Illyrian religion and nation as zero institution

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Abstract

The main theoretical and philosophical framework for this paper are Louis Althusser's writings on ideology, and ideological state apparatuses, as well as Rastko Močnik's writings on ideology and on the nation as the zero institution. This theoretical framework is crucial for deconstructing some basic tenants in writing on the religious sculpture in Roman Dalmatia, and the implicit theoretical constructs that govern the possibilities of thought on this particular subject. This paper demonstrates how the ideological construct of nation that ensures the reproduction of relations of production of modern societies is often implicitly or explicitly projected into the past, as trans-historical construct, thus soliciting anachronistic interpretations of the material remains of past societies.

This paper uses the interpretation of religious sculpture in Roman Dalmatia as a case study to stress the importance of the critique of ideology in the art history. The religious sculpture in Roman Dalmatia has been researched almost exclusively through the search for the presumed elements of Illyrian religion in visual representations; the formulation of the research hypothesis was firmly rooted into the idea of nation as zero institution, which served as the default framework for various interpretations. In this paper I try to offer some alternative interpretations, intending not to give definite answers, but to open new spaces for research.

Keywords: Roman sculpture, province of Dalmatia, nation as zero institution, ideology, Rastko Močnik, Louis Althusser.

David Foster Wallace’s metaphor of fish and water, which he first presented on a commencement speech to Kenyon College class of 2005, has become a topos in the discussion of ideology.¹ This story features two fish who go swimming one morning and meet an older fish who greets them, and, as a passing remark, asks “How’s the water?” After they swim a little bit further, one of the fish turns to the other and asks “What the hell is water?” Researching what water is while being a fish is not an easy task, just like researching basic tenants of history of art while being an art historian. Wallace’s metaphor points to the idea that the production of knowledge, and the interpretations of the past are undertaken from within ideology, and take place inside of it, reproducing the framework that allows for the status quo. This notion also drives the research on the concept of ideology in the 20th century Marxist philosophy.² The main theoretical and philosophical framework for this paper are Louis Althusser’s writings on ideology,³ and ideological state apparatuses, as well as Rastko Močnik’s writings on ideology and on the nation as the zero institution.⁴ This theoretical framework will be crucial for deconstructing some basic tenants in writing on the religious sculpture in Roman Dalmatia, and the implicit theoretical constructs that govern the possibilities of thought on this particular subject. My main task is to demonstrate how the ideological constructs that ensure the reproduction of relations of production of modern societies are often implicitly or explicitly projected into the past, as trans-historical constructs, thus soliciting anachronistic interpretations of the material remains of past societies. Concretely, I will try to show how the

¹. Wallace, D. F. (2009). This is water: Some thoughts, delivered on a significant occasion, about living a compassionate life: Hachette UK.

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concept of nation as the zero institution skewed the interpretation of the religious sculpture in Roman Dalmatia. In Althusserian terms, the anachronistic trap of ideology is impossible to escape without a critical and theoretical reflection upon the interpretative framework.

The nation is one of the anachronistic ideological constructs that is often implicitly trans-historically projected onto pre-national societies. The concept of nation is understood through the idea of “zero institution” that Rastko Močnik discusses in his seminal study Tri teorije: Ideologija, nacija, instutucija; further elaborated by Slavoj Žižek.

The concept of “zero institution” originated in work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. In studying smaller tribal communities, Lévi-Strauss noticed that they feature concepts that do not serve any purpose in the society, other than to enable the conceptualization and the reproduction of social totality. Lévi-Strauss’ example was the Winnebago village in North America, whose inhabitants are divided according to the location of their dwellings. One group understands their houses and the entire organization in two concentric circles – as a part of an in/out opposition. Since this society managed to function regardless of the fact that it’s fundamentally divided according to the understanding of the world, Lévi-Strauss deduced a third opposition – one that is not pertinent to either group, and does not produce any new meaning, but only creates the possibility for social antagonisms and different conceptualization of reality even to occur. Lévi-Strauss names this notion the “zero institution”. The zero institution, as Slavoj Žižek defines it, functions similarly to the concept of mana (another anthropological concept), an empty concept that enables thinking about the supernatural. On the level of society, what the zero institution enables is its very reproduction as a society – as a totality. That is the starting point of Močnik’s view of the reproduction of modern individualistic societies. The individuals can be interpellated into subjects supposed to believe – ones adhering to particular ideology – and into subjects supposed to know – ones identified with the zero-institution, and whose belonging is naturalized and never questioned, as it serves to enable the discussion about particular ideological position and to create a framework for the struggle for hegemony. For Močnik, nation functions as the zero institution. Nation institutes the field for the political pluralism, the arena for the discussion about social values, the frame that defines society. The nation does not produce any new meanings in itself – the way of proving one's national affiliation is a tautological circle because it presupposes the acknowledgement of the other members of the community, which in turn are legitimized by other members. There is no outer indication of nation, since the institution does not produce new meanings. In society, the discussion is centred on hegemony, or the ideological systems that are supposed to superimpose the nation as zero institution, and thus to enable a domination of a particular ideology in the entire society. All the other institutions are supported by the zero institution.

The zero institution, claims Žižek, functions as ideology in its purest form. It establishes a particular worldview as natural and self-explanatory, but is itself in fact a historical social construct. However, in order to function as such, it has to naturalize its ideological core, to project it into the past, so it would be perceived as given and unquestionable. One other example of the zero institution that Žižek offers is the division of the world into sexual binaries. While one group claims that men and women should be equal, the other is certain that women belong in the kitchen; in both cases, the individuals that receive the interpellation of a particular ideology become subjects supposed to believe. But, the reason that those groups can have a discussion in the first place is that they accept the division of the world into males and females, and by entering the discussion, become subjects supposed to know. As long as they know, and not believe, they are unable to think outside of the

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9 Močnik 1999.
10 Močnik 1999.
11 Žižek 2012.
12 Žižek 2012.
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pre-defined framework, and so they naturalize it, project it into past times, and do not question it. With the creation of modern national states in the middle of the 19th century, the concept of nation enabled the political pluralism is the society, and reproduction in its totality. Močnik develops his thesis relying heavily on Althusser's notion of ideology.15 According to Althusser, ideology has a firm material existence: it is created and reproduced through practice.16 Every action is thus in the service of ideology – writing about art not any less so. As individuals, people are "always-already interpellated" as subjects; ideology precedes individual identities.15 In the case of writing about the past, scholars often find themselves unable to exit their own social frameworks of the zero institution. This can lead to assumption the religion in antiquity is national religion; that it functions in correlation to the supposed national identities of believers. In this case, regardless of which theoretical concept we chose to adopt, that of Romanisation (the rejection of an individual's national religion, and the accepting of a different national religion, and different national identity), or that of resistance (individuals adhering to the old national religion through the cultural resistance to the colonizers), we are still entering the discussion from the point of the nation as zero institution.

Before Roman colonization different tribes populated the area that will become the Roman province of Dalmatia. One can find different names for those peoples in the ancient sources: most often, they are, wrongly and imprecisely, named Illyrians. The problem of Illyrians is complex in multiple ways. This name itself is an exonym found in Greek and Roman sources, the only written sources we have from the time, and already interpretative; the concept itself is problematic and will easily be subjected to different exploitation in later centuries. It has been debated in scholarship for decades, and a good overview of these discussions as well as some new insights can be found in Danijel Dzino.16 Dzino directly links the way the notion of Illyrians has been discussed in scholarship with the modern concepts of nation and ethnicity – the construct of historical continuities having always been vital for the formation of the nation. One of such interpretations is that of the Illyrian movement, a 19th century movement connected to the national revolutions of the South Slavs. Its adherents used the term Illyrians as an umbrella term, so that they could manufacture a myth of continuity all the way to the ancient times. And although the point of national origin soon shifted to the Slavic tribes that arrived to the Balkans during the Völkerwanderung in the late antiquity / early middle ages, the idea of continuity from the Illyrians is still present. Although the symbolic capital of the Illyrians is mostly visible in Albania (Albanians built their national identity on the linguistic differentiation from the neighbouring Slavs, as direct descendants from the Illyrians), it is still present in other Balkan nations.17 That symbolic link can be recognized through close reading of the classical scholarship, where we often detect sympathy towards the Illyrians in the fight against the colonizers, much like the Balkan nations had to fight its oppressors. The work of Duje Rendić Miočević can be used as the example for the implicit recognition of Illyrians as "us". He writes that Rome asked for a "cosmopolitan levelling of the peoples she ruled, which, according to Rome, had the same meaning as Romanisation (i.e., the abolishing of certain national values), which form the basic component of the resistance of a nation to everything that is being forced on them from the outside.”18 This idea is clearly visible in the following paragraph: “[T]he problem of continuity is gaining more and more importance, here and everywhere in the world, (...) and this is especially important to us, because while investigating the cultural and ethnic component of our own beings we find many particles that survived due to those people who struggled and fought for centuries, on the battlefield and in their homes, in everyday life and in craftsmanship, to preserve their individuality, national characteristics and faithfulness to tradition”19 (my emphasis and translation). We find the same idea of continuity on the denotative level as well: in her paper on Illyrian

13 Močnik 1999.
14 Althusser 2006.
15 Althusser 2006.
17 Dzino 2014.
costumes in sculpture from Roman Dalmatia. Irma Cremošnik draws a series of analogies, and a directly links the Illyrian costumes to those in rural Herzegovina in the twentieth century. The notion of symbolic continuity between the Illyrian and modern national identities has also informed the (art) historians in the interpretation of the material. The first result is the idea of a clearly discernible Illyrian identity during the Roman government. Secondly, that identity was understood as the substrate for every other cultural or social institution, and is visible from the ethnological research to the archaeological search for the Illyrian elements of small finds and burial grounds, and to the presupposed Illyrian religion and Illyrian art. Regardless of how wide the national identity net is being cast – is it a discussion of Illyrians, or the particular tribes that fall under this umbrella term – nation as the zero institution is projected directly into the past. The thinking of the material remains from the antiquity is impossible without their interpretation within the framework of nation.

My hypothesis is thus that the concept of nation as zero institution was unconsciously projected into the pre-national societies in antiquity, and that the framework of nation as the field of reproduction of social totality in modern nation-states also informed the notion of the struggle for hegemony on national bases in pre-modern societies. In other words, I claim that the research questions about religious sculpture were posed in a way that implies a national religion and national identity. Furthermore, I will try to show that such a theoretical model offers a particular interpretation of the material, and makes it impossible to propose different answers and different questions.

In fact, the question of "Illyrian" or "Dalmatae" religion is problematic from two aspects. The first one is the transhistorical use of a particular ideological construct – that of the "nation" – explicitly or implicitly in the scholarship about religion in the Roman era. The second one is the assumption that the idea of the nation is pertinent to the society, that it produces meanings in itself. In the expression "Croatian culture" the adjective "Croatian" does not offer any pertinent explanation of the characteristics of the culture, it only defines the field for the struggle for hegemony – as different subjects have different ideas about what is that culture supposed to look like. Even if we allow for transhistorical use of the concept of nation, in the expression "Illyrian religion" the adjective "Illyrian" can only point to the field of struggle for hegemony.

Although the use of theoretical models for the investigation of past societies does not necessarily present its results as the only true interpretation – moreover, it should serve as only one of the frameworks for the construction of questions (for example, feminist theory will allow for a certain set of questions to the material, but it will not pretend to give all the imaginable answers) – the problem with the theoretical model of nation is that it is deeply unconscious in the sense that it does not recognize itself as particular. Unlike the interpretative models of the modern theoretical thought, that present themselves as some of the possible ways to investigate the past, and within which authors take the place of subjects supposed to believe, the theoretical model of the nation is deeply ideological, and authors working within it take the place of subjects supposed to know, preventing any alternative interpretation of reality. Here I will point to some concrete research problems that come from the use of such an ideological model to the interpretation of some examples of religious sculpture in Roman Dalmatia.

The scholarship on religious sculpture in Roman Dalmatia is in general one of the largest bodies of work concerning research on Roman art in this area. This has to do with a number of reasons, two of the most important being the fact that a large part of the sculpture in Roman times was religious (directing the attention of art historians and archaeologists to that material), and the lack of written sources, that contributed to the interest of historians of religion. As it was already mentioned, the main focus was the search for autochthonous (Illyrian or Dalmatae, Liburnian etc.) elements in the corpus. For this to be possible, there had to exist a strong notion of the national character of religious thought (concepts, rituals, deities), and of its visual representation.

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21 For an overview of the research see Lulić, J. (2015). Aspekti religijske skulpture na prostoru provincije Dalmacije u vrijeme Rimskoga Carstva. PhD, University of Zagreb, Zagreb.
I will try to prove this claim through the analysis of interpretative models of the sculptural representation of two deities: Silvanus and Liber, as presented in two large overview studies that can be taken as paradigmatic examples of the scholarship, and that, although being separated by four decades, rely upon the same implicit theoretical model of nation as zero institution. In this paper I will indicate some characteristics of the material that remained unnoticed because of the model in question, and I will offer alternative interpretation.

Silvanus is the most frequent deity in the corpus of the religious sculpture of Roman Dalmatia, he is depicted on almost 25% of the all religious sculpture. Unlike the traditional Roman Silvanus, the Dalmatian one is depicted zoantropomorphologically, as the Arcadian Pan. Epigraphy, on the other hand, offers a different solution: invocations on the reliefs are directed to Silvanus, an old Italic deity. Silvanus reliefs from Roman Dalmatia differ in quality, but share their main iconographic characteristics. Silvanus is regularly depicted as a male figure with legs of a goat, often horned. In most examples he is surrounded with trees, with a dog or a goat, carrying a syrinx and pedum, clothed in nebris. Often we find other deities with Silvanus, almost exclusively nymphs and Diana.

Considering the number and iconographical uniqueness of those reliefs, as well as their geographical provenience, scholars have been assuming that under the Roman name of Silvanus and the Greek image of Pan a still unidentified Illyrian deity of forests and pastures remains hidden.

The best example of such a model is the seminal 1955 paper by Duje Rendić Miočević. Rendić Miočević gives an overview of earlier research, presents some new arguments for the thesis that the cult of Silvanus is in fact an interpretation of an Illyrian deity (possible Illyrian elements in the epigraphy), and offers a new classification and iconographical interpretation of the reliefs. His main thesis is that in the depiction of Silvanus and his cultic community we can find the interpretatio Romana of major Illyrian deities. Rendić Miočević is the first to point to the difference in iconography of the reliefs from the Dalmatian hinterland and those from the coast: in the hinterland the deity is usually younger and beardless, while on the coast he is depicted older and with a beard, according to the iconographical cannons of both Silvanus and Pan. This is the difference that he attributes to the conservative inclinations of the Dalmatae people. Besides the general notion of conservative Illyrians keeping their cultural characteristics, a close reading of Rendić Miočević’s paper offers further instances where nation as zero institution comes forth. In the very beginning, while praising the work of Robert Schneider, who was the first to publish a number of reliefs, he refers to his study of “Illyrian cult iconography”. Shortly after he mentions that the main Illyrian deities are “better known under their Italic names of Silvanus and Diana”. When describing the relationship between the supposed Illyrian deity and the Roman superstratum Rendić Miočević is ambivalent: first he mentions that “the Illyrian cults were free to develop and flourish under Roman domination” only to claim in the next paragraph that the Latin name for the deity is “grafted upon, borrowed and imposed”.

If there is any doubt that the implicit ideological framework he adopts is that of the nation, we should point out that in this paper (which is, again, only an example paradigmatic of the entire body of scholarship on the issue) he argues for the interpretation of Silvanus as an Illyrian deity stating that the Illyrians “through

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2 Silvanus is regularly depicted as a male figure with legs of a goat, often horned. In most examples he is surrounded with trees, with a dog or a goat, carrying a syrinx and pedum, clothed in nebris.
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long periods of Roman occupation managed to preserve the traditional forms of their cultural development and their nationality, among which cults and religion must be mentioned in the first place. This conceptualization leaves many questions unanswered. No names are preserved in epigraphy for this putative deity, unlike Venus-Anzotica (to give an example of the find from the same province, not far from the main cluster of Silvanus reliefs), which is a clear case of interpretatio Romana, in the manner it is usually understood: giving Roman names to their indigenous doppelgangers (in the most simplified definition). In the case of Dalmatian Silvanus it is not that the outsider saw the strange rituals to an unknown deity and dubbed it Silvanus because it was closest to the idea already in his pantheon: every single epigraphic evidence confirms that the people who created the monuments (as patrons or directly as stone carvers) thought of this deity as of Silvanus. Considering the stress put on the notion of Silvanus as an autochthonous cult in the scholarship, there is unusually small number of dedicants whose Illyrian ethnicity we can easily assert. On the other hand, dedicants on fifteen inscriptions bear the tria nomina form of the name.

Furthermore, there are reliefs of Silvanus and the Nymphs that cannot be easily explained by this conceptualization. In the reliefs with the Nymphs, Silvanus is depicted playing the flute, or accompanying Nymphs in their dance, sometimes depicted secondary to the Nymphs, smaller, and seated at the outer edge of the relief. Especially interesting in that regard is the representation of Silvanus on the Jajce example. The Jajce relief is an elongated rectangular field, with depictions of Nymphs in long dresses whose schematized folds point to the dance movement. There are five Nymphs, in two groups (by two and by three), each group accompanied by one Silvanus. This is the only known relief depicting two Silvani. It would be very hard to explain that relief if we were to adhere to the idea of Silvanus as the main Illyrian deity. However, if we abandon the theoretical framework of nation, it becomes possible to offer other interpretative models. One of those models is the epidemiological model of culture, instated by Dan Sperber. According to Sperber, cultural concepts and institutions can be treated as the precipitate of cognition and communication in human population. Moving from bottom up, from the observable phenomena to higher concepts, the tracking of reduction and diversification of specific concepts can offer a direction for thought. The motif of Silvanus and the Nymphs is in many ways different than the motif of Silvanus alone – Silvanus can be conceptualized in such a way as a mere companion to the Nymphs, a different religious concept altogether than when he is depicted alone. If this new religious concept is that of Nymphs with company, than the problem of two Silvani becomes a problem of two groups of Nymphs – and in that case more material for comparison is available. The two groups of Nymphs on the relief are depicted visually similar to each other, but separated, and with different attributes. Different types of Nymphs are common in the Greco-Roman antiquity, and if Silvanus is only accompanying them, his

Fig. 1. Two Silvani and the Nymphs. Franciscan monastery in Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
doubling is easier to understand. The confirmation for that we can look for in the inscription from Klapavica, Klis, where the epigraphic inscription mentions two groups of nymphs, and two Silvani: _nymphis fontanis cum silvano_ and _nymphis silvestris, cum silvano_. Nymphs with Silvanus, not Nymphs and Silvanus, _cum_, not _et_: this linguistic choice points to a hierarchy, and helps in understanding the two Silvani on the Jajce relief. In the framework of national religion it is impossible to offer a satisfying interpretation for both the relief as for the inscription.

The second example of the interpretation of a deity as one of a local cult is that of Liber. In Dalmatia Liber is depicted in relief and in sculpture in the round, often in his basic iconographical schema as a demi-nude ephebe facing the viewer, leaning on a long staff with one hand, and pouring libation from the _patera_ he is holding in the other. He is often accompanied by a panther and surrounded with vegetative motifs, especially grapevine. Similarly to Silvanus, Liber is also often interpreted as an Interpretatio Romana of an Illyrian cult. In a 1990 overview paper Boris Olujić writes that “behind the name of Liber hides an epichoric deity that has reached us through the interpretatio Romana”, and that this cult spreads to the hinterland from the coast through the process of “violent Romanization”. Leaving aside the question of how an epichoric cult could be spread through Romanization, especially a violent one, Olujić’s arguments of identifying Liber as an Illyrian deity are interesting to look into. He argues that the reason for the popularity of the cult of Liber on the coast lies in the culture of wine growing. Since no wine was growing in the hinterland, he argues that the cult was popular there because it was hiding some unknown Illyrian fertility deity. Marin Zaninović also follows a similar line of argumentation when he claims that in the inscriptions in Narona we must search for an Illyrian deity of wine. Since the wine growing was autochthonous in the Narona region, there must have been, according to Zaninović, an Illyrian deity of wine underneath the name and iconography of Liber. In both cases, the idea of the national deity that had to be preserved was so self-explanatory that it required almost no argumentation. Authors treat the notion of a national Illyrian deity as common sense, regardless of cultural changes in the province. The period in which Olujić writes his paper is also the one when Močnik writes his study on nation and ideology, the period just before the

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41 Olujić 1990, p.10

42 Olujić 1990, p.10

43 Olujić 1990, p. 10.

44 Zaninović 1984 p. 250.
Yugoslav wars, when nationalisms grow stronger in the entire country and all of its republics. This informs the self-evident reasoning of Olujić’s interpretation: there are some inscriptions dedicated to Liber with the Illyrian names on them, and an Illyrian can only worship an Illyrian deity.

Besides the names of the dedicants, Olujić finds more evidence in the formal characteristics of sculptures. Describing the relief of Libera from the island of Hvar, Olujić talks about a “rustic”, “unsophisticated”, “modestly looking” relief, and treats those characteristics as evidence of “autochthonous, local element”. He never explains the reason for such an interpretation. Even if we took for granted that the bad quality of the relief can prove the ethnicity of its creator (which is far from being self-evident), we are still left with the same problematic premise that if the author is Illyrian, the deity is necessarily Illyrian as well. There is another argument for the identification of Liber with the interpretatio Romana of an Illyrian deity. Veljko Paškvalin argues that on the inscription on the altar from Ustikolina proves the Illyrian identity of Liber. The inscription reads *Termino / Lib(ero) P(atri) / (ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)*. Paškvalin’s line of reasoning is that Liber is necessarily an Illyrian deity, since he was given the central place on the inscription. Furthermore, the assumption that Liber is the interpretatio Romana of an Illyrian deity became an argument for the existence of a connection between Liber and Silvanus. Since there is no known relief depicting those two deities together, elements of syncretism are recognized in some attributes on the Silvanus reliefs, such as grapes.

Again, those interpretations have trouble recognizing some aspects that don’t neatly fit into the model within which they operate. Two reliefs from the hinterland of Dalmatia, today’s western Bosnia, present us with an interesting example. In those monuments Liber is depicted holding a patera in one hand, pouring the libation to the panther, and he holds a staff. The staff is placed into a basket with a snake winding around it; the latter motif is not unique, and can be found in Dionysian iconography. Liknon, a woven basket is a part of mystery aspects of Dionysian mystery cult. The combination of the snake and the basket makes this connection even more interesting. A snake appears in the initiation process, hidden in a secret basket revealed to the initiates. Can we then talk about organized Dionysian mysteries? Hardly. The votive formula found on the relief is generic: Victorina is giving a votive for her health, pro salute sua. There is no indication of any mystery formula. In the area where these two reliefs were found, there existed several towns and travel stations, but even if we might entertain the idea of a larger Dionysian community in Salona, it could be hardly expected in Salvia or Delminium. There was certainly a demand for a larger

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46 Olujić p. 15-16.
47 Paškvalin 1963, p. 137.
workshop production – the reliefs were copied – and the nonchalance in producing a larger number of depictions of presumably secret initiation elements can hardly appear in a community of initiates. A noteworthy parallel can be found in the depictions of Mercury – some elements of the representation have their equivalents in Greek mystery cults, although the Dalmatian examples are emptied from their original meaning. One of the examples of Mercury with Orphic elements was also discovered nearby the location of Liber reliefs. In the case of Mercury reliefs, there was also no reason to presume an active Orphic community. Still, it remains interesting how the echoes of two Greek mystery aspects found their place in the Dalmatia hinterland. The viewpoint of cognitive theory can offer an interpretation of these elements. According to cognitive theory, the new concept in cognitive religious network will necessarily be cut from its essential parts, and reinterpreted. As Dan Sperber argues, there are no symbols with self-explanatory content – all are just a string of local interpretations. The idea of a network of religious cognition and floating signifiers in form of iconographical schemes can hardly appear within the framework of nation as a zero institution.

A crucial element of Althusser’s discussion on ideology is the idea of state’s ideological apparatuses. In order to manage a reproduction of social relations, the state relies upon different institutions to create material bases of ideology, and the only activity that has the possibility to question ideology is theory. The history of art can approach its material from an atheoretical point of view – thus necessarily reproducing ideology, projecting it to the past, and cementing its position in the present time –, or it can use theory to question the very foundations of existing interpretations. If we investigate these ideological frameworks, we can gain new insights to the material, but we can also articulate a different view on the methodology of art history. This paper used the interpretation of religious sculpture in Roman Dalmatia as a case study to stress the importance of the critique of ideology in the art history. The religious sculpture in Roman Dalmatia was researched almost exclusively through the search for the presumed elements of Illyrian religion in visual representations; the formulation of the research hypothesis was firmly rooted into the idea of nation as zero institution, which served as the default framework for various interpretations. In this paper I tried to offer some alternative interpretations, intending not to give definite answers, but to open new spaces for research.

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Bibliography


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Image list:
1. Two Silvani and the Nymphs. Franciscan monastery in Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
2. Liber from Vašarovina. Franciscan monastery in Livno, Bosnia and Herzegovina
3. Liber from Šumnjak. National Museum in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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