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Live to Tell, or, The 2020 *Framework for Hatred*

Abstract

The paper discusses intertextuality in Ivan Aralica's novel *Okvir za mržnju* (*A Framework for Hatred*). The interference of the oral and the written medium is analysed not only at the level of primary orality (various oral and marginally oral forms) but also at the level of secondary orality, often referred to as "new orality," which is transmitted through new, different media (for example, newspaper text, radio, television, and wall newspapers). The comparative method will be used to present the motif of a scabies contagion in the novel, with the presence of oral literature as a medium for discussing everything that the contagion entails. Parallels will be made with modern oral forms (memes), which are most often transmitted via Viber, WhatsApp, Internet, Facebook and Instagram today, and which currently feature the COVID-19 pandemic in Croatia and the world. Given that history is the teacher of life, it is perfectly understandable that this novel by Aralica, based on historical facts and experiences surrounding contagion, can serve as an example of how to tackle similar challenges of the present. It is this long-established hypothesis that shows the aim of the paper, not only at the level of the theme and motifs, but also on an experiential level, which includes a number of different emotional states (from hatred to laughter) caused by the political and social circumstances of a community which often observes its history and present through the prism of conspiracy theories. Although the novel *A Framework for Hatred* is valued differently by many critics, this paper reintroduces the possibility of reconsidering the canonical value of this work, bearing in mind that literary texts sometimes outgrow their own authors, especially at times when the contemporary reader's self is reflected in the text and subtext of a newer, recognisable social context.

Keywords: social context, Ivan Aralica, intertextuality, *A Framework for Hatred*, orality, contagion

Tko preživi – priča će ili okvir za mržnju 2020.

Sažetak

U radu se problematizira intertekstualnost u Araličinu romanu *Okvir za mržnju*. Interferiranje usmene u pisanu riječ analizira se ne samo na razini primarne usmenosti (različiti usmeni i rubno usmeni oblici) već i na razini sekundarne usmenosti, često nazivane i „nova usmenost”, a prenosi se putem novih, drugačijih medija (primjerice novinski tekst, radio, televizija i zidne novine). Komparativnom će se metodom prikazati motiv zaraze „svraba” u romanu, prisutnost usmene književnosti kao medija kroz koji se progovara o svemu onomu što zaraza kao nedaća sa sobom donosi. Pronaći će se i paralela u suvremenim usmenim oblicima (memi), koji se danas najčešće prenose putem Vibera, WhatsAppa, interneta, Facebooka i Instagrama, a kojima je trenutna tema pandemija COVID-19 u Hrvatskoj i svijetu. S obzirom na to da je povijest učiteljica života, potpuno je razumljivo da ovaj Araličin roman, oslonjen na povijesne činjenice i iskustva susreta sa zarazom, može poslužiti kao primjer kako se nositi sa sličnim izazovima sadašnjice.

Upravo na toj davno postavljenoj hipotezi ostvaruje se i cilj rada, i to ne samo na tematsko-motivskoj razini već i na iskustvenoj, koja uključuje i niz različitih emocija (od mržnje do smijeha) izazvanih političkim i društvenim okolnostima jedne zajednice koja svoju povijest, pa i sadašnjost, često promatra kroz prizmu „teorija zavjere”. Iako roman *Okvir za mržnju* mnogi kritičari različito vrednuju, radom se ponovno otvara mogućnost preispitivanja kanonske vrijednosti ovog djela jer književni ostvaraji nekada „nadrastaju” i samog autora, posebice u trenucima kada suvremeni čitatelj „ozrcali” sebstvo u tekstu i podtekstu novijega, prepoznatljivoga društvenoga konteksta.

Ključne riječi: društveni kontekst, Ivan Aralica, intertekstualnost, *Okvir za mržnju*, usmenost, zaraza

Introduction

If a man uses a word, for whatever purpose he may use it – he must live with the word, not from time to time only when he needs that word, but he must live with it from early morning to late night and, by living with it, go through all of its written and oral manifestations. (Aralica, 2009, p. 51)

Ivan Aralica¹ is a writer who has often depicted historical,² spiritual and material heritage, especially of the inhabitants of the Dalmatian Hinterland, using a specific linguistic combination of language and imagery, Franciscan chronicles, records of ancient travel writers, authentic folk vernacular and folk literature (Hrvatska enciklopedija, 2021a). The interference of different oral and mar-

¹ Ivan Aralica, prose writer, essayist and film screenwriter, is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures in Croatian literature of the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. He gained the acclaim of both audiences and critics after the publication of his novel *Psi u trgovištu* (*Dogs in the Marketplace*) in 1979, in the “HIT Biblioteka” series of modern literature. Since then, Aralica has created a number of works that secured him a rightful place in the canon of Croatian literature.

² He has been rightfully compared to Ivo Andrić (Kadić, 1992, p. 246) because he was the only writer who provided a detailed account of the past of southern Croatia, Herzegovina and central Bosnia in his novels.

ginal oral forms in *Okvir za mržnju (A Framework for Hatred)*, one of the writer's novels, will be presented in this paper.

Aralica also writes about the art of survival in the dreadful, destitute conditions of the Dalmatian Hinterland,³ a mentality that has been preserved to this day in character traits such as arrogance, belligerence and cunningness (he narrated this with admiration, but also with irony) (Visković, 1990, foreword by Aralica, p. 11). This sort of humour and mentality of resistance will be tackled in the paper in a somewhat broader context, both spatial and temporal, with a special emphasis on the occurrence of contagion. Given that such mentality survives as a special trait and is an integral part of one's identity, the paper will demonstrate at what point the identity, which is often conditioned by sociopolitical circumstances, both in Aralica's novel and in the current pandemic, undergoes a crisis (Bertoša, 2006, pp. 19–20). In fact, Aralica is a writer whose works illustrate the past, which allows for some lessons to be drawn for the present and the future, as will be depicted in the paper. If literature is observed as a discourse, it implies that we have become aware of its historical and social ubication and that it is not secluded or recluse but rather determined precisely within the interdiscourse which includes the public, the market, institutions, conventions and other values. At that moment, the literary text reveals itself as a dynamic, open excerpt from the cross-processes of birth, understanding and processing of meanings originating in historical networks of interpersonal, interlinguistic, intertextual and sociocultural relations (Juvan, 2011, pp. 49–50, after: Ryznar, 2014); hence, it is important to re-examine the literary value of the novel *A Framework for Hatred*, especially in the context of current events.

By applying the methods of analysis and comparison, the aim of the paper is to present the motif of the scabies contagion in the novel and oral literature as a medium for discussing everything that the contagion entails (from fear through conspiracy theory to humour). Parallels will be made with modern oral forms (memes), which are most often transmitted via Viber, WhatsApp, Internet, Facebook and Instagram today, and which currently feature the COVID-19 pandemic in Croatia and the world. Hypotheses of intertextuality and topicality arise from all of the above.

Social and Historical Framework in the Novel; or, Socialism — Utopia

In order to rule without any limitations, the Communist Party established its satellite organisations in all segments of society. Mass political organisations acting as its transmission media took over the implementation of its agendas, direc-

³ The term *hinterland* (Cro. *zagora*) originated from the perspective of the coast and the population settled there. According to Nikša Stančić (1997, p. 197, after: Sunara, Bošković, 2014, p. 100), “hinterland as a geographical term originated from the perspective of the Adriatic coastal strip, denoting the mainland hinterland behind the hills that separate it from the coast.” All quotations in this article have been translated into English by Ana Mršić Zdilar.

tives and instructions, with Departments of Agitation and Propaganda operating within each of them by following the central model. The ideological orientation and shaping of young people upon the platform of the ruling Communist Party, which was modelled on the principles of Marxism and Leninism, was extremely important, especially in terms of education and culture (Dimić, 1988, after: Šarić, Jukić, 2013, p. 275; Kašić, 1991, p. 245; Knezović, 1994, p. 48).

Structurally, the organisation of the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije — SKOJ) was merely a replica of the Communist Party, which set up its basic organisations, activist sections and committees at all levels of society (factories, unions, schools, universities, villages) while setting up city, county, district and regional committees of SKOJ throughout the country (Šarić, Jukić, 2013, pp. 270–271). Tatjana Šarić and Marijana Jukić explained the ultimate goal of this operation:

Traditional civic values were to be replaced by the newly created traditions of the workers' movement, the revolutionary liberation struggle and the socialist state-building, which was supposed to be an integrating factor in building togetherness and "brotherhood and unity." These processes took place in schools and universities, but also in all other institutions and youth workplaces. (Šarić, Jukić, 2013, p. 275)

It was a strictly hierarchical structure, which eliminated all democratic conflicts of opinions (Šarić, Jukić, 2013, p. 272).

In his novel *A Framework for Hatred*, Aralica provided a one-dimensional portrayal of typical ideologically indoctrinated people from that time through several characters.

In the following excerpt from the novel, Martin Kujundžić writes a story in which he alludes to Ilija Mrdalj, a narrow-minded student who embodied blind subservience and obedience:

There was once a young man who wanted to perfect his habits through exercise, to be punctual as a slot machine and useful as the most precise machine. He believed in all that and he devoted his whole life to the goal of doing everything by someone else's wishes, in such a way that he did not have to do anything or think for himself, because thinking was his weak spot. Among the many activities he practised for this purpose was developing the habit of coughing up at night before going to bed, spitting out the window and then going to bed, thus clearing his throat for night breathing. When he finally perfected the habit, he happened to spit in his bed and jumped out the window. The trip from the fourth floor to the ground was too short, so he did not have enough time to realise that he had made a mistake, and he died without ever realising that before every task, no matter how frequent and ordinary, you should always stop and think about what you intend to do. (Aralica, 1987, p. 111)

In fact, there was a frequent trial of strength between protagonists and antagonists in the novel. Aralica did not condemn his protagonists, even when they were deeply steeped in crime and blood. "He tries to understand them and then show why they acted in this way, and not in a way that would seem more ethical and acceptable. He lets the attentive reader draw his own conclusions and perhaps learn something along the way" (Kadić, 1992, p. 237).

Can Contagion Defeat Ideology?

Ideological political indoctrination is also visible in the episode of treating students for head lice and scabies (Cro. *svrab*),⁴ which is a chronic, contagious, parasitic disease affecting mammals and birds, characterised by skin changes and severe itching (Hrvatska enciklopedija 2021b).

Teacher Vinko Maglica arrived in the Preparatory School in Knin,⁵ *inter alia*, with a special mission to rid students of this parasitic disease, which Anuška, the Commissioner for Education of the Regional Board, “removed from the competence of medicine and subsumed under politics” (Aralica, 1987, p. 12), claiming that “any occurrence of these diseases is a gross political omission of the administration and personnel” (Aralica, 1987, p. 12).

In fact, it did not take long to persuade Maglica to do so because he believed that “not only scabies and lice, but also many other things can and must be observed from the political aspect [...] [H]e believed in advance in the omnipotence of politics and its comprehensiveness” (Aralica, 1987, p. 13). Accordingly, in order for the mission to take on the meaning of political action, he prominently posted the slogan “LICE WILL EITHER BEAT SOCIALISM OR SOCIALISM WILL BEAT LICE” (Aralica, 1987, p. 35).

Dr. Viler was one of Maglica’s assistants in his mission to eradicate lice and scabies. He was a former prisoner of war, who decided to stay in the country, where he arrived as a military doctor of the German occupation forces. He aroused strong suspicions of the teacher Vinko Maglica and his loyal ideological followers, although he was never engaged in politics in his life. Moreover, he was only interested in medicine. His enthusiasm for children’s songs and circle dancing (around the burning infected hay), as their usual response to all the problems that afflict them, is interpreted by the indoctrinated student Korina Kužina as his underestimation of children, whom he considered incapable of anything else but singing.

Only circle dancing and nothing else! They get scabies, they circle dance! They get lice, they circle dance! Ah, circle dancing, circle dancing! Wonderful! Circle dancing — said Dr. Viler. [...] He meant to say that these boys and girls are wonderful: whenever something bothered them — cold and hunger last winter and now lice and scabies — they would circle dance and sing. That was what he had meant to say, but he was misunderstood. (Aralica, 1987, p. 39)

An even bigger incident occurred when, without any malicious intent, Dr. Viler handed out leaflets to students with information about scabies and instructions

⁴ Described already in the Bible. The primary risk factor is overcrowding — so schools, kindergartens, nursing homes, hospitals and other forms of crowded institutions are often the focal site of this disease.

⁵ It should be noted that Aralica attended primary school from 1937 to 1941 in his home town. He continued his education in 1944, first in Drniš, and then in Knin, where in 1953 he finished the Teacher Education School, the so-called Preparatory School, after which he worked as a teacher in rural schools throughout the Dalmatian Hinterland (Sunara, 2018, p. 14).

on how to eliminate lice. The problem was that the leaflets were from his military medical supplies, so they depicted a German eagle with a swastika in its claws on one side (Aralica, 1987, p. 46). The dangerous emblem immediately caught the eye of the eager Korina Kužina, and so she informed the teacher Maglica, who then confronted him, using the opportunity to ideologically educate the crowd of students who had gathered around them. Strong suspicions concerning the teacher point to the doubts about possible conspiracy theories that arose from political omnipotence, as in the case of the appearance of Dr. Viler, who recklessly distributed leaflets with Nazi insignia and was consequently reprimanded by the teacher Maglica. It is interesting that the focus here is not on the doctor's reprimand, but on using the opportunity to re-educate future young generations in terms of ideology, which indicates Aralica's somewhat ironic approach to the contagion and the way it can be handled.

Intertextuality⁶ of Oral and Written Media in the Novel *A Framework for Hatred* with Examples of Primary and Secondary Oral Literature

Although recognised as a prominent name of contemporary literature, Aralica was perceived by critics as an epic storytelling writer of the Dalmatian Hinterland, “the sage from Promina” and “Homer from Promina.” This is due to the fact that the history and contemporaneity of the Dalmatian Hinterland, with all its forms of material and spiritual culture, have never found such a deep and eloquent literary expression as in his books (cf. Bošković, 2011, pp. 129–154).

Martin in *Lament for My Beloved*

Let us now discuss episodes from the book which support statements made in the previous section of this paper. One such example is Martin Kujundžić, who drew teachers in the “Funny Box” of the national wall newspaper. The characters of Maglica, Beban and Turić were particularly affected. Below the picture, Kujundžić included a composition entitled *Lament for My Beloved* with the subtitle

⁶ Intertextuality is a feature of literary and artistic texts, and literature is a place of dialogue between them (Maković et al., 1988, p. 7). Therefore, intertextuality implies the recognisability of adopted textual templates, and so, from this perspective, texts with a more direct reference to their templates are noticed, whether these are recognisable designations of other contrapuntally included discourse types or — quite explicitly — thematic-motif and linguistic relations that a text achieves in relation to another text (Kovačević, Badurina, 2001, p. 191).

Folklore Sketch from Ivanbegovina, a prose introduction and several verses (Aralica, 1987, p. 122). In a series of texts, a story from everyday life with elements of the eschatological tradition is presented:

In the introduction he wrote that he met a man named Martin last summer in his village Ivanbegovina who told him about the beauty of a creature for which he could not decipher whether it was a woman, an animal, a plant or something completely different. When asked about who/what the creature was, Martin refused to answer. The introduction is followed by several examples of the man's admiration for the beautiful creature. (Aralica, 1987, p. 122)

You disappeared, my darling, one evening when they said:
We love her too, but in a different way.
Your hands were like gilded ivory.
You equally shared poverty and grace with each man.
I swore to the earth: her or no other!
And I let you lie in the grave, which has been your resting place since the dawn of time.
Who is going to help us if not her, I said.
Be patient, they said, time is fleeting,
There will be time for her return. (Aralica, 1987, p. 122)

This is followed by a poem, written in traditional ten-syllable verse, where Aralica takes the main character and the reader back to the anthropological context of nature, its cruelty and neorealism. Although the aesthetic of the poem is questionable and it features elements of pleading, the writer exposes the whole farce of the time, which had to be defied:

Milica, sing the chant that the people of Lika sing to Velebit —
said Maglica when Kujundžić came with the horsemen.
Oh, Velebit, may you burn in flames,
for you have separated Lika with the sea. (Aralica, 1987, p. 131)

There is an abundance of irony and mockery immersed in the Croatian literary heritage, as Aralica pointed out in the following excerpt when an inept teacher tried to humiliate the best student:

Kujundžić, write that! Write it down! This is philosophy, this is poetry, and not that rubbish you, poor beggar, usually read. This is not the smartest thing you have ever written in your notebook, this is actually the smartest thing you have ever written. What are you waiting for, take the pen out of your bag! (Aralica, 1987, p. 131)

These excerpts once again confirm that the Dalmatian Hinterland, primarily the place of patriarchal heroism, ten-syllable-verse poems and folk tradition, legends and myths, heroes and hajduks, folk customs and localisms, is also the place of moral foundations and Christian values, but also deeply rooted burdens, political and religious misunderstandings and intolerance that were often covered up, and yet came to light (Bošković, 2011, p. 131).

Intertextuality of Oral and Written Media in the Novel *A Framework for Hatred* with Examples of Contemporary Marginal Oral Literary Records

Graffiti

Graffiti as oral literary forms should be viewed in such a way that their structure is related to oral literary poetics (Botica, 2013, pp. 508–509), and therefore examples of graffiti found in the novel *A Framework for Hatred* are presented below:

Men are like toilets: they are either shitty or taken.
A woman is like the soil: the deeper you plough her, the more fertile she is.
Ms. teacher, better correct those grades,
before my gang comes with the blades!
The truth always changes but the lie remains the same.
A man who digs a hole for another man is a port worker.
A man who flies high is a pilot.
To think means to be deprived of knowledge.
This school of ours really sucked;
we entered innocent and came out fucked. (Aralica, 1987, pp. 61–62)

or

The situation with Korina hasn't even settled yet, when a new issue of the wall newspaper came out. In the "Funny Box," Kujundžić wrote in capital letters: SCREW A WALL WITH NO SCRIBBLES ON IT!⁷ The students liked the slogan so much that they began to write it on the walls, on the stones, on the margins of notebooks and books, wherever there was an empty surface. (Aralica, 1987, p. 73)

The above examples of marginal oral literary forms, more precisely graffiti, were popular in the period when the novel was written, and hence they abound in criticism, witty, bitter humour, boasting and ridicule full of figures of irony, paradoxes and oxymorons (for example, "This school of ours really sucked; we entered innocent and came out fucked"), which tells us who we are, what place and time we live in (for instance, "Men are like toilets: they are either shitty or taken") (cf. Lalić et al., 1991; Bagić, 2012, p. 162). As a linguistic structure, graffiti often represents an aphorism (for example, "The truth always changes but the lie remains the same") or a proverbial experience. It is notable that Aralica alludes again to the sociopolitical situation in the country at the time, even when these forms have no meaning, when they are without any aesthetic or poetic content — "To think means to be deprived of knowledge."

⁷ This happens to be one of the most common graffiti in the Republic of Croatia today.

Coronavirus as a Motif of Memes — Stylistic Coincidence with Aralica's Humour Marked by Orality

The nature of the minimalist genre of memes, as well as the above-mentioned graffiti, is reflected in brevity and wit. Memes also have genre similarities with proverbs, jokes, sayings, aphorisms, swear words (cf. Predojević, 2018, after: Vidović Schreiber, 2021, p. 149) and slogans. They are characteristic of modern communication, and therefore the paper includes memes with the motif of contagion, which are interesting because they reveal the mentality of Croats, often Dalmatians, prone to the same ironic and sarcastic humour as found in the work of Aralica (see Figs. 1–2). The photos are shared from person to person on social networks, blogs, etc. In addition, during major global events (for example, the COVID-19 pandemic), they are often depicted with brighter notes, frequently with dark humour.⁸ One of their characteristics is the use of words and phrases with intentional misspellings or the use of incorrect grammatical structures.

A meme is a form of communication shared through various social media platforms that can be viewed as part of postmodern folklore (cf. McNeill, 2009, p. 84, after: Predojević, 2019, p. 152), where common norms and values are created through cultural artefacts, such as photoshopped images or urban legends (Shifman, 2014, p. 15, after: Rušinović, 2020, p. 32). The essence of success often lies only in the wit or humour of thus created and shared memes (Shifman, 2014, p. 15, after: Rušinović, 2020, p. 30). Furthermore, a meme image can remain the same but the content changes, and the sharing begins by those in the immediate vicinity, who spread it further (if, of course, the meme is good enough to be reproduced) (Sparožič, 2015, p. 16). Given that the meme can, as noted by Užarević (2012), be active, like a virus, only in the body of the host (carrier) and it requires a carrier — a role that can be performed by people, books, newspapers, computers, disks — can a meme, in fact, be considered a kind of contemporary cultural contagion?

⁸ It should be noted here that folklorists warned about the spread of catastrophe-related humour on the Internet as early as at the beginning of the 21st century (cf. Predojević, 2019). In fact, according to Sardelić (2018, p. 193), humour enables personal freedoms, and it is a response to social and institutional repression, limitation of human desires and needs, and perhaps the only possibility of resistance.



Figure 1. A meme with text alluding to the period of the communist regime, which recalls the implementation of certain epidemiological measures during the COVID-19 pandemic⁹

⁹ The example is taken from the personal archive of the authors. English translation: “This is not corona, this is SOCIALISM. 1. You finish work on Friday at 3 p.m.; 2. You come home and rest by Monday; 3. No one is bothering you, you have no one to rush to; 4. You have whatever money you have; 5. People who don’t work get paid; 6. Everyone’s concerned about your health; 7. Your family contacts you by phone, people play cards; 8. Women are baking cakes again; 9. People are watching the news and everyone has to be quiet; 10. You are not allowed to speak against the president; 11. People are not allowed to go to church or larger gatherings; 12. No one is in a rush to do anything; 13. People are waiting in lines; 14. Retired people are taken care of. This is really not a disease. TITO IS THAT YOU.”



Figure 2. Examples of memes received by the authors on different personal social media platforms¹⁰

Stories with a Motif of Fear Stemming from a Rumour; or, “Nothing in Life Happens by Accident”

In Aralica’s novel *A Framework for Hatred*, as well as in stories with a motif of the coronavirus conspiracy theory, there are texts relying on rumours. The examples cited below have one thing in common, and that is the spread of fear. However, time, regardless of the evil that burdens it, cannot silence the creative spirit of a person who finds ways to speak under a collective “framework” and who finds a way to survive even when they are pressed by individual reality.

First, the example of a rumour spread with awe in Aralica’s novel about the infamous Radojica Duvančić, a member of the Yugoslav Secret Service (UDBA):

¹⁰ English translation: 1. “The vaccinated are waiting for the non-vaccinated to die from corona. The non-vaccinated are waiting for the vaccinated to die from the vaccine. Suspenseful until the very end!”; 2. “A patient who received the vaccine twice has died. Medical experts say that it would be even worse if he were non-vaccinated.”; 3. “March is around the corner. I still remember March 2020 when they said that the following two weeks were crucial for the virus to disappear. I was 26. Now I am almost 29. The longest two weeks of my life!”; 4. “I hate antivaxxers... Russians! You hate Russians now!”; 5. “This corona thing turned out like those TV shows when they run out of money, so they just wrap it up without any explanation.”; 6. “A piece of advice for those who overstocked on oil and flour in the case of WWII. Cover yourselves in oil and flour. We don’t have to all be baked, some of us can be fried.”

Thus, for most students, he was a man who likes to joke, who pats them on the shoulders and strokes the heads of boys and girls with fatherly affection. They had never heard him shout, scold or threaten, and they knew that he was more professional and powerful in his professional domain than Dr. Viler, whose erudite education and undoubted kindness had an air of something ridiculous and cowardly within, probably because he was a prisoner. Radojica's kindness was complete and serious, one might even say authentic, because it was tied to power and innocence. They thought that it had to feel good to be sinless, to be completely of clear conscience and immaculate biography, to be trusted, no matter what anyone said, to be as light as an angel and rigid as a marble saint. They thought that someone was good just because he was powerful and that a man without power could not be good. How can a person tainted by humiliation and weakness like rusted iron show kindness and provide protection? They thought, because they attended the Preparatory School and knew all about educational goals, that the purpose of Radojica's visits was to instil the students with the fear of stains in their biographies and fill their hearts with the striving for sinlessness. Only those who are strong in their impeccability can spread laughter, wit and kindness around them.

Was it just an illusion? All they knew for sure about Radojica was that he was a member of the disciplinary commission at the Commission of Education in the County Board. (Aralica, 1987, p. 68)

The interesting thing about rumours is that not only do they spread fast, but they are often disseminated by the media, especially today. This includes all the information in the media that has not been verified to date. The most common motifs of rumours as part of modern traditions are infectious diseases, mysterious deaths, radioactive waste, various products (Vidović Schreiber, 2011, p. 110). The reason for the rapid spread of rumours is that they are perfectly intertwined with the anxieties of ordinary people with unverified information, where they do not distinguish truth from fiction, unsure what to believe (Marks, 1996, after: Vidović Schreiber, 2011).

There are various conspiracy theories about the coronavirus in the media today, some of which are as follows: the coronavirus was created by the Chinese (in their laboratory) as a biological weapon against the United States; the use of masks and frequent hand-washing make people even more susceptible to disease; coronavirus was released from a laboratory to introduce 5G technology; Bill Gates is behind the pandemic — he invested money in vaccine development; coronavirus is a US biological weapon aimed at destroying the Chinese economy; a cure for coronavirus already exists; the pandemic is political manipulation. More information about this can be found on the web (see Nehring 2020).

Conclusion

The analysis of the literary work *A Framework for Hatred* by Ivan Aralica provides a number of new reflections on the canonical value of this novel because it is actualised by the appearance of the current contagion (COVID-19), which is shaped through stories about conspiracy theories or hatred, and humour as the

only spiritual and psychologically possible prevention. The following hypotheses have been confirmed:

1. Intertextuality¹¹ of oral and written media, discussed using examples from the novel (such as graffiti, wall newspapers), is realised in the modern technological context through intermediality¹² (for instance, memes and stories with the motif of conspiracy theories), all with the aim of creating a media space in which an ordinary person or a writer can speak publicly about the problems that affect them.

2. The topicality of Ivan Aralica's novel *A Framework for Hatred* at the level of content and themes and motifs — contagion as a hazard which creates frameworks, both epidemiological and intellectual, but also the longing for freedom, both in the film and the book. In the current coronavirus crisis, it finds an escape in spiritual and creative flights. In short, in this utopian desire to survive, true salvation means to flee to the other bank of the river, which does not necessarily have to be physical, but intellectual or spiritual, where again the “framework,” that is, isolation, is not imposed, but we choose it ourselves.

Although the novel *A Framework for Hatred* is evaluated differently by various critics, it should be noted that literary works sometimes outgrow their own authors, especially when the modern reader's self is reflected in the text and subtext of a newer yet repeated context. The paper indicates that, regardless of the sociopolitical system, the public and the engaged writer-author react in the same way during the pandemic by using the only available tools, namely, creativity, humour and (in the case of the coronavirus) spirituality. The novel *A Framework for Hatred* shows that fear of contagion existed back then as well as today, and that people were also divided in their opinions; it also shows the attitude of the authorities towards the contagion and the measures undertaken. In addition, it is clear in the novel that the attitude of the communist totalitarian government is significantly different than it is today. While today the medical profession is allowed to make decisions, at that time politics had completely marginalised the profession, which is reflected in the relationship between the teacher Maglica and Dr. Viler, and in the conversation between Maglica and Anuška, the Commissioner for Education of the Regional Board, who sent him on a special mission to exterminate scabies. Finally, in (non-)democratic countries, bulletin boards become a space for publicly addressing the city government, functioning as wall newspapers, graffiti or memes on social networks, while writers' literary achievements become a space

¹¹ In fact, in Aralica's novel, the text reveals itself through dialogues with genres, skilful intertextuality, and, in this general distribution of subjects, languages, places and roles, it influences the relationships between different forms of activities and communication in society. Hence, this is a matter of shifting roles, mimicry, simulacrum, delayed portrayal strategies and the indirect relationship between language and reality; therefore, interdiscursivity can be seen as a kind of political strategy of a literary text (Vuković, 2010, p. 169, after: Ryznar, 2014, p. 71).

¹² In fact, the film *My Uncle's Legacy* (*Život sa stricem*) is intermedially connected with the novel because it generates this “political irrationalism” (Nemec, 2003).

where they use the freedom of speech, which is stylistically marked by humour, to reveal all social deviations, even though they are sometimes disguised as rumours or conspiracy theories.

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