured to attract the attention of the populace with the aim of reinforcing the Catholic faith when it swayed and of enticing the faithful to observe religious practices by spreading cults of new saints which brought together the thaumaturgic and transformation powers of the non-believers. Research of the local ecclesiastical, historical and political context (in Split, Dubrovnik and Kotor) constitutes the framework for shedding light on our case studies, which are also examined within a broader European context. The results of the analysis have created the need for further research, which would entail expanding the area of researching the iconographic and literary motifs in which the imperative of trust in the strength of the Catholic Church represents an alternation of emotional and ideological messages that can be understood only within a clearly defined context.

1 In Croatian historiography, the painting was named by Kruno Prijatelj, and it is still known under that title. Compare: K. PRIJATELJ, Neobjelodanjeni ciklus slika Mateja Ponzonija – Pončuna, Split, Galerija umjetnina, 1974.


5 Ibid., pp. 29-31.


8 “Le mère queurt et brait et crie; S’aubbleure à terre rue Paumes batant, sant en la rue Ses cheveus ront et detirant”.


10 The collection was not illustrated during Gautier de Coinci’s life; most likely the earliest illustrated manuscripts are the ones dating back to 1250-1260 onwards. Compare: F. Murcia Nicolás, “Milagro e imágenes de culto. Una nueva cultura visual en los manuscritos de Gautier de Coinci”, in: Codex Aquilarensis, 28, 2012, pp. 169-184.


13 To find out more about the folded hands gesture, see: Gombrich, op. cit. 1985, pp. 64-82, in particular pp. 73-74; Barasch, op. cit., 1987, pp. 56-71.

14 It is a gesture which can have an ambiguous meaning of both joy and grief. In our case it most certainly symbolizes grief. Compare: H. Maguire, “The Depiction of Sorrow in Middle Byzantine Art”, in: Dumbarton Oaks Papers, 31, 1977, pp. 158-166.

15 Ibid., pp. 158-166.


19 In this regard, especially prominent is the influence of Giotto’s and Duccio’s painting. Compare: Russakoff, op. cit.,
The authors would like to thank Anna Russakoff for an exchange of opinions regarding the potential influence of Simone Martini on Jean Pucelle.


A similar pose and gestures of the mother have been noticed and interpreted by Carlee A. Bradbury in *Vernon manuscript* (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Eng.poet.a.I, fol. 125r.), and in the manuscript *The Smithfield Decretals* from British Library (Royal MS 10.E.IV, fol. 213). C.A. BRADBURY, “Picturing Maternal Anxiety in the Miracle of the Jew of Bourges” in: *Gender, Otherness, and Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Art*, C. A. BRADBURY-M. MOSLEY-CHRISTIAN (eds.), 2017, p. 48.


37 This doubling of the tale was the source for some later iconographic and hagiographic confusion. On the partially destroyed documents for Vincent’s canonization trial see L. ACKERMAN SMOLLER, “From authentic miracles to a rhetoric of authenticity: examples from the canonization and cult of St. Vincent Ferrer,” in: Church History, vol. 80, no. 4, 2011, pp. 773-797.


42 Dante’s reference to the episode in Purgatorio; Boccaccio in De Casibus Virusorum Illustrium; Chaucer in The Legend of Good Women, see M.L. PRICE, Consuming passions: The uses of cannibalism in late medieval and early modern Europe, Routledge, 2003, pp. 69-75.


45 Diana Bullen Presciutti explains the monkey as an “anecdotal detail” which marks spaces as elite; BULLEN PRESCIUTTI, op. cit., 2015, p. 182.

46 On the monkey as a symbol of a naturae degenerantis homo (the famous lines of Bernardus Silvestris in the Cosmographia, also known as De mundi universitate from the 12th century), and as a symbol of the fratricidal Jews, see H.W.


58 Teoli especially mentioned Giovanni da Pistoia and his enormous influence on the spreading of the cult in Dubrovnik as well as among other towns: “Abbracciarono i ragusei così di cuore una tal divozione, che essendo al santo ricorsi perché li liberasse dalla peste che allora faceva di loro grandissima strage, appena fu fabbricato il sopradetto altare che subito cessò la peste”; A. TEOLI, Storia della vita e del culto di S. Vicenzo Ferrerio dell’ordine de’ predicatori composto dal P. F. Antonio Teoli domeniciano nuovo pubblicata da Gio. Battista Marini e dedicata allo stesso venerabile ordine de’predicatori, Roma, Da’Torchi di Angelo Ajani, 1826, p. 543.

59 Ibid., pp. 543-545.