The Image of the Wall

The Antemurale Christianitatis Myth from an Imagological Perspective

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Abstract

The interpretative focus of this contribution is on the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth, which is one of the most durable historical myth-symbol complexes typical for the heterotopic cultures of the European periphery. Its first part highlights the epistemological status and imago-generative quality of historical myths within the theoretical framework of historical imagology. In the second part, the analysis focusses on the multiple uses, functions and meanings of this *antemurale Christianitatis* myth within Croatian culture over a long historical period. Special attention is paid to detecting how it simultaneously functions both as a rich repository of auto- and hetero-images as indispensable means for symbolic construction of collective identities and as a vital part of Croatian social imagery and cultural memory. Together with its structural and functional features, the modalities of intertextual, interdiscursive and intermedial circulation of the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth are also examined. In this way, light is shed on the extraordinarily high ideological and political potential of the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth which could be reactivated at any time, for example as a consequence of migration pressures on the Balkan route.

1 Introduction

These days, when the American president puts all his efforts into building an “impenetrable, physical, tall, powerful, beautiful wall” along the US-Mexican border,¹ and the eastern borders of the Schengen area have been protected by metal fences and razor wire, the image of the wall ceases to be a pure historical reminiscence of chivalric medieval times or a sentimental cultural reference

1 As a Republican presidential nominee, Donald Trump described his proposed wall along the Southern U.S. border during an immigration policy speech on August 31, 2016. See: https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/trump-says-he-will-build-impenetrable-physical-tall-powerful-beautiful-border/2016/08/31/34eceacc-6fb6-11e6-993f-73c693a89820_video.html?utm_term=.5c9945d9eb28 [accessed 05.09.2017]

to the legendary Pink Floyd album. It is no wonder that the image of the wall gains its currency in Croatia, one of the newer EU members and one of the most exposed countries on the Balkan refugee route, since it is one of the most vital elements of the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth, which has played an indispensable role in the historical imagery and cultural memory of Croatia.² This paper will therefore scrutinize more closely this mythical-symbolic complex from the imagological perspective.

Regrettably, literary imagology has not focused enough analytical attention on historical and political myths despite their decisive role in the construction of the self-image of communities.³ Recent imagological research on historical mythology of the European nations is mostly concerned with the structural elements of the mythical narratives, such as historical and allegorical mythical figures, the characteristics of their medial representations and the functions of myths within the national memory.⁴

2 The Functioning of Historical Myth

For the purpose of this analysis, I will outline a provisional theoretical and methodological scheme for the research of historical myths. As a heuristic platform profoundly suitable for scrutinising complex imagemes such as historical myths, I would propose a framework of historical imagology which operates with a broader concept of image. The image is defined as an interferential configuration of mental images, textual and non-textual representations and practice patterns which are constituted within a certain socio-historical context. Seen from the perspective of that subtle dialectics of structure and agency or objectification and embodiment, an image could appear as a constitutive part both of collectively disposable cultural imagery and individual experience of the world. Accordingly, images can be understood not only as cognitive and perceptive products of the human brain or various kinds of visual representations, but also as formative elements of all cultural imaginaries, i.e. systems

2 This fact was recognised during the 1990's by the most prominent Croatian philosophers and sociologists who extensively wrote about the *antemurale* myth (See e.g. Paić (1997), Žanić (1999)). Surprisingly enough, the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth has not attracted any interest of Croatian historians, not to mention imagologists, although it may be an inexhaustible source both for the historical and imagological research.

3 For a brief overview on the research of myths in literary history and historiography see Beller (2007), pp. 373–376.

4 See Beller (2007), p. 375.

of signs and/or thoughts with ideological, axiological and affective potentials which represent imaginational possibilities of a culture in a certain period.⁵

The proposed conceptualisation is in many aspects congruent with the theory of political myth recently launched by the Italian philosopher Chiara Bottici. Accentuating praxeological and phenomenological approaches as foundations for her theoretical conceptualisation, Bottici defines political myth as a complex narrative which coagulates and produces significance shared by the group by virtue of addressing the specific political conditions in which the group operates.⁶ Although political myth shares many structural and functional features both with historical narratives and other kind of myths (natural, religious, foundational myths etc.), Bottici argues that it can be treated as a specific category thanks to its inherent capability to inspire and prompt political action.⁷ This capability of political myth is possible due to its ability to generate imaginary significations which Bottici, following the theory of the social imaginary by French philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis, regards as an indispensable element for the constitution and functioning of each society.⁸

Inspired by the theoretical presumptions of Hans Blumenberg, Bottici deems political myth not a final product, but a process of continual reworking

5 For a more detailed account see Blažević (2012), pp. 105f.

6 See Bottici (2007), p. 180.

7 See Bottici (2007), p. 216.

8 Beside his inspiring influence on the philosophy of political myths, Cornelius Castoriadis's work has many possible incentives for imagological research as well. According to his quite radical imagocentric theory, social imagery itself possesses an ontological priority vis-a-vis both reality and society: "The social world is, in every instance, constituted and articulated as a function of such a system of significations, and these significations exist, once they have been constituted, in the mode of what we called the actual imaginary (or the imagined). It is only relative to these significations that we can understand the 'choice' of symbolism made by every society, and in particular the choice of its institutional symbolism, as well as the ends to which it subordinates 'functionality'. Incontestably caught up in the constraints of the real and the rational, always inserted in a historical continuum and, consequently, codetermined by what was already there and cannot be freely manipulated, the production of these significations cannot be exhaustibly reduced to one of these factors or to all of them together. This cannot be done because none of these factors can fill the role of these significations, none can 'answer' the questions that they 'answer'. [...] In the same way, every society defines and develops an image of the natural world, of the universe in which it lives, attempting in every instance to make of it a signifying whole, in which a place has to be made not only for the natural objects and beings important for the life of the collectivity, but also for the collectivity itself, establishing, finally, a certain 'world-order'. This image, this more or less structured vision of the whole of available human experience, makes use in each case of the rational lines of what is given, but arranges them according to and subordinates them to significations which themselves do not belong to the rational order (nor, moreover, to a positive irrational order) but to the imaginary." Castoriadis (1997), p. 146 and 149.

of the basic narrative core of *mythologem*, which is endowed with cognitive, practical and aesthetical dimensions.⁹ In order to provide functional cognitive schemata for mapping the social world by reducing the complexity of social life, as well as to mobilize people for social action, political myths are usually represented in a dramatic form, evoking a kind of *pathos*.¹⁰

According to Bottici, important features of political myths are their positional character, multimedial appropriateness and condensational power. In other words, they are always constructed from the standpoint of the present and they are appropriate for representation in various media: textual, visual, audio and performative ones.¹¹ Thanks to the ubiquity of potential medial conveyors of political myths under the contemporary conditions of globalised spectacle, they can cause “the primacy effect” more easily than ever.¹² In addition to this, as Christopher G. Flood has convincingly demonstrated, political myths are endowed with a condensational power which refers to their capacity to condense things into a few images or “icons”.¹³ For all these reasons, political myths are able to incite practical understanding which, recursively, strengthens their persuasive potential and, subsequently, their mobilising effect.¹⁴

9 In his famous work *Arbeit am Mythos*, Hans Blumenberg develops a processual approach to myths. In short, his main proposition is that a basic narrative core of the myth, a *mythologem*, must change over time to be appropriated by different requirements and exigencies in order to answer a need for significance. See Blumenberg (1979).

10 See Bottici (2007), p. 181.

11 Bottici (2007), p. 214.

12 Christopher G. Flood launched the term in order to stress that a person's earliest perceptions of a phenomenon function as a powerful basis for generalisations, categorisations and expectations that are not easily or adequately revised in the light of subsequent observations. The “primacy effect” is a distinguishing feature of political myths primarily due to their emotional appeal which leads to a narrowing of attention, with a consequent reduction of categories used for the interpretation of the phenomenon. For a more detailed account see Flood (2002), pp. 86f.

13 In his insightful analysis of structural and functional features of political myths, Flood points to the specific ability of images to evoke mythical stories. According to Flood, they do so in the following manner: a) by depicting particular, identified historical actors in particular, identified situations; b) by depicting particular, identified persons in stock, hypothetical, or imaginary situations; c) by depicting unidentified persons representative of a group in particular, identified, historical situations; d) by depicting unidentified, representative persons in stock, hypothetical or imaginary situations; e) by depicting allegorical figures or supernatural entities in identified historical situations; and f) by depicting allegorical or supernatural figures in stock, hypothetical or imaginary situations. See Flood (2002), pp. 167f.

14 On practical understanding, which refers to the implicit, intuitive and embodied knowledge, as one of the key concepts of practice theory, see Schatzki (2001), pp. 10–18.

As constitutive parts of a social imaginary, which Bottici, again following Cornelius Castoriadis, conceptualizes as a symbolic network of imaginary significations which provide social meanings, political myths might obtain both legitimising and critical functions.¹⁵ In this sense, political myths are similar to ideology viewed as a “a set of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify ends and means of organised social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order.”¹⁶ However, the impact of political myths is in many cases superior to those of ideology thanks to the pathos evoked by their emotional and affective quality which makes them more appropriate means for political mobilisation.¹⁷ Finally, by virtue of their inherently plural nature which enables multiple identitary recognitions and juxtapositions, political myths are indispensable vehicles for constructing both individual and collective political and cultural identities.¹⁸ Or, as Chiara Bottici succinctly formulates, “as narrative which can coagulate and provide significance, political myth unifies all the various elements that constitute common identity which comes to be recognised and accepted by a plurality of living, acting and narrating bodies.”¹⁹

3 The *antemurale Christianitatis* Myth in History

Although at first glance the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth belongs to the category of historical or even cultural myths, thanks to its inherent structural and functional characteristics it can also be regarded as a political myth *par excellence*. According to the distinction between these two categories made by Bottici, political myth, unlike historical with which it shares narrative form, has to be received as a drama which makes its moral explicit in order to prompt

15 See Bottici (2007), pp. 225f.

16 Flood (2002), p. 13.

17 See Bottici (2007), p. 196.

18 Bottici warns that every attempt to scrutinize the complex issue of identitary recognitions and juxtapositions must necessarily take into account the following relations: the relation of the singular human being with himself or herself; relations of different singular human beings with each other; relations between the same singular human beings with themselves in time, as well as the relations between them and a *tertium* (i. e. nation, gender or another social group) and even the relation of this *tertium* with itself. See Bottici (2007), p. 235.

19 Bottici (2007), p. 243.

political action.²⁰ Since the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth has been one of the key factors of the Croatian “identity battles” for almost half of a millennium,²¹ its political connotations and mobilising power are more than obvious. Therefore, the following imagological analysis of the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth will be situated among the proposed theoretical coordinates which seem appropriate enough to examine its cognitive and explanatory values.

The metaphor of “the bulwark of Christendom” was a flattering epithet for the French defenders of Edessa which had been coined in the twelfth century by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), a fervid preacher of the Second Crusade. It became a fairly widespread syntagm in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when Ottoman incursions reached their peak. It originated in the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, i.e. in the *Book of Praise*, where the prophet Isaiah envisaged the destruction of Moab,²² and has been an indispensable element of the rhetoric of the Crusades. Therefore, it could easily be adapted to the circumstances of the Ottoman threat within the early modern European political imaginary, which was deeply imbued with religious symbolism.

In order to symbolically compensate for the military efforts in defending Christianity as well as to exculpate themselves for not providing sufficient material assistance, European secular holders of power attributed this fashionable nickname to Croatia, Hungary and Poland, which were situated on the first line of the anti-Ottoman defence. Soon the nickname developed into a powerful element of these countries’ self-description and a potent mythology which abundantly fuelled their respective national *mythomoteurs*.²³

As far as the Croatian historical imagery is concerned, the first mention of the *antemurale Christianitatis* title was linked to the sacral and moral authority of Pope Leo X (1475–1521). After hearing a report on anti-Ottoman battles in Croatia submitted by the Tragurian bishop Thomas Niger, the pope in the consistory held on 12 of December 1519 allegedly named Croatia “scudum solidissimum et antemurale Christianitatis” i.e. “the strongest shield and bulwark of

20 See Bottici (2007), p. 216.

21 Žanić (2003), p. 161.

22 See Isaiah 26.2.

23 The nickname of bulwark and shield of Christianity were attributed to Hungary and Croatia for the first time by the Hungarian kings Vladislaus I (1424–1444) and Vladislaus II (1456–1516) Jagiellon in the second half of the fifteenth century. Afterwards it was used by Maximilian I (1459–1519) and Ferdinand I (1503–1564) of Habsburg to accentuate the importance of Croatian lands for defending the eastern borders of the Holy Roman Empire. In Poland the motif of *antemurale Christianitatis* was especially popularised during the seventeenth century by the authors of Polish Sarmatism (e. g. Wespazjan Kochowski in his *Polish Psalmody* published in 1695). See Žanić (2003), pp. 164f.

Christendom".²⁴ Although not corroborated by historical evidence, this fancy metaphor was rapidly appropriated by numerous Croatian humanists and diplomats such as Count Bernardin and Krsto Frankopan.²⁵ They used it mainly as a powerful tool for legitimising the claiming of military subsidy from the Roman popes and Habsburg Emperors during the first half of the sixteenth century.²⁶

In addition, during the early modern period the *antemurale* mythologem was simultaneously integrated into the elite political discourse and turned into an indispensable element of the chivalric and heroic self-image of the Croatian nobility.²⁷ In order to enhance its mobilising value and emulative potential, it was hypostatised in the heroic figure of Nikola Šubić Zrinski (1508–1566), the "Croatian Leonidas". He was a famous Croatian viceroy and nobleman who was murdered as a martyr while defending the fortress of Szygetvár from the copious Ottoman army led by the sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1494–1566) in 1566.²⁸

24 Šanjek (1993), pp. 351f.

25 Count Bernardin Frankopan (1453–1529) delivered his "Speech for Croatia" in Latin language at the Diet of the Holy Roman Empire on 19 November 1522 in Nürnberg, while his son Krsto (1472–1527) addressed his memorandum on Croatia, dated 1 July 1523, to Pope Adrian VI (1459–1523).

26 E. g. the fragment of Krsto Frankopan's memorandum addressed to Adrian VI: "There is no word which can describe how crudely and under worst penances our people were treated under the most cruel Turkish yoke and violence. Holy Father, in Croatia can be seen children who are slaughtered in front of their parents' eyes and men in front of eyes of their wives. Wives are dishonoured, virgins raped, sacred places and priests desecrated. Holy Father! Croatia is a bulwark and shield of Christendom, especially of border provinces such as Carinthia, Carniola, Istria, Friuli and Italy. If Croatia – God forbid – would be occupied, all of the above mentioned torments would endanger its neighbouring provinces and there would be a clear and open way for the Turks." Gligo (1983), p. 356. [Translations by the author].

27 For a seventeenth century example of the literary construction of the heroic Croatian self-image see Blažević (2010), pp. 35–42.

28 The siege of Szygetvár was first described by Ferenc Črnko, a scribe and chamberlain of Nikola Šubić Zrinski, who was an eyewitness of that battle. After the fall of Szygetvár, Črnko was captured by the Turks, but he was eventually bought out by Nikola's son Juraj. Under his influence, Črnko wrote a literary chronicle on the battle of Szygetvár in Croatian, which was translated into Latin by Slovenian writer Samuel Budina in 1568 and thus became a pretext for the later works dealing with this famous episode. The siege of Szygetvár was especially popularised in the seventeenth century by Nikola Zrinski's great-grandson Nikola VII (1620–1664), the author of the famous epos *Adriai tengernek Syrenaia* (published in Hungarian in 1651), which was subsequently translated into Croatian and published by his brother Petar IV (1621–1671) under the title *Adrianskoga mora sirena* in 1660. They might be considered the founders of the Nikola Šubić Zrinski myth

During the period of the Croatian national movement in the nineteenth century, the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth encountered a significant modification in order to adapt to the new political circumstances and ideological needs. The role of the Croats as traditional guardians of the Western civilisation was projected back to the thirteenth century when, according to the legend, the wild hordes of Tatars were defeated by the intrepid Croatian army in the field of Grobnik near the town of Rijeka in 1242.²⁹ Together with the important “antiquation-effect”,³⁰ which situates the Croatian bulwark function even in the pre-Ottoman times, the nineteenth-century version of the myth brought forth new enemies – the barbarous Tatars – who were symbolically identified with the Hungarians, the main political and ideological rivals of the Croats in that period.³¹

The rise of various Slavophile ideologies in the second half of the nineteenth century brought about a kind of *antemurale* counter-myth. It absorbed its ideological potential from the historical episode of the pan-Slavic Christianisation project by S. Cyril and Methodius which took place in the ninth century.³² In contrast to the impermeable and exclusionary character of the wall, the new myth envisaged Croatia as a permeable civilisational bridge or

which simultaneously played an important role as a strategy of the noble representation of the family and as a cornerstone of the Croatian national identity and cultural memory. See Blažević, Cocha (2007), pp. 137–164. On later appropriations and literary representations of the Zrinski myth in Croatian, Austrian and Hungarian cultures see Kovács (2015), pp. 83–100.

29 Although the legendary battle of Grobnik between Tatars and Croats was first mentioned in the *Chronicle* published by Croatian historiographer Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652–1713) in 1696, it became an indispensable part of Croatian national memory primarily thanks to the romanticist poem *The field of Grobnik* published by the poet Dimitrije Demeter (1811–1872) in the Croatian literary journal *Kolo* in 1842. For a synthetic overview see Rapacka (2002), pp. 70f.

30 See Stergar (2016), pp. 96–99.

31 See Rapacka (2002), p. 71.

32 The cult of S. Cyril (826/827–886) and Methodius (before 815–885), known as the ‘apostles of the Slavs’, who translated the Bible into the Church Slavonic language and invented the Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabet, has been abundantly documented in Croatia since the medieval period. However, it gained a new popularity in the nineteenth century when it was used as a legitimising idea for the political unity and cultural identity of the Slavs in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as well as an important factor of distinctive Slavic national ideologies, including the Croatian one. The main promoters of their cult in Croatia were bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815–1905) and historian Franjo Rački (1828–1894). As an important nineteenth century Croatian *mythomoteur*, the cult of S. Cyril and Methodius serves to promote and legitimize Yugophile ideas of South Slavic cultural, political and religious unity, but also functions as a proof of the national character of the universal Catholic church. For a more detailed account see Rapacka (2002), pp. 35–37.

crossroads. In this way it enhanced the images of Croatia's religious and cultural heterogeneity and plurality not only as acceptable, but also as distinctive markers of its identity.³³

In the course of the turbulent twentieth century, both versions of the Croatian auto-mythologems lived on, confronting, intertwining but always conforming to the various ideological purposes and political needs. The classical variant of the *antemurale* myth was mainly nurtured and reproduced within the conservative and clerical political discourse,³⁴ while its counter-myth retained its popularity predominantly among leftist and Yugophile political circles.³⁵ The most interesting example of the ideological adoption of the *antemurale* myth for the anti-Soviet political platform of Josip Broz Tito stems from the beginning of the 1950's, when Yugoslavia was pompously proclaimed "a rock which defends the democratic West."³⁶ However, a more widespread *antemurale* metaphor during the socialist period included images of Yugoslavia as "a bastion of self-managing socialism" and a "fortress of the brotherhood and unity."³⁷

As could be expected, the new revival of the *antemurale* myth with its entire symbolic repertoire has occurred under Tuđman's regime during the 1990's. Moreover, its ideological content was slightly modernised, so that the standard religious symbolism was enriched with a Huntingtonian dash of 'civilisational clash'. Accordingly, faced with the military threat from Belgrade, the young and independent Republic of Croatia was again promoted to the bulwark of Western Christianity, civilisation and democracy against the contemptible Eastern

33 See Žanić (2003), p. 176f.

34 The most prominent propagators of the classical version of the *antemurale* myth were, among others, the bishop of Krk Antun Mahnič (1850–1920), the Jesuit philosopher and publicist Fran Bitnički (1875–1945) and the geographer Filip Lukas (1871–1958). After the Second World War, members of the Croatian radical political emigration revived the *antemurale* myth once again in order to mobilize Western countries against the new Yugoslav state. In 1953 they issued a postage stamp which iconographically represented the main elements of their revisionist political ideology: the Croatian historical coat-of-arms, a portrait of cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, who was sentenced by the communist government, a map of Croatia in its maximised 'natural' borders and a baptistry of count Višeslav from the ninth century as a symbol of Croatian Christian identity, with the overarching title *Antemurale Christianitatis – Pope Leo X 1519*. For a more detailed account see Žanić (2003), pp. 184–187.

35 This trend was especially reinforced after 1980 when Pope John Paul II declared S. Cyril and Methodius "co-patrons of Europe". For a more detailed account see Žanić (2003), 189f.

36 Cited in Žanić (2003), p. 187. This statement was launched by Josip Broz Tito during his speech delivered in Slovenia in September 1952, in the middle of the so-called Trieste crisis.

37 Žanić (2003), p. 188.

Orthodoxy, uncivilised Byzantinism and Communism. Interestingly enough, until 1993 and Tuđman's break with his Muslim allies in Bosnia, and for reasons of political correctness, the preferred version was the 'Grobnik version' of the *antemurale* myth with the Tatars in the role of the inimical Other. After 1993, the 'Grobnik version' of the *antemurale* myth was mostly used in its archetypal Islamic variant epitomised in the heroic figure of Nikola Šubić Zrinski, whose name was given even to the state decoration of the Republic of Croatia instituted for "heroic deeds in the war" by Franjo Tuđman in 1995.³⁸

After Tuđman's death at the end of 1999 and the election victory of the Social Democratic Party in 2000, the *antemurale* myth and its bridge/cross-roads counter-myth happily coexisted within the Croatian political discourse. Naturally, there has been a slight predomination of the one version or another depending on the conservative or liberal orientation of the currently ruling political establishment.³⁹

4 Conclusion

As far as the classical *antemurale* myth is concerned, worth exploring are also its structural features and imago-generative mechanisms, which nurtured its ideological potency and political efficiency. Following Botticci's classification, its most striking feature is certainly the mechanism of coagulation. It is simultaneously realised on different structural, functional and semiotic levels, which greatly enhance its imagological value. First of all, it rests on the bonding of the positive auto-image (i.e. Croats) and negative hetero-images (Tatars or Turks), as well as on the intertwining of the sacral and military semantic fields. They are epitomised in the figure of the *athleta Christi*, i.e. an exemplary national martyr and a hero who sacrifices his life in the battle against the enemies of Christianity.⁴⁰ In addition to this, coagulation is realised in the form of the fusion of temporal horizons by constructing an imaginary analogy between the past and the present, which serves as a model for the future actions. At the most abstract level, there is the coagulation between the internal and the external. It produces a significant symbolic effect of including Croatia into the

38 For a more detailed account see Žanić (2003), p. 190–193.

39 See Žanić (2003), pp. 194f.

40 The exemplary model of heroic martyrdom of the *athleta Christi* is that of Nikola Šubić Zrinski, who proudly refused Suleiman's offer to surrender the fortress and personally led a breach from Szygetvár. For a detailed analysis of discursive constructions of heroic martyrdom of Nikola Šubić Zrinski see Blažević, Coha (2007), pp. 139–141.

Western and Christian civilisation while simultaneously excluding it from the barbaric and infidel East.

An imago-generative quality of the *antemurale* myth is additionally bolstered by two complementary modes. One is a strategy of symbolic condensation, which refers to the structural capacity of a myth to condense its content into few images or icons. Without any damage to its semantic or ideological potentials, the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth can thus be reduced to an architectural element or a sign like a bulwark, fortress and wall, or to a historical person like Nikola Šubić Zrinski. Another one is a principle of symbolic extension by virtue of which particular persons, places or historical events might easily be generalised to designate entire nations, religions or civilisations, which is a basic strategy of construction of the Croatian national auto-image.

Furthermore, important features of the *antemurale* myth are its polysemic and multimedial qualities, which enable its highly successful intertextual, interdiscursive and intermedial circulation throughout its long historical duration. From the sixteenth century onwards, the *antemurale* myth has been articulated in various literary and documentary genres and visual arts and especially in nineteenth-century historical painting.⁴¹ A very convenient medium for reproducing the *antemurale* myth are musical works as well. Its most famous example is the monumental national opera *Nikola Šubić Zrinski* composed by Ivan Zajc in 1876.⁴²

41 The most representative example is certainly a painting entitled *Antemurale Christianitatis* by Ferdinand Quiquerez (1845–1893), a Croatian painter of French origin, in 1892. It is an allegory of Croatia fighting against the Turks. Croatia is represented as a young and beautiful woman crowned by laurels. She holds a flaming sword in her right hand and the Croatian coat-of-arms pinned by arrows in her left. Croatia stands on the monumental staircase and fights against the Turks who invade from below, while behind her back the most famous representatives of the Western intellectual and cultural life peek fearfully: Rafael, Dante, Michelangelo, Galileo, Molière and Shakespeare. In the background the contours of the St. Peter's Dome can be seen, which clearly illustrates Croatia's role in defending European civilisational values.

42 The opera *Nikola Šubić Zrinski* (tragedy in three acts) composed by Ivan Zajc (1832–1914) after a libretto by Hugo Badalić (1851–1900) is doubtlessly the most popular Croatian musical work. From its premiere, which took place in the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb in 1876, until the beginning of the 1990's it was performed around 2000 times, which is the best proof of its popularity. The best known element of the opera is a song *To battle, to battle* set to lyrics by Franjo Marković. It is no surprise that the heroic martyrdom of the *athleta Christi* Nikola Šubić, which strikingly resembles samurai values, has been recognised in Japan as well. The song *To battle, to battle* was performed by a Japanese choir which numbered 1000 men, conducted by maestro Katsuaki Kozai in Tokyo in 2006. For a more detailed analysis of the imago-generative potential of the opera within the Croatian national culture see Marković (2014).

By functioning as a rich repository of axiologically and affectively imbued auto- and hetero-images, the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth is certainly one of the most enduring cornerstones of Croatian national identity. Moreover, thanks to its compensatory function, the image of a small, but heroic nation situated at the very edge of Europe with a God-given mission to defend the Western civilisational values still ranks very high in Croatian national memory. A very frightening proof of that statement provides the anti-immigration propaganda of Croatian right-wing, conservative and clerical circles which invigorates historical myths of the heroic battle of Croatian priests against the Ottoman threat within the recent political context of “soft Islamisation” allegedly caused by too liberal immigration politics of European states.⁴³

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43 See <http://nacija.hr/2018/07/07/svecenici-ratnici-za-hrvatsku-grudu-i-katolicnu-vjeru/>.

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