

# Letters



*Processional cross (reverse). Croatia. Second half of the 14th century. Gilded silver and enamel. (Monastery of St Francis of Assisi, Zadar; photograph Pixsell; Alamy Stock Photo).*

## Croatia across borders

Sir, As the founding trustee of the London-based organisation the International Trust for Croatian Monuments, I was pleased to read the Editorial in the October issue, 'Croatia across borders' (p.1051), which was prompted by Beatrice Tanzi's article 'A new attribution to Giovanni Bellini: the "Virgin and Child" in Pag' (pp.1074–81). I thought that readers of *The Burlington Magazine* might like to have drawn to their attention a recent piece of good news about Croatia's medieval heritage. This is the return of a fourteenth-century processional cross to the Franciscan friary at Zadar, from which it was stolen in 1974. This gilded silver and enamel cross, which depicts the patron saints of Zadar, was purchased in good faith at auction by the Lia family, who have generously returned it to its original home. The cross was first identified by the art historian Donal Cooper in 2009, when it was in the Amedeo Lia Museum in La Spezia. Anyone interested in the Franciscan heritage of Croatia should read his chapter 'Gothic Art and the Friars in Late Medieval Croatia 1212–1460' in the book *Croatia: Aspects of Art, Architecture and Cultural Heritage*, published by Frances Lincoln, London, in 2009.<sup>1</sup> More information about the International Trust for Croatian Monuments, including ways of supporting its projects, can be found at [www.croatianmonuments.org](http://www.croatianmonuments.org).

JADRANKA, LADY BERESFORD-PEIRSE

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the cross, published while it was still missing, see M. Kovačević: 'Ophodni križ – još jedan anžuvinški "ex voto" u Zadru?' ('Processional cross – another Angevin "ex voto" in Zadar?'), *Radovi Instituta za Povijest Umjetnosti* 31 (2007), pp.29–42.

Sir, In your Editorial 'Croatia across borders' in the October issue you state that in 2019 Dubrovnik received 'almost 1.5 million visitors, more than either Venice or Barcelona'. To this should have been added 'per head of population'. According to statistics published by [statista.com](https://www.statista.com), in 2019, the pre-Covid high point, Venice received 5.5 million visitors, or around twenty-one tourists per head of the approximately 260,000 residents of the Comune. Dubrovnik's 1.5 million visitors in 2019 equates to thirty-six visitors per head of its population of around 42,000. In terms of pressure on the city's historic fabric you are right to observe that Dubrovnik is exceptional – the figure of thirty-six places it far ahead of other popular European city tourist destinations: second placed are not only Venice but also Bruges and Rhodes, each with twenty-one visitors per head of their population in 2019. It is worth observing, however, that if the figures were to be calculated using only the population of the historic centre of Venice – which is what most tourists come to see – then the city is in a league of its own: with around 51,000 permanent residents in 2019 it had approximately 107 visits per head of its population.

HARRY WEBSTER

## Jan van Eyck's 'Crucifixion' and 'Last Judgment'

Sir, In the July issue (pp.804–06), Larry Silver published his review of *Jan van Eyck's Crucifixion and Last Judgment: Solving a Conundrum*. I write now not to challenge Silver's various opinions about the conclusions of the book, to which he is entitled, but to direct your attention to two mistakes in the review that have considerable consequences for the book's main arguments. I contacted Larry Silver about this, and he agrees that it is important to correct his mistakes in *The Burlington Magazine*. First, the rediscovered fragmentary Middle Dutch texts on the original frames of the paintings are translations of the Latin pastiglia biblical texts surrounding the paintings on the covers of the frames. These texts are not a prayer, as stated by Silver. This is important to understand as passages from Deuteronomy, Revelation and Isaiah (the last not mentioned by Silver) thus are presented in the vernacular for those venerating the Miraculous Bleeding Host relic at the church of Sts Gudula and Michel in the fifteenth century. In appendix C of the book, two Belgian university linguistic specialists, Frank Willaert and Luc De Grauwe, explain that the Middle Dutch texts feature elements of the Brabant (i.e., Brussels) dialect. Secondly, Silver wrongly noted that the Miraculous Bleeding Host relic was presented by Pope Eugenius IV to Duke Philip the Good and installed at the church of Sts Gudula and Michel in Brussels in 1438, when in fact this relic was given in 1433 and installed then at the duke's chapel adjacent to his palace in Dijon. It was remnants of another Miraculous Bleeding Host, purportedly desecrated in Brussels in 1370, that were placed in a reliquary in a chapel in the Church of Sts Gudula and Michel in 1436–38, not in 1435 as Silver says. It was this latter relic that was favoured with multiple indulgences by Pope Eugenius IV, a privilege not associated at the time with the Dijon relic. These mistakes are important to correct as they have considerable implications for the further argumentation in the book of various issues of history, religion, and devotional practice at the time.

MARYAN AINSWORTH