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ABSTRACT

In this essay, I examine an early modern battle between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, the Siege of Szigetvár, and its protagonists, Nikola Šubić Zrinski and Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, as sites of memory in Hungary, Croatia, and Turkey. In relation to recent commemorations of the Siege, I focus on how sanctioned memories of Szigetvár have been sanitized for national(ist) ends, evacuating fraught historical and political questions related to the enmity between the two empires. Concomitantly, I pursue the silences and erasures that hegemonic memories of the battle and its protagonists have produced, both in relation to specific landscapes of memory in Szigetvár and through an analysis of three narratives of the Siege: a Hungarian-language epic poem, a Croatian opera, and a Turkish television serial.

KEYWORDS

Memory; amnesia; antagonism; post-imperialism; Ottoman Empire; Habsburg Empire

Introduction: a triumvirate commemoration

As one drives north on Highway 67 from the somnolent town of Szigetvár, Hungary, through fields of corn and wheat extending across the Pannonian plain, a curious sight appears on the left-hand side of the road. An octagonal marble structure, encased by floral-patterned tiles in blue, green, and white, rises on the edge of a gravel parking lot. Upon closer inspection, this structure is recognizable as a fountain. Beyond it, several sculptures and pavilions are visible. Two small signs attached to a retaining wall declare the name and aim of the site: the Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Park.¹

The Friendship Park's signature monument consists of a pair of gargantuan busts depicting Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1494–1566 CE) and Viceroy Nikola Šubić Zrinski IV/Miklós Zrínyi (1508–1566 CE),² the protagonists of the Siege of Szigetvár. This critical battle in 1566 CE pitted Ottoman military forces against a defensive contingent of Habsburg soldiers stationed in the town's eponymous fortress, and marked an apogee of Ottoman sovereignty in the Danubian basin. Although the Ottomans ultimately prevailed, their victory was Pyrrhic: The heavy losses they suffered at the hands of the smaller Habsburg force, led by the Croat-Hungarian nobleman Zrinski, precluded a second possible siege of Vienna. In addition to the busts, the Friendship Park also features a modest tomb (*türbe*) for Süleyman, who perished during the siege of natural causes, several months before his 72nd birthday. Although Süleyman's imperial mausoleum,

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located within the cemetery of the Süleymaniye Mosque Complex in Istanbul, is a more monumental mortuary site, the small tomb in the Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Park approximates the location of the Sultan's actual death.³ A footpath circumnavigates the sculptures and the tomb; at regular intervals, informative panels narrate the chronology of the Siege of Szigetvár, the history of Ottoman rule in Hungary, and later ties between Hungary and Turkey, culminating with a celebration of recent political-economic and cultural initiatives spearheaded by the governments of Viktor Orbán and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

On 7 September 2016, the Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Park was endowed with a new monument: An unhewn marble boulder was erected in the piazza in front of the busts of Zrinski and Süleyman. Three brass plates affixed to the boulder record the names of three dignitaries who visited the park on that day in three different languages, Hungarian, Turkish, and Croatian: His Excellency János Áder, President of Hungary; the Distinguished Veysi Kaynak,⁴ Assistant to the President of Turkey; and, Her Excellency Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, President of the Republic of Croatia. Áder, Kaynak, and Grabar-Kitarović had travelled to bucolic Szigetvár as official celebrants of the 450th anniversary of the Siege. Although the principal commemorations of the anniversary occurred within Szigetvár Fortress, where historical reenactors revived aspects of the military drama, the three national delegations also included the Friendship Park on their itinerary, and their visit was deemed worthy of remembrance in its own right (Figure 1).

While the Friendship Park's new lithic addition is insignificant in stature in comparison to the busts of Zrinski and Süleyman, it performs a crucial political-historical gesture. The



Figure 1. The busts of Nikola Šubić Zrinski and Süleyman the Magnificent in the Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Park. Süleyman's tomb is visible in the background. Photograph by author.

commemoration of and by three national dignitaries, whose equivalence is signalled by the identical brass plaques, establishes the Friendship Park as a single, integrated ‘site of memory’ (Nora 1989) for Hungary, Turkey, and Croatia. My panoramic task in this essay is to offer an account of the political and discursive transformations that this triumvirate nationalization of the Siege of Szigetvár and its heroes and villains entails. How has a bloody battle rooted in the knotted borderland politics of two early-modern empires become a largely unproblematic emblem of pride in three distinct national contexts? What modalities of memory endow military violence with an afterlife as, in the words of the current mayor of the Turkish Black Sea city of Trabzon (Süleyman’s birthplace and Szigetvár’s sister city), ‘a centuries-old foundation of peace and brotherhood (*yüzyıllara dayalı olarak bir barış ve kardeşliğin temeli*)’ (Milliyet 2016, my translation)? And what foreclosures of historical perspective have resulted from this transmogrification?

While the triple nationalization of Szigetvár is a particularly vivid feature of the Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Park, commemorations of the Siege are not new. The tale of Zrinski’s valiant, doomed defence of Szigetvár’s fortress was enshrined as a cornerstone of Hungarian national memory over several centuries following the battle. In particular, the panegyric *Siege of Sziget* (*Szigeti veszedelem*), written in 1648–1649 by Zrinski’s great-grandson, Miklós Zrínyi, is widely considered to be the first epic poem in Hungarian and a foundational text of Hungarian literature, though general enthusiasm for the poem only coalesced in the nineteenth century (Gömöri 2011, xv). Zrinski’s valour also became an object of Croatian national sentiment in the nineteenth century, an era of proliferating nationalisms across the Dual Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. A narrative account was crucial in this moment of nationalization, as well: the opera *Nikola Šubić Zrinski*,⁵ written by Ivan Zajc and librettist Hugo Badalić and first performed in Zagreb in 1876 (Batušić 1993; Blažević and Coha 2008; Marković 2014; Neubauer 2011). Finally, although the Siege of Szigetvár has generally played a less prominent role in Ottoman-Turkish historiography and Turkish national memory (but see Börekçi 2019), details surrounding the battle – Süleyman’s death, especially – have attracted more substantial interest in recent years as part of the broader reintegration of Ottoman legacies into contemporary Turkish nationalism, known popularly as ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ (Batuman 2014; Fisher-Onar 2009; Walton 2010, 2016, 2017).

Over the remainder of this essay, I plumb the politics of memory and memory of politics that have fuelled public pride and commemoration of the Siege of Szigetvár and its protagonists. My basic argument is that ethnolinguistic nationalism constitutes a flexible ‘collective framework of memory’ (Halbwachs 1992, 40) that recasts both Süleyman and Zrinski as commensurate objects of historical pride. I pursue and unsettle these sanitized, nationalized collective memories of the Sultan and the Viceroy by tracing their conjugations across several other sites of memory, including Miklós Zrínyi’s poem, Ivan Zajc’s opera, and the popular Turkish television serial, *The Magnificent Century* (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*). Throughout this itinerary, I rely on the hermeneutic method that I describe in the introduction as ‘textured historicity’: the embodied encounter between a subject in the present and objects that convey the past, with the aim of attending to the possible futures that such objects might yet entail (see also Walton 2016). By cultivating textured historicity in relation to the Siege of Szigetvár, I mine counter-histories and counter-memories (cf. Nora 1989, 23) that the triumvirate nationalization of the Siege has ‘silenced’ (Trouillot 1995). In particular, I attend to how enmity and figures of the ‘enemy’ (Mouffe 2000) create both tensions and thundering silences in nationalized memories of Szigetvár, the Sultan, and the Viceroy.

Three post-imperial landscapes of memory

During my first visit to Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Park, the hypnotic busts of the two former adversaries, the Sultan and the Viceroy, spurred me to reflect on Chantall Mouffe's (2000) arguments concerning antagonism, agonism, and the role of the 'enemy' in political life. Within the landscape of memory that the park articulates, the imperial military antagonism between Süleyman and Zrinski is almost entirely muted. From a Mouffe-ian perspective, the park curates a revisionist project of liberal internationalist pluralism, according to which bygone imperial enmity is recast as friendship among nation-states. For critics of liberalism such as Mouffe, such projects are necessarily depoliticizing: 'What such a pluralism misses is the dimension of the *political*. Relations of power and antagonisms are erased and we are left with the typical liberal illusion of a pluralism without antagonism' (Ibid.: 20, emphasis in original). With Mouffe's point in mind, the politics of the past that defines the Friendship Park achieves greater clarity: Internationalist pluralism redeems and domesticates the conflicts and violence of the imperial past by depoliticizing them for the national present. Süleyman and Zrinski, bygone imperial enemies, become equivalent, 'friendly' post-imperial national heroes, whose massive likenesses are able to reside harmoniously side-by-side.

The Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Park is not the only site of memory in Szigetvár – indeed, it is a recent, peripheral addition to the city's commemorative landscape. Elsewhere in Szigetvár, memories of the Siege, the figure of Zrinski, and the Ottomans are configured rather differently. Zrinski himself is omnipresent in the city. During my exploration of Szigetvár, I counted no less than five statues and busts of him, as well as two of his great-grandson, and the city's central square is, unsurprisingly, named 'Zrínyi tér.' The fortress itself – known as Zrínyi Castle – is the town's signature site of memory and nationalized heritage. Within the walls of the citadel, Zrinski and his troops' heroic, if futile, resistance is the focus of the pedagogical aspects of the site, especially in the small museum located within a former mansion in the fortress' courtyard. While the specific post-imperial landscape of memory within the Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Park is one of internationalist pluralism, the more prevalent post-imperial landscape of memory throughout the city is that of monumental, nationalist heroism, according to which erstwhile antagonists are either demonized or erased entirely.

Szigetvár's Ottoman past, which lasted for over 125 years following the Siege, is subject to yet another landscape of memory. In general, the city's Ottoman heritage is both muted and rendered in a different idiom than its Habsburg past. Outside of the Friendship Park, Szigetvár is devoid of monumental, heroic depictions of Süleyman and the Ottomans. In the museum spaces of the fortress, Ottomans are consistently described in a language of political-military enmity as foreign invaders, intruders, and conquerors. On the other hand, the Ottoman-Turkish era of Szigetvár is the object of what we might call ethnological depoliticization, particularly in the space of the 'Turkish House Museum' (*Török Ház Muzeum/Türk Evi Müzesi*), a small institution located in one of the city's few remaining Ottoman-era structures. The Turkish House Museum's main exhibit is a rendering of a sixteenth century Ottoman domestic space, complete with life-size mannequins in period costume, sharing ersatz Turkish coffee and sipping from empty bowls of soup. In contrast to the monumental landscape of memory that surrounds Zrinski and the Siege, the representational practices of the Turkish House Museum figure the Ottoman past of Szigetvár

as a bygone era of cultural and religious alterity that can be appreciated through aestheticized viewership precisely because it does not bear on the present.

Elsewhere in Szigetvár, the Ottoman era is subject to more thorough forms of erasure and silencing. Other than the Turkish House and the fortress' fortifications, there are few remaining Ottoman structures in the town. Several of those that have persisted no longer retain their original forms and functions. The minaret of former Mosque of Süleyman (*Szulejmán szultan dzsámija*) inside the fortress has been decapitated, and the space is now occasionally devoted to workshops and lectures. Elsewhere, the Church of Saint Roch (*Szent Rókus-templom*), a baroque house of worship that stands near the centre of the town on Zrínski Square, subtly gestures to the disavowed Ottoman past. To the architecturally-inclined eye, the church's ogee window arches, which encase a lattice-work of smaller circular apertures, suggest the structure's origins. Beside the main door, a small plaque reveals that the church was initially founded as the Ali Pasha Mosque in 1589 CE (Figure 2).

In summary, we can identify at least three distinct, overlapping landscapes of memory in Szigetvár: a landscape of internationalist pluralism, which redeems imperial conflict and violence by promoting modes of commemoration that promote harmony among nation-states; a landscape of monumental nationalism, which recontextualizes imperial figures as



Figure 2. The Church of Saint Roch, formerly the Ali Pasha Mosque, in Szigetvár. Photograph by author.

national heroes; and a landscape of erasure and silencing, which domesticates problematic pasts by enclosing them in 'safe' spaces such as the museum or obliterating them entirely. Each of these landscapes of memory achieves the depoliticization of the imperial past by muting enmity between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. Enmity is recast as harmony among nations, obscured in the shadows of national heroes who are no longer defined in relation to their erstwhile enemies, domesticated through musealization, or silenced entirely.

Mediating the siege: conjugations of religion and nationalism

With its epic dimensions – the disparity in the number of attacking and defending forces, and a broader context in which the Ottomans were viewed as a mortal threat to European Christendom in general and Vienna in particular – the Siege of Szigetvár was tailor-made for retelling and re-visualizing. And, indeed, the Siege has incited discourse since shortly after the clamour of the Ottoman mortars aimed at the fortress' walls fell silent. Ottoman and Persian miniaturists painted delicate depictions of the Siege, many of which are held in the collections of Istanbul's Tokapı Palace. European painters also took up the theme eagerly – the most famous rendering of the Siege is probably the eponymous canvass by the Romantic painter Johann Peter Krafft, from 1825. The many literary treatments of the battle by Christian-European authors include Brne Karnarutić's poem, *The Conquest of the City of Sziget (Vazetje Sigeta grada)*, written within a decade of the event; Pavao Ritter Vitezović's poem *Odiljenje sigetsko* (1684); and Karl Theodor Körner's drama *Niklas Graf von Zrinyi*⁶ (1812) (see Marković 2014). The most celebrated narrative representations of the Siege today, however, are Miklós Zrínyi's epic poem, *The Siege of Sziget (Szigeti veszedelem)* (1651) and Ivan Zajc's opera, *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* (1876).

Zrínyi's poem and Zajc's opera are crucial texts within Hungarian and Croatian national discourses, respectively. *The Siege of Sziget* is a fundament of Hungarian literature; *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* is likely the most famous Croatian-language opera. The events and characters that constitute each narrative are largely the same: the period immediately prior to the Siege and the Siege itself, with Zrinski and Süleyman in the leading roles, supported by their entourages and armies. Yet, despite these broad commonalities, Zrínyi's and Zajc's texts occupy two different ideological and discursive domains. Zrínyi's epic is firmly rooted in a Catholic-Christian *Weltanschauung* oriented toward questions of divine providence and human religious virtue, while Zajc's opera occupies the discursive domain of nationalism, in which honour, glory and sacrifice are oriented primarily toward imagined communities in and of this world.

The Siege of Sziget unfolds on an ontological plane in which divine and human action are intertwined, and where the former has a decisive impact on the latter. Zrínyi's homage to his great-grandfather brims with references to Greek mythology, the Homeric epics, the Bible, and various other predecessors in epic verse, and its overarching thematic concern is to illustrate the righteous Christian courage of the defenders of Szigetvár in their battle against the 'pagan' Ottomans. In the context of the poem, the attack on Szigetvár is an act of vengeance on the part of God against the impious Magyars, who 'do not walk on that path which His Son ordered' (Zrínyi 2011, 8; Part 1, Stanza 7). As retribution, God compels the Archangel Gabriel to spur Süleyman the Magnificent to war (Ibid., 10; Part 1, Stanza 20). The climax of the poem is staged as a battle between a ghoulish chthonic

host, summoned by the Ottoman army's resident warlock, and a fearsome brigade of angels, led by Gabriel (Ibid., 217 ff.; Part 14). A conflict between immaterial beings thus mirrors, and intersects with, the final assault on Szigetvár fortress and the deaths of Süleyman⁷ and Zrinski.

A fundamental yet unstable dichotomy between (faithful) Christian and (pagan) Turk (synonymous in this context with 'Muslim') structures the entire poem. Zrínyi is fascinated by miscegenation and misrecognition between Christians and Muslims, Magyars and Turks, the very categories of difference that propel the poem's narrative. The author repeatedly expresses wonder over uncanny intermingling on the battlefield: 'Everyone's foe is now before their eyes,/Turks and Christians are mixed together,/The groans of the dead, the screams of the living,/Mingle with a great dust cloud in the heavens' (Ibid., 48; Part 3, Stanza 70). And again: 'Swelled the camp, from everywhere they run,/Some wage great war between themselves;/Amongst alien nations, should they mix,/Everyone thinks his companion an infidel' (Ibid., 68-69; Part 4, Stanza 87). A key aspect of Zrínyi's literary triumph stems from the tension between the presentation of Zrinski and his comrades as the sole hope for 'Christendom' (Ibid., 75; Part 5, Stanza 24) and the inevitable blurring of selves and others in battle that this defence of Christian verity entails.

Throughout *The Siege of Sziget*, defence of the faith demands encounters on the battlefield that render the very identity of Christians and Muslims, allies and enemies, illegible. The two great heroes of the respective armies, Deli Vid and Demirhan, are frequently locked in intimate combat: 'The Saracen crushes to himself the *vajda*, and the *vajda* the Saracen, as well as he can' (Ibid., 159; Part 10, Stanza 40).⁸ Repeatedly, various characters blur these distinctions through subterfuge and camouflage – acts of what we might call military-religious drag. Early in the siege, two Magyar-Croat *vajdas*, Radivoj and Juranics, wreak havoc on the Ottoman camp disguised in garments plundered from perished Turkish soldiers (Ibid., 143; Part 9, Stanzas 40-41). Later, Deli Vid, the Christian Ajax of Szigetvár who also speaks Turkish, slips disguised into the Ottoman camp (Ibid., 202; Part 13, Stanza 3); Vid's wife, originally a Turk herself, seeks him out by aid of her mother tongue (Ibid., 203; Part 13, Stanzas 7-11). The anxieties of proximity and blurring of identities that arise throughout the battle's narrative are only resolved at the poem's end, when Zrinski and his band of defenders achieve apotheosis through annihilation. Zrinski's sacrificial warfare is a means to cultivating Catholic-Christian virtue, and atoning for the Magyars' impiety, which was the ultimate cause of the Ottomans' sortie to Szigetvár.

The Siege of Sziget achieves narrative propulsion by rendering the dichotomy of Christian and Muslim/pagan evanescent and unstable in the context of the battle only to re-establish it more dramatically in conclusion. This narrative dynamic, which both unsettles and reiterates religious categories of belonging and difference, has little to say concerning 'nations.' Certainly, Zrínyi refers to a variety of identities that later achieved degrees of nationalization: Croats, Magyars, Germans, Turks, Tartars. But the important point about these categories is their placement within the broader Christian/pagan binary. Like other early-modern writers, Zrínyi frequently uses 'Turk' and 'Saracen' as synonyms for 'Muslim,' and the difference between 'Croat' and 'Magyar' in his text is far less important than the bond of Christianity that unites the two. As the character Zrinski asserts in the poem, 'To fight, however, not just for any reason/We must, but for our beloved Christian homeland,/For our Lord, wives, children,/Our own honor and lives' (Ibid., 76; Part 5, Stanza 27). Nationality is conspicuous in its absence here and elsewhere in the poem. Yet the

ideological absence of nationalism within the poem did not preclude its eventual status as a national icon of Hungarian literature, which was cemented in the nineteenth century (Gömöri 2011).

Hungarian nationalists were not alone in turning to Zrinski in the nineteenth century – the budding Croatian nationalist movement also found an icon in the martyr of Szigetvár. Above all, Ivan Zajc's 1876 opera, *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski*, consolidated Zrinski's status as a Croatian hero. For Zajc and his librettist, Hugo Badalić, Zrinski's defence of Szigetvár provided the template for a myth of proto-national Croatian military glory. In contrast to Zrínyi's *Siege of Szigetvár*, in which the categories of 'Christian,' 'Magyar' and 'Croat' are largely interchangeable, Zajc and Badalić present Zrinski and his warriors as unmistakably Croatian in an ethnonational sense. Much of the drama of *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* derives from the agony that Zrinski, his wife Eva, their daughter Jelena, and his prospective son-in-law Lovro Juranić experience over the prospect of their imminent deaths, and the meaning of death in relationship to the commitments of family and nation. A clear sacrificial logic is at work in *Zrinjski*, but it is quite different than the theology of sacrifice in Zrínyi's *Siege*: Zrinski and his intimates sacrifice not only their lives, but also the pleasures and obligations of family, to the greater honour of the Croat nation. Sacrifice is less a means to religious virtue than to national pride, one that is expected not only of the masculine warrior Zrinski, but of his wife and daughter as well. The opera's famous final scene is a bombastic spectacle of this national sacrifice, as Zrinski and his troops sing the stirring '*U boj, u boj*' ('To battle, to battle') while marching to their certain deaths. In the version of *Zrinjski* that I saw in Zagreb in October 2016 – staged to commemorate the 450th Anniversary of the Siege of Szigetvár – a gigantic Croatian flag unfurled above the stage during this climax, as the opera's entire cast climbed a stairway at the back of the stage into a diaphanous curtain lighted from above – less a religious apotheosis than a national one.

The most dramatic contrast between Zrínyi's *Siege* and Zajc's *Zrinjski* relates to their treatment of the enemy, and the different relationships between the defenders of Szigetvár and their Ottoman assailants. Although Zrínyi portrays the Ottomans as 'pagans' and untrustworthy 'curs,' he also admires the valour of the Ottoman warriors, and praises Süleyman, averring that 'Perhaps never was there such a lord amongst the Turks' (ibid., 30; Part 2, Stanza 44). More abstractly, *The Siege of Sziget* pivots on the intimate, confusing proximity of Christians and Muslims, and there is no trace of Orientalist fascination with the Ottoman other. In *Zrinjski*, by contrast, the distinction between Croats and Turks is rigidly maintained. One eccentric feature of the opera is the separation between scenes featuring Süleyman and the Ottoman Army and those focusing on Zrinski and his entourage. The battle itself occurs after the narrative action of the opera, and Croats and Turks almost never appear on stage together. The only significant interaction between the antagonists occurs when Sokullu Mehmet Pasha (Mehmed Sokolović), Süleyman's Grand Vizier, unsuccessfully attempts to persuade Zrinski to surrender. Scenes focusing on Süleyman and his advisors employ a variety of Orientalist tropes, including that of the harem – the version of the opera I attended featured a lengthy 'Oriental' dance in the harem, in which three women wrapped in thick black scarves performed a *pas de trois* while Süleyman smoked a hookah stoically to the side (see also Wolff 2016, 5–7). In contrast to *The Siege of Sziget*, *Zrinjski* vigilantly polices the separation between Croats and Turks; there is no mistaking the former for the latter here.

As befits its nineteenth century context, Zajc's opera focuses on the geopolitical, rather than theological, causes and consequences of the Siege of Szigetvár. While the political context in Zrínyi's poem is vague and subordinated to matters of divine justice and retribution, *Zrinjski* accentuates the status of Szigetvár as a border fortification on the route to Vienna and, hence, all of Europe. While the character of Süleyman in *The Siege of Sziget* is driven by religious motivations (as well as being an instrument of retribution on the part of the Christian God), Süleyman in *Zrinjski* is obsessed with Vienna as a worldly object of desire and military aspiration. Concomitantly, Zrinjski and his Croat companions are presented as indispensable defenders of Christendom in a geopolitical, rather than theological, sense, and Croatia is recast as a nation that bears unique responsibility for the defence of 'Christian Europe,' the *Antemurale Christianitatis*. As Tanja Marković (2014, 10–11) has pointed out, Zajc and Badalić 'Croaticized' the names and identities of the defenders of Szigetvár while also shoring up their loyalty to the Habsburg Empire, and, *mutatis mutandis*, 'Europe' at large.

Zajc's *Zrinjski* has served nationalist ends through its contexts of performance as well. The first performance of the opera, in 1876, took place in Zagreb's Old City Hall, the initial home of nascent Croatian National Theatre. A century later, during the 'Croatian Spring' (*Hrvatsko proljeće*) – the movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s that contested Belgrade's political-economic dominance in Yugoslavia, and advocated the distinctiveness of Croatian national identity – *Zrinjski* experienced a minor renaissance. A friend in Zagreb recounted to me the excitement that accompanied a performance of the opera that he attended as a child in his hometown, the Dalmatian city of Šibenik – *Zrinjski's* climactic finale was one of the few contexts in which one could see a Croatian flag at the time, and was greeted with jubilation on this basis alone. Finally, *Zrinjski* has enjoyed a general revival since Croatian independence in 1991. The opera is now regularly staged at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb, an exquisite Baroque Revival building that first opened in 1895 and remains one of the city's most recognizable landmarks. When I arrived at the Theatre to attend a performance of *Zrinjski* in October 2016, I was greeted by a column of honour guards in historical regalia. The well-attended performance was sponsored by the Brethren of the Croatian Dragon (*Braća hrvatskoga zmaja*), a neo-Masonic Croatian nationalist organization dedicated especially to memory of the Zrinjski family. Two senior members of the Brethren greeted the audience prior to opening curtain with a salute to Zrinjski as a paragon of Croatian national virtue (Figure 3).

Fascination with both the figure of Zrinjski and the opera *Zrinjski* continue to wax today. Some of the more peculiar renditions of the opera's score have taken place in Japan, where the anthem '*U boj, u boj*' has become a unlikely staple for glee clubs.⁹ Enthusiasm for Zrinjski in Croatia has been robust recently. In November 2018, one of Croatia's major newspapers, *Večernji list* (2018), published a special issue of its magazine entitled 'Nikola Šubić Zrinjski: The Hero of Siget who Changed History' (*Nikola Šubić Zrinjski: Sigetski Junak koji je Promijenio Povijest*). One article in the collection focuses entirely on Zajc and Badalić's opera, while another details unexpected versions of the Siege in comic strips and novels. Generally, the editors of the issue walk a thin line between the ideological principles of internationalist pluralism that I outlined above and the status of Zrinjski as the paradigmatic Croatian warrior. One essay avers that 'Zrinjski does not belong solely to either the Croatian or the Hungarian nation' (Šokčević 2018, 27, my translation), while several others discuss Turkish public memory of the Siege. Yet the special issue also



Figure 3. Members of the Zrinski Guard pose outside the Croatian National Theatre, Zagreb, before the 450th Anniversary performance of Ivan Zajc's opera *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* (October 2016). Photograph by author.

salutes the reverberations of Zrinski's warlike valour in the most recent military conflict in Croatia, the Homeland War (*Domovinski Rat*) that accompanied the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. One article in the collection features an image of the iconic water tower of Vukovar, the city in eastern Slavonia that was subjected to a lengthy siege during the war, accompanied by the following text: 'We can perceive reflections of the heroism of the commander of Siget in the tragic siege of Vukovar during the Homeland War' (Krušelj 2018, 14, my translation).

Recent interest in the Siege of Szigetvár is by no means limited to contemporary Croatian popular discourse.¹⁰ While 'Zigetvar' has generally played a less prominent role in Turkish national mythology, 'Neo-Ottomanism,' the recent revival of interest in and attachment to the Ottoman Empire (Walton 2010, 2016, 2017) has sanctioned new representations of Süleyman and the Siege as objects of memory. The most influential mass media portrayal of Süleyman in recent years has surely been the serial television soap opera, *The Magnificent Century* (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*) (Carney 2014). After four seasons and 139 episodes, *The Magnificent Century* ended in 2014, though its afterlife in syndication is robust, both in Turkey and globally.

The final scene of the series, which depicts Süleyman's valedictory speech, his death, and his journey into the afterlife, takes place directly outside of the Fortress of Szigetvár, which is seen consumed by flames in the background. Though visibly deteriorating, Süleyman – played with gravitas by Halit Ergenç – emerges from his tent for a final time. The Sultan's advisors are not sanguine about the possibility of capturing the fortress soon,

but Süleyman insists: 'Szigetvár is exceptionally important to me. Szigetvár is not merely some fortress in the hands of the infidels. Szigetvár is my belief, my hope' (my translation).¹¹ He then turns to the assembled Janissary corps:

My lions! You who raise your swords in the name of God the Exalted, who embody the spirit and breathe the air of the Prophet Muhammad! Utter the name of God (*Besmele çekip*) one final time and crush the infidels! With God's permission, today will be our day! God, prayers, and the winds are at our backs! Victory and heaven have been decreed for us! I have faith that before tomorrow dawns, Szigetvár will fall! (my translation).

The conclusion of *The Magnificent Century* is overladen with religious and nationalist symbolism and allegory. Süleyman is cast as an embodiment of military Muslim valour, and the Siege of Szigetvár is an occasion for the realization of this valour. In this respect, the final episode of *The Magnificent Century* articulates themes that are not entirely distant from those of Zrínyi's *Siege of Sziget*. Simultaneously, Süleyman and his army embody an emboldened, Neo-Ottoman Turkish nationalism, one which celebrates the Ottoman past as an object of prideful memory and disregards the truncated borders of Turkey as a nation-state (Walton 2016). As nationalist allegory, *The Magnificent Century* shares an ideological palette with Zajc's *Zrinjski* according to which of military sacrifice and honour are constitutive of nationhood. Finally, *The Magnificent Century* also mutes national-religious enmity even as it glorifies national-religious heroism – although Süleyman's final call to arms decries and demonizes the 'infidels' (*kafirler*), the specific enemy remains vague, unspecified. While earlier scenes sketch the imperial geopolitical context of the Siege of Szigetvár, Zrinjski is only mentioned in passing, and the enemy is abstract, invisible, and only imputed by the conflagration in the final scene's backdrop. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to imagine this Süleyman standing calmly beside the Zrinjski of Zrínyi or Zajc. The double statues of Süleyman and Zrinjski in the Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Park, with which I began this essay, embody a fantasy of reconciliation and international amity that potentially contradicts other, more militarized, nationalist memories of the Sultan and the Viceroy.

By way of a conclusion: earthly remains across national borders

Although Süleyman and Zrinjski perished within a day of each other in Szigetvár, their worldly peregrinations were not over. Aware of the bloodshed that often accompanied sultanic succession in the Ottoman Empire, Sokullu Mehmet Paşa concealed Süleyman's death until his heir could ascend to the throne uncontested. Although Süleyman's body returned to Istanbul for burial, his heart, liver, and sundry organs were interred in Turbék, just outside of Szigetvár (Ágoston 1991; Smith 2014). Süleyman's two tombs, one in the cemetery of the eponymous Sülemaniye Mosque Complex in Istanbul and the other in the Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Park, index the dispersion of his earthly remains.

Zrinjski's body was also destined for disintegration; ironically, Mehmed Sokullu Paşa was also responsible for his dismemberment. After the Ottomans seized Szigetvár, Zrinjski's corpse was decapitated, and the Pasha sent Zrinjski's head to his cousin Mustafa, the Pasha of Budin (Buda) (Šestak 2016, 17). Zrinjski's severed head continued to travel: Mustafa sent it as a gruesome warning to a Habsburg general in the city of Győr, who eventually conveyed it to Zrinjski's son Juraj IV Zrinjski (Ibid.). Zrinjski's head finally received a respite from its travels when it was interred in the family crypt, located in a Pauline monastery just outside the Zrinjski family seat of Čakovec, today a provincial city in northern Croatia. The

remainder of Zrinski's remains were not nearly so perambulatory. They stayed in Szigetvár, where a small tombstone within the fortress walls now commemorates them.

The tale of the four tombs of the two protagonists of Szigetvár, the Sultan and the Viceroy, suggests a fitting, evocative conclusion to this essay. During their lifetimes, Süleyman and Zrinski may well have envisioned their posthumous disintegrations – such dismemberments were not uncommon at the time, after all (see Feichtinger and Heiss 2013). The future dismemberment of the polities they served, on the other hand, would have been more difficult to envision, and the national borders that have created new partitions on the former frontier of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires would have been unimaginable. The fact that both Süleyman and Zrinski are now buried in two different nations apiece (three total) exerts a morbid fascination that deeply unsettles the verities of nationalist geographies. I cannot think of a more visceral illustration of what Mark Mazower has called 'the odd and implausible version of the past' (2004, 439) that underpins nationalism. Counter-histories and counter-memories of empire demand a perspective that is simultaneously more panoramic and more rooted in such specific sites, both telescopic and microscopic. If the Sultan, the Viceroy and the Siege of Szigetvár continue to conjure imperial pasts in unexpected ways, it is surely by virtue of such telescopic, microscopic operations in relation to histories, memories, and geographies.

Notes

1. The comparative literature on friendship parks is regrettably minimal. For a recent consideration of the heavily policed Friendship Park on the United States-Mexico border separating San Diego, California, and Tijuana, see Holslin (2019). Information on this park is also available at <https://www.friendshippark.org/home> (accessed 24 February 2019).
2. Zrinski (1508–1566) was a Habsburg nobleman of Croat ancestry and *Ban* (Viceroy) of Croatia during the latter part of his life. He is known by both the Croatian (Zrinski) and Hungarian (Zrínyi) versions of his name. In Croatian, he is also known by the epithet *Sigetški* ('of Siget'). Zrinski's great-grandson, the poet and military figure whom I also discuss in this essay, was also named Nikola Zrinski (1620–1664). For clarity's sake, I refer to the commander of Szigetvár as 'Zrinski' and his scion and chronicler as 'Zrínyi.'
3. The exact location of Süleyman's final resting place remains an archaeological mystery. Hungarian archaeologist Norbert Pap has conducted excavations near the park in search of the grave, with support from the Turkish government (Smith 2014).
4. President Erdoğan had planned to attend the events, but was distracted by the aftermath of the coup attempt of 15 July 2016 in Turkey. For background on the coup attempt, see Walton (2017, 35–37).
5. I follow Tatjana Marković's (2014, 5, n.1) preference for the older Croatian spelling 'Zrinjski' in reference to the opera, and the contemporary 'Zrinski' in relation to the historical figure.
6. Marijan Bobinac (2001) argues that Körner's theatrical treatment of the Siege of Szigetvár was a crucial link between earlier literary representations of the battle, particularly those in German, and Croatian nationalist interpretations of the Zrinski in the nineteenth century. See also Bobinac (2010), especially Ch. 4, 'Povijest i nacija u drami – Theodor Körner.'
7. In the poem, Zrínyi has his great-grandfather kill Süleyman personally. While this is an historical inaccuracy, it is unclear whether Zrínyi himself had access to the facts of the battle, and the final slaying of the Sultan by the Viceroy certainly makes for a more dramatic conclusion to the poem.
8. '*Vajda*,' a cognate of the Slavic '*voivode*' is a Hungarian term for 'warlord' or 'war-leader.'
9. A Croatian news report on the performance of '*U boj, u boj*' by a university choir in Japan is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WPpnBhl6rc> (accessed 23 January 2019).

10. Scholarship on the Siege and its aftermath is also booming. Early 2019 witnessed the publication of a massive edited volume on history and legacy of the battle, titled *The Battle for Central Europe: The Siege of Szigetvár and the Death of Süleyman the Magnificent and Nicholas Zrínyi (1566)* (Fodor 2019).
11. The final episode of *The Magnificent Century* is available on Youtube at <http://muhtesemyuzyilenglish.blogspot.de/2014/06/muhtesem-yuzyil-last-episode-translation.html> (accessed 21 April 2017).

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