

# How Vitezovic read Mrnavic

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## Summary

*Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo* (1703) by Pavao Ritter Vitezovic (1652-1713) and *Vita Petri Berislavi* (1620) by Ivan Tomko Mrnavic (1580-1637), two significant works in the Croatian literary corpus written in Latin that deal with important historical characters and events from Croatian history with the explicit intent of preserving them from oblivion, have unjustifiably been omitted from the national literary canon. Following recent scholarly interest in these works in the last fifteen years or so, this paper reinvestigates and confirms intertextual references, with special emphasis on Vitezovic's relation to Mrnavic. The article focuses on determining traces and re-stylizations of parts of the *Vita* in around sixty lines of verse from the first canto of the *Two Centuries of Croatia in Mourning*, which are shown to be a complete episode, paradigmatic in its ideological concept for the whole poetic work.

**Keywords:** re-stylization; Vitezovic; Mrnavic; contraction, versification, expansion.

## Kako je Vitezović čitao Mrnavića

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### Sažetak

*Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo* (1703.) Pavla Rittera Vitezovića (1652.-1713.) i *Vita Petri Berislavi* (1620.) Ivana Tomke Mrnavića (1580.-1637.), dva značajna djela iz korpusa hrvatske književnosti na latinskom jeziku koja se zanimaju važnim povijesnim likovima i događajima iz hrvatske povijesti s izričitom nakanom njihova očuvanja od zaborava, ostala su dugo i neopravdano izvan nacionalnog književnog kanona. Na tragu novijih znanstvenih zanimanja za ta djela tijekom posljednjih petnaestak godina članak preispituje i utvrđuje interferencije s posebnim osvrtom na Vitezovićev odnos prema Mrnaviću. U tom smislu članak se fokusira na utvrđivanje tragova i prestilizaciju dijelova *Životopisa* u šezdesetak stihova iz prvog pjevanja *Dva stoljeća plačne Hrvatske*, koji se pokazuju cjelovitom epizodom, paradigmatičnom po svom idejnom konceptu za cijeli spjev.

*Cljučne riječi:* kanon; prestilizacija; Vitezović; Mrnavić; Berislavić.

### Introduction

Pavao Ritter Vitezovic, the first professional Croatian literary author and polymath who lived at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, authored numerous works in Latin and in the vernacular. Traces of other authors in his published and unpublished works, both his older compatriots as well as European authors, speak decidedly in favor of Vitezovic being widely educated and well-read. Among these names, Ivan Tomko Mrnavic, an immensely educated and prolific author who was active up to the third decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, stands out in a special way. Besides Mrnavic's *Life of Petar Berislavic* (*Vita Petri Berislavi*)<sup>1</sup> being Vitezovic's inspiration for the sixty or so hexameters

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1 IVAN TOMKO MRNAVIC, *Vita Petri Berislavi Bosnensis episcopi Vesprimensis. Dalmatiae Croat. Slauon. Bosnaeque bani*, Venice, 1620; *Vita Petri Berislavi - Životopis Petra Berislavića*, translated by Tamara Tvrtkovic. Croatian Institute of History - Museum of the City of Trogir, Zagreb - Trogir, 2008. Hence-

in the poetic work *Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo* (*Two Centuries of Croatia in Mourning*), which is the focus of this paper, Vitezovic also mentioned Mrnavic by name in his earlier works. Along with other information in his *Chronicle* for the year 1630, Vitezovic noted that Ivan Tomko Mrnavic, the bishop of Bosnia and lector of Zagreb, of royal descent, who wrote many beautiful books, was living at the time.<sup>2</sup> Such credit - in every sense atypical for a chronicle entry - was not made by Vitezovic for any other literary author. From it, we can confidently decipher that he valued Mrnavic and his writing, and even the books he had in mind. In fact, the note about Mrnavic's royal descent ("Kralevfkoga pokolenja") in the chronicle summary points to a book with an inauthentic genealogy, *Indicia vetustatis et nobilitatis familiae Marciae vulgo Marnavitiae*,<sup>3</sup> and the specified year to an extremely valued collection of saints' biographies from Illyricum, *Regiae sanctitatis illyricanae foecunditas*, which was printed in 1630. Vitezovic mentioned the same book by name in *Croatia rediviva* (1700) (*Croatia Revived*) in which he projected his vision of Croatia almost onto the whole area of the Roman province of Illyricum. However, he noted the long form of the title from memory, and therefore, instead of *foecunditas* being the last word in it, he wrote *nobilitas*, leading Marotti<sup>4</sup> to think of a conflation with Mrnavic's hagiographic title *Unica gentis Aureliae Valeriae Salonitanae Dalmaticae nobilitas*.<sup>5</sup> Vitezovic was actually referring to the claim that Austria was also part of Illyricum, which Mrnavic had laid out in the Dedication of his work to Ferdinand III, Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>6</sup>

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forth referred to in the paper as *Vita*, and as VPB with the corresponding page number after citations.

- 2 "1630 [...] Shvilje ovo vreme Ivan Tomko Mernyavich Biskup Boffanfki Lector Zagrebacski, Kralevfkoga pokolenja, ki je vnoge lipe Knyige popifal." PAVAO RITTER VITEZOVIC, *Kronika aliti spomen vsega svieta vikov u dva dela razredjen, koterih prvi drzi od pocetka svieta do Kristusevoga porojenja drugi od Kristusevoga porojenja do ispunjanja leta 1690.*, Zagreb, 1696, p. 189.
- 3 IVAN TOMKO MRNAVIC, *Indicia vetustatis et nobilitatis familiae Marciae vulgo Marnavitiae*, Rome, 1632.
- 4 BOJAN MAROTTI, *O preidevanje latinskoga izvornika i o nekim osobitostima hrvatskoga prijevoda*, in: PAVAO RITTER VITEZOVIC, *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske - Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*, Edited and translated by Zrinka Blazevic and Bojan Marotti, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 2019, pp. 295-329.
- 5 IVAN TOMKO MRNAVIC, *Unica gentis Aureliae Valeriae Salonitanae Dalmaticae nobilitas*, Rome, 1628.
- 6 SAME, *Regiae sanctitatis illyricanae foecunditas*, Rome, 1630.

In motivating a Habsburg, who was at the same time the Croatian-Hungarian King, to turn his foreign policy interests towards those regions of Illyricum under Ottoman control, Vitezovic verified his political conception, especially as the spatial vision of Illyricum was similar to that found in Mrnavic's work and in *Croatia Revived*.

*Plorantis Croatiae* is Vitezovic's elegiac epic composed of 2792 hexameters, in which Croatia personified narrates the troubles that befell her during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Her first-person lamentation - about battles and wars on land and sea, especially about the Turkish devastations, about her bans, known and unknown sons who bravely defended her and died for her, about lost fortresses, plagues, and natural disasters - follows the chronology of events. With years noted next to some concisely described events, Kombol saw it as "a sort of poetic chronicle."<sup>7</sup> It was published in Zagreb in 1703 and dedicated to Count Ivan Ferdinand Josip Herberstein (1663-1721), the vice-president of the Court's War Council in Graz. Vitezovic knew him from the time they had worked together on the Border Commission with Turkey when he was hoping for a more favorable outcome of the preparations for his homeland. In his dedication to Herberstein, Vitezovic wrote, among other things, that he still could not believe that the most beautiful regions from the Sana River to the Vrba River continued to remain under the Turks.<sup>8</sup> The poet's betrayed expectations undoubtedly added to and defined the final tone of the poetic work. However, Vitezovic did not falter in his commitment, and according to Bratulic, he published his poetic work "seeing that he would have to widen the circle of those who could help determine secure borders"<sup>9</sup> after some subsequent war and in more favorable conditions. He had published the serious treatise *Croatia rediviva* with the same aim a year earlier, whose political ideas about Croatia's territory were not only encompassed by *Plorantis Croatiae*, but also inspired Croatian political thought up to and including the 19<sup>th</sup> cen-

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7 MIHOVIL KOMBOL, *Poviest hrvatske književnosti do Narodnoga preporoda*, MH, Zagreb, 1945, p. 273.

8 P. R. VITEZOVIC, *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske - Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*, p. 27.

9 JOSIP BRATULIC, "Oživjela Hrvatska u obzoru života i djela Pavla Rittera Vitezovića", in: PAVAO RITTER VITEZOVIC, *Oživjela Hrvatska*, Golden marketing, Zagreb, 1997, pp. 7-40.

ture.<sup>10</sup> However, the borders remained the same, Vitezovic's *Plorantis Croatiae* was forgotten and up until recently, it has remained outside the more serious interests of the scientific community.

Recent interest in Vitezovic and his works opens the possibility of wider reception, most particularly in the critical edition of the *Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*, that is, *Two Centuries of Croatia in Mourning*, which includes a Croatian translation, accompanying commentary and scholarly papers.<sup>11</sup> Taking the poeticized historical events, crucial for national survival, as a starting point, the introductory study "The Birth of a National Epic: *Two Centuries of Croatia in Mourning*"<sup>12</sup> by Zrinka Blazevic, the editor and translator, argues that according to its characteristics the poetic work is a prototype of a national epic.

One of the arguments for determining the type of poem that is of special interest for this paper is the argument for the formation of the characters of the Croatian bans. The author calls them viceroys and constructs them as fathers of the homeland who symbolize the political survival of the Croatian Kingdom.<sup>13</sup> Vitezovic may have used Mrnavic's literary creation Petar Berislavic as a role model for these characters. From what is presently known, the title of viceroy was first used, along with ban, in the collection *Pannoniae luctus* (1544),<sup>14</sup> whose elegiac tone, similar subject matter of Turkish conquests and lamenting point of view from the very title could have also inspired Vitezovic, as it did Mrnavic. In the context of shaping the character of the ban as an almost independent position with foreign policy

10 FR. HRVATIN GABRIJEL JURISIC, "Pavao Vitezović kao Latinist," Senj, vol. 22, 1995, p. 204.

11 P. R. VITEZOVIC, *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske - Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*, pp. 40-43.

12 ZRINKA BLAZEVIĆ, "Rađanje nacionalnoga epa: *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske*", in: P. R. VITEZOVIC, *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske - Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*, pp. 5-21.

13 ZRINKA BLAŽEVIĆ, *Ilirizam prije ilirizma*, Zagreb: Golden marketing i Narodne novine, 2008, p. 316.

14 In the unpaginated book of verses in Latin and Greek, Petar Berislavic is first named in the title of the poem *Petri Berislo episcopo Vesprimiensi et proregi Croatiae Jochanes Langus* by the author Johannes Langus, and then also by the editor who intervened in the original papal letter *Leo Papa X. Petro Berislo episcopo Wesprimiensi, provinciarum Dalmatiae et Croatiae proregi. Hieronymus Vietor, Pannoniae luctus quo principum aliquot, et insignium virorum mortes, aliique funesti casus deplorantur*, Krakow, 1544.

competencies, the author of the *Vita* tells of Petar's signet ring which he also used when officially dealing with foreigners (*apud suos externosque* [VPB, p. 4]), and in the letters of Pope Leo X to Petar, Mrnavic, along with the title of the bishop of Vesprim, adds the title of "governor of Illyricum" (*Illyrici Praetori* [VPB, p. 34]). The inclusion of the Illyrian ideologeme becomes clearer in the full title of the *Vita*, that is, *Vita Petri Berislavi Bosnensis, episcopi Vesprimensis, Dalmatiae, Croatiae, Slauoniae, Bosnaeque bani*, suggesting a territorial national space under the ban's competence, and a national and cultural Illyrianism constituted by one nation with one language in four old kingdoms, which, as a Saint-Jeromian idea, will be confirmed by the highest Vatican court in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century.

Ivan Tomko Mrnavic wrote and had *The Life of Petar Berislavic* printed in 1620, on the occasion of the centenary of Berislavic's death with the intent of keeping the memory of the great hero and ban alive, which had been enveloped in a "shameful silence" during the century.<sup>15</sup> In accordance with traditional genre conventions, the *Vita* presents its hero, a descendant of noble ancestors, from birth till death. Although no life period is omitted, the *Vita's* content, often imaginative and literarily convincing, is concentrated on Berislavic's life of, first court, and then Church and state obligations and business, the observance of which always enhanced his reputation and glory and, in his days as ban, also the envy and hatred of opponents. He dedicated it to abbot Juraj Draskovic (VPB, p. 3), the grandson of Nikola Istvanffy, who made available reference parts of the text from his grandfather's manuscript *Povijesti (Histories)*. The work and the author were appreciated by many even before Vitezovic. It suffices to mention Ivan Lucic, Jerolim Pastric, Pavle Andreis, Daniel Farlati,<sup>16</sup> until Alberto Fortis, without any proof in his text about Antun Vrancic, accused Mrnavic of plagiarizing a non-existing original that had supposedly been written by Vrancic.<sup>17</sup> When this accusation came into focus again, together with opposing views, at the time the national literary canon was being formed, Mrnavic and his numerous works in Croatian and Latin were not reprinted. Only after a reprint of the *Vita* with a Croatian translation was published in 2008, and the study *Fik-*

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15 I. T. MRNAVIC, *Vita Petri Berislavi - Životopis Petra Berislavića*, translation by T. Tvrtković, p. 3.

16 MIROSLAV PALAMETA, *Fikcionalnost Životopisa Petra Berislavića*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb - Split - Mostar, 2016, pp. 52-57.

17 *Same*, pp. 58-60.

*cionalnost Životopisa Petra Berislavića* (2016) (*The Fictionality of the Life of Petar Berislavic*) which in a detailed manner argues against the accusation and demasks the reasons for Fortis's deception,<sup>18</sup> have the conditions been created for a rehabilitation of the distorted perception which neither the author nor the work deserved.

Mrnavic's *Vita*, which has fulfilled its basic intent of wresting the name of ban Berislavic from oblivion, inspired a whole from line 106 to line 164<sup>19</sup> in Vitezovic's *Plorantis Croatiae*. By summarizing a few comprehensive episodes into concise hexameters, the poet still managed to preserve clear signals that indicate their origin.

## 1. The Battle of Dubica

Vitezovic's epic<sup>20</sup> introduces ban Berislavic at the moment of his victory over the Turks at Dubica on the August 16, 1513. Actually, this battle was not fought against regular Turkish troops, but against a

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18 While writing his text, Fortis had extensively used the biography of Antun Vrancic (in manuscript) written by the latter's cousin, a young Faust Vrancic, and which Fortis found in the Vrancic archive in Sibenik. In order to deflect anyone's suspicion, he accused Mrnavic of plagiarizing Antun Vrancic with vehement moral indignation right at the beginning of his own loose translation of Faust Vrancic's text into Italian. See in detail: M. PALAMETA, *Fikcionalnost Životopisa Petra Berislavića*, pp. 210-231.

19 The content from line 2638 to line 2639 has been taken from the *Vita*. "Inde Dobo, celsam Beriflavi stemmatis arcem /Praesidio privat nostro, Turcoque restaurat." ("Then from Dobo, the famed Berislavic's fort, Our crew went and the city returned to the Turks") P. R. VITEZOVIC, *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske - Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*, pp. 192-193. Even the first edition of *Plorantis Croatiae* mentions "Dobo" as the fortress of Berislavic's kin, which is either the poet's or merely a printing mistake. It should stand "Dobor", which is a fortress northeast of Dobo towards the Sava River, after which one branch of the Berislavic family is called Doborski. According to the *Vita*, it was liberated from the Turks by Petar after the death of Frane Berislavic, which is, in a historical sense, Mrnavic's fictional construct; Cf. M. PALAMETA, *Fikcionalnost Životopisa Petra Berislavića*, pp. 73, 74, 176-177, 241. At the time Vitezovic was writing his poetic work, the Dobor fortress was an insignificant place, but Dobo was known, especially because of an unsuccessful attempt by those who manned it to stop the breach of Eugene of Savoy towards Sarajevo, five or six years before *Plorantis Croatiae's* publication. Since Herberstein, to whom the poetic work was dedicated, was also among Eugene of Savoy's officers, it is entirely possible that this replacement was made by Vitezovic on purpose.

20 The analysis uses the critical edition: P. R. VITEZOVIC, *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske - Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*, pp. 40-43.

very numerous formation of *akindji*, military pillagers whose sudden and persistent incursions and devastation of enemy territory encouraged depopulation until their final conquest. This Turkish strategy proved to be very dangerous and effective, especially after the death of King Matthias Corvinus (1490), and thus, in the odd twenty years or so, the Battle of Dubica was one of the most significant military victories of a Croatian ban over the Turks. All existent domestic chronicles noted the event, just like Vitezovic's *Chronicle* from 1696<sup>21</sup> informs the reader that ban Petar Berislavic, together with his heroes and knights, killed two thousand Turks on Dubica field. The number of dead adversaries and other information points to the *History of the Hungarian Kingdom* by Nikola Istvanffy which reports the event in a single passage.<sup>22</sup> Vitezovic's chronicle entry could have derived from it, if not taken from Vramac's *Chronicle* where it can be found in the same form.<sup>23</sup>

Just like the whole epic, Vitezovic's five Latin verses dealing with this event are composed in a register of elevated lamentation, while the event itself is stylized by a string of synecdoches. In them, the poet's homeland laments its fate exposed to Turkish pillaging, yet simultaneously proud of its hero who defended her and mercilessly punished her oppressors.

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21 SAME, *Kronika aliti spomen vsega svieta vikov u dva dela razredjen, koterih prvi drzi od pocetka svieta do Kristusevoga porojenja drugi od Kristusevoga porojenja do ispunjanja leta 1690.*, p. 134.

22 "Et quum in provintia veniset, brevi occasionem virtutis fortitudinisque suae declarande fortuna ei obtulit. Nam, cum Turcae magno numero Savum traiecissent et regionem inter Savum et Hunnam fluvios (hunc a priscis Valdanum olim appellatum fuisse quidam putant) adiacentem passim popularentur ac ferro et igne vastarent. Colectis, quantis in re subitanea et tumultuaria potuit, copiis eos non procul ab arce et oppido Dubicensi ubi Hunna in Savum influit, adortus est, insignique edita pugna hostes fudit atque fugavit, et fugientes longe lateque persequutus, amplius duo millia eorum interfecit, captis quamplurimis et multo maxima parte in Savum demersa paucis natando evadentibus ita ut hostes audaciae perfidiaeque suae et violatorum induciarum cumulas poenas dedisse viderentur. Atque hac strage perculti, simul etiam qualicumque induciarum vi coerciti, excursionibus et praedis agendis aliquamdiu abstinerunt". NIKOLAUS ISTVANFFIUS, *Historia Regni Hungariae, post obitum gloriosissimi Matthiae Corvini regis Historiarum de rebus Ungaricis*, liber IV., Köln, 1622, p. 38.

23 ANTUN VRAMEC, *Kronika vezda znovich zpravljena kratka szlouenzkim jezikom*, Ljubljana, 1578, p. 53.



Excurrit Turcus Dubicensia rura superbus  
Et praedas iam victor agit, potiturus iisdem,  
Ni Beriflav Prorex hostem invasisset, et ipsum  
Fudisset ferro, rapidis mersisset et undis;  
Latronem nam praeda ingens et culpa gravabat.

the arrogant Turks invaded the villages around Dubica, already driving forth the victory loot. They would have pillaged even more if not for the valiant attack of Berislav viceroy who either with a sharp sword cut them down, or in swift waves drowned them: great loot and guilt always burden the robber.

It is obvious even at first glance that the factual template in the content of the quoted verses is not the same for Vitezovic's entry in the *Chronicle*. As neither the aforementioned passage from Istvanffius's *History* nor other available sources mention military plunder at all in the description of the battle, the only source that remains is Mrnavic's *Life of Petar Berislavic*, where the writer shaped a very extensive story about the whole event, exhaustively following available historical data, mainly very short reports, unprecise maps of the time, as well as the patterns of descriptions of John Corvinus's battles with the Turks by Bonfinius.<sup>24</sup> For all the information in these verses from Vitezovic, which otherwise looks fragmentary, short passages can also be extracted from Mrnavic's narrative, showing it to be their certain source.

The first of these implies that the devastation and pillaging was the main goal of the Turkish formation of twelve thousand soldiers under the command of Yunus Pasha after crossing the Una River: "(...) The Turks have suddenly invaded into upper Croatia from Bosnia and with quick incursions they combed those regions, made the flocks run away, captured and imprisoned a vast number of people found there and inflicted heavy damages and losses to the inhabitants."<sup>25</sup> Vitezovic's statement, "They would have pillaged even more" (*potiturus iisdem*), relates directly to the end of the siege of the fortress Blinja from Mrnavic's story, where the "champions locked themselves

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24 M. PALAMETA, *Fikcionalnost Životopisa Petra Berislavića*, p. 123.

25 I. T. MRNAVIC, *Vita Petri Berislavi - Životopis Petra Berislavića*, p. 11 (translated from Latin into Croatian by Tamara Tvrtkovic).

up with the more precious equipment."<sup>26</sup> Even though the Turks were hoping for greater loot, they had to pull back because of news that ban Petar Berislavic had crossed the Sava River from the north with an army and assumed a strategic position which would prevent them from returning the way they had planned:

August 15 arrived, the holy day of Ascension of the Virgin into the Heavens, when Petar, in the aforementioned valley where the Una flows into the Sava River, made camp in order to shield the flanks of the camp from two sides and to, at the same time, take away from the enemy the possibility of retreat.<sup>27</sup>

When the Turks saw that there were not even three thousand soldiers with the ban, they celebrated the next day's victory the whole night in advance. However, in the battle that lasted four hours, as the original precisely states, the Turks were completely crushed. Many of them were taken prisoner. Panic found its way into their ranks, and many non-swimmers found their deaths in the waves of the two rivers while trying to flee. The original does not give a precise number of dead, but only states that "A vast number of Turks fell by the sword, and many of them perished in the river" (VPB, p. 28). It is only here in Vitezovic's stylizations that his insistence on synecdoche in all four verses does not preserve clarity, as the Croatian translator took the parallel occurrence of dying by the sword and drowning in the waves as successive events experienced by the same subject.

## 2. Description of the winter of 1514

The next five verses deal with the cataclysmic winter cold which was killing people and cattle in northern Croatia in 1514. The description of unusual weather conditions, a staple of chronicle narrating, with Vitezovic being no exception, functionally and logically fits into the sorrowful intonation of the whole epic:

Rara nimis hinc, saevit hyems tam frigore multa  
Quam nive (qua tellus bis trino mense sepulta  
Plurima damna tulit) magna cum strage soluta  
Iumentorum hominumque penes. Sic durior Aether  
Saeviit in miseros.

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26 *Same*, p. 12.

27 *Same*.

Even though later mild, the winter brought a great cold, and an abundance of snow (with which for six months even the earth was covered, inflicting damages), and bringing death to great numbers of both people and cattle. Even worse the wind whipped the poor.

Vitezovic's short description of the weather directly coincides with the description from *The Life of Petar Berislavic*. Immediately after the narration of the Battle of Dubica, Mrnavic described the snowy, frosty cold of the following winter as an introduction to the events in the wider area of the Kingdom, but first and foremost to explain the failure of the winter attack of the Bosnian Pasha on the city of Pozega and the Berislavic estates therein: "The next year, 1514, is remembered by an abundance of snow and by an intolerable cold, so that many people and a great number of cattle died because of snow drifts. Snow remained high for a full six months that year."<sup>28</sup>

Thus, Vitezovic only versified this description, which served to explain the king's monetary assistance to the inhabitants of Senj who had suffered at the hands of the Turks, intensifying the dimensions visually and tactilely with the frosty wind, a realistic depiction of the Bora in Senj. However, the content about Perény and the citizens of Senj, that the epic covers in the following lines of verse, concluding with line 123, have no direct connection to Mrnavic's *Vita*. Vitezovic's *Chronicle* also mentions them briefly in its entry for 1513.<sup>29</sup> This addition can only be comprehended on the level of the poet's idealogical political conceptions, which shall be discussed later.

Postquam melioribus auris  
Altior aethereo terram Sol igne foveret,  
Senonibus nostris infensi plurima Turcae

Damna patrant. Illis Rex succurrebat in aere:  
Sed Peren, ut Prorex simul et Capitaneus urbis,  
Deglubit Cives: tanto minus aptus honori,

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28 *Same*.

29 P. R. VITEZOVIC, *Kronika aliti spomen vsega svieta vikov u dva dela razredjen, katerih prvi drzi od pocetka svieta do Kristusevoga porojenja drugi od Kristusevoga porojenja do ispunjanja leta 1690.*, p. 134.

Quo minus est animi generosi: multa superbo  
Fortunae desunt bona, desunt omnia avaro.

After with a warmer air  
from the heavens, the Sun's torch warmed Almighty's earth,  
to our citizens of Senj those brutal foes, the Turks

inflicted damages without count. The king aided them with money,  
But Peren, the city captain and viceroy,  
defrauded the citizens. He was completely unworthy of honor,  
even less was he graced with a nobility of spirit. Little  
does Fortuna give to an arrogant man, but to a greedy one she gives  
nothing.

In the year indicated, Ambroz Peren was neither ban nor Senj's captain. He observed those duties shortly before ban Berislavic. The poet introduced this expansion here for several reasons, such as, intending to banish the idea that all Croatian bans were worthy persons, to contrast Peren with Berislavic, and place emphasis on Berislavic's selflessness, which the *Vita* mentions in several places, as well as introduce the citizens of Senj to verse, who were especially feared on the sea by both Turks and Venetians.

### 3. The siege of Sinj

The next episode about Yunus Beg, the Bosnian Pasha, or rather his incursion into the Cetinska Krajina region in 1516, his ferocious pressure on the Sinj fortress and the nameless hero, referred to only as the "citizen who was obliged"<sup>30</sup> (*amans Civis*), and who, feigning to be a defector, came before the Pasha and killed him, is a more expansive episode in the poetic work. Of course, this episode also includes the six final verses about the clearing of the province under the command of ban Berislavic who arrived after the Pasha's death and executed all the captured Turkish soldiers.

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30 The translator recomposed Vitezovic's hexameters into Croatian pseudo-hexameters which are traditionally based on six accents per verse. This demanding job of versification has sometimes required a looser translation. Because of this, in such cases this paper directly bases its English translation on the Latin text.

Post ea Junus-Beg Bossnae Praefectus ad amnem,  
 Cetina qui nobis, Nestum dixere priores,  
 Impositum ruppi castrum Sin nomine, forti  
 Marte premit, redigens in praedas omnia circum;  
 Donec amans Civis propria cum morte salutem  
 Exemit patriam; profugum simulatus, adivit  
 Barbarum et occidit. Quo facto, instanteque Bano,  
 Ad celerem dat terga fugam gens barbara, fama  
 Territa Proregis Beriflavi: cui bene nomen  
 Gloria lecta dedit: quoscumque is ceperat, omnes  
 Infixos palis avibus porrexit in escam;  
 Taliter exolvit poenas temerarius hostis.

After that Yunus Beg, the steward of Bosnia,  
 attacked the Sinj fort which lay on a cliff  
 next to the river called, by us, Cetina, and Nesta by ancestors.  
 Everyone from the surrounding land he forced with his sword into  
 slavery,  
 until the citizen who was obliged to redeem with his own death  
 the salvation of the homeland, feigning he was a defector, attacked  
 the barbarian and cut him down.<sup>31</sup> The viceroy arrived then,  
 and the barbarian tribe began to run in fear hearing the news about  
 Berislav viceroy, to whom bestowed a name  
 the glory he reaped. Every one of his prisoners  
 he put to the stake and gave to the birds to eat.  
 That was the punishment every careless enemy suffered.

The facts contained in these twelve hexameters Vitezovic certainly took from Mrnavic's *Vita*, where the same characters and events are narrated in the same time and place. Indeed, no other known written source could offer similar content or information coherent enough for its reconstruction. The text begins with a presentation of Berislavic's military operation of clearing Turkish units that had been plundering

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31 The Croatian re-composition of this text from line 128 to line 130, which reads, "Until the citizens themselves redeemed with their own death/the salvation of the homeland. Feigning to flee they/attacked the barbarians and cut them down (Sve dok građani sami ne otkupe vlastitom smrću/Spas domovine. Hinec da bježe, na bārbare oni/Nasrnu te ih posijeku)", completely deviates from the Latin original.

from the Cetina River to the Krka River while the ban was at the session of parliament in Pozun, and then a passage ensues from which Vitezovic took most of the information for his verses:

After a Turkish commander was killed in the siege of a very strong fortress, located down the Cetina River, and above Klis, called Sinj, by some soldier from the besieged fortress who vowed his life to the salvation of the homeland (and who, after leaving the fortress and pretending that he was a defector was brought before Yunus Beg, who was in turn impatient for information about the conditions in the fortress and careless, and so he was slaughtered before his own men, who immediately executed the soldier), the Turks were becoming discouraged. In fact, as soon as they learned that the ban was coming, whoever could, chose to flee. And all those he managed to capture, the ban put to the stake and left all around the tops of nearby hills for birds and beasts to eat.<sup>32</sup>

In all of Mrnavic's story, which does not even take up double the space of the quoted text, there are no historically confirmed events at all, as the study *The Fictionality of the Life of Petar Berislavic* concludes. It suffices to note that Yunus Beg was executed the following year, in 1517, far away from Sinj. Sultan Selim had him executed when they were returning from Egypt where they had suppressed a Mamluk revolt. In fact, Yunus Beg was not the pasha of the Bosnian Sanjak from 1515,<sup>33</sup> as the same year he assumed a high function in Constantinople. Accordingly, the whole Turkish conquest of the same year, not mentioned by any report, the heroism and the sacrifice of the anonymous defector, as well as the putting to the stake of the prisoners, were all interesting constructions by Mrnavic.

In the fictional story, presented in a string of analepses and catalepsies, Vitezovic first interfered with the chronological sequence of events in the initial verses where he also included his reconstruction of the military violence in the wider region, which the *Vita* does not even mention. He also focused the description and position of the

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32 M. PALAMETA, *Fikcionalnost Životopisa Petra Berislavića*, p. 144.

33 "Kad sultan 1514. diže vojsku na Perziju, pozove i bosanske spahije, koji pod vodstvom Junus bega zapute se u daleki svijet" ("When in 1514 the Sultan raised an army against Persia, he also called the sipahi of Bosnia, who under the command of Yunus Beg set out for the distant world"). SAFVET BEG BASAGIC-REDZEPASIC, *Kratka uputa u prošlost Bosne i Hercegovine (Od g. 1463.-1850.)*, own circulation, Sarajevo, 1900, p. 25.

fortress on a narrower space than it was in the original source and gave the river a Latin and a vernacular name, as he did in other such instances throughout the epic. Still, he soon abandoned the chronological sequence in the summary about the heroic undertaking of the anonymous defector who killed the Turkish commander. The summarization and versification processes are obviously being applied simultaneously. Therefore, Mrnavic's "soldier from the besieged fortress who vowed his life for the salvation of the homeland" in the epic becomes "the citizen who was obliged." Even though Vitezovic's narrational summarization of exhaustive events in just a few verses is a legitimate, and a completely appropriate procedure for the lamenting tone, it can sometimes be hard to comprehend, especially for a contemporary reader if the persons mentioned in the verses happen to be less familiar or the events are from a more distant past. Accordingly, the translator of *Plorantis Croatiae* into Croatian translated the narration of this undertaking in the plural, thinking that it was a synecdoche, just like in the verses about the Battle of Dubica, and which she wanted to eliminate here.

The arrival of the ban on the epic stage, introduced by the terror and flight of the enemy at the very mention of the ban's name, as in several other places in the *Vita*, inspired Vitezovic to play with the etymology of the ban's surname ('Berislav' as 'one who gathers or reaps glory').<sup>34</sup> In this way, he relaxed the presentation before revealing the terrifying notoriety of Berislavic in the bizarre executions of the captured pillagers, considering this, like Mrnavic, a quality every military leader should possess.

#### 4. The death of King Vladislav

The lament for King Vladislav in five hexameter lines, which is the next separate thematic whole for 1516, is full of tropes about a too-early-departure, the importance of the deceased and merciless death that makes no difference between kings and their subjects. Shaped thus in an ornate utterance it seems like a periphrasis or a chronicle entry about the death of any dignitary.

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34 Cf. footnote in: P. R. VITEZOVIC, *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske - Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*, p. 225.

Ast hoc ipso anno Vladiflavi tristia Regis  
Funera deploro; longa dignissimus ille  
Vita erat et fato meliore; sed impia Parca  
Non parcit, cum tempus adest fatale, vel ulli:  
Subditus et Princeps naturae debita solvit.

The same year I mourned King Vladislav's  
sad farewell. He was above all worthy  
of a long life and an even better fate, but the godless Parca  
upon the hour of death spares no one:  
both ruler and subject pay their debts to nature.

In fact, these verses, more than anything else, strongly suggest that their content comes from Mrnavic's *Vita*. Only the time stamp at their beginning, which links them to the previous episode about the imaginary Yunus Beg's winter incursion into the Cetina region the same year, in 1516, just like in the *Vita*, stands in the way of excluding that possibility.

## 5. The death of ban Petar

Vitezovic's borrowing from *The Life of Petar Berislavic* ends with the events surrounding the ban's heroic and tragic death. As opposed to the short summary in his *Chronicle*,<sup>35</sup> which was inspired by information from Vramac and Tomasic,<sup>36</sup> Vitezovic clearly uses the content of Mrnavic's fictional biography in *Plorantis Croatiae*. He only stood by dating the event in the year 1519, just like in his *Chronicle*, undoubtedly according to Tomasic.

At the beginning of the episode, Vitezovic introduces, in six lines of verse, a description of the ancient royal city of Knin, a powerful fortress from antiquity, which the noble family Nelipic made famous by defending it from mighty adversaries. These six lines are composed as a lament over the fate of that crucial Croatian fortress, which ac-

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35 P. R. VITEZOVIC, *Kronika aliti spomen vsega svieta vikov u dva dela razredjen, katerih prvi drzi od pocetka svieta do Kristusevoga porojenja drugi od Kristusevoga porojenja do ispunjanja leta 1690.*, p. 134.

36 IVAN TOMASIC, *Chronicon breve Regni Croatiae*, Arkiv za povjestnicu jugoslavensku/ ed. Ivan Kukuljevic Sakcinski, vol. 9, Zagreb, 1868.



According to Vitezovic, the Turks finally conquered the same year Berislavic died, even though its actual conquest happened in 1522.

Knin Arx insignis (Tininum dixere Latini)  
 In ripa Titii, quo vulgo Kyrka vocatur,  
 Condita magnifice, Nelepetis, regia dñde  
 Arte locique situ validissima, subdidit hosti  
 Captivum miseranda caput: nec Banus adesse  
 Tutandae poterat;

The beautiful fort of Knin (Tininum it was called by the Latins), which on the bank of Titii, called Krka by the people, has been superbly built, first owned by the noble family Nelipic, later by the King, by position and skill guarded, has bent its head to the enemy, the poor thing. The ban could not save it.

According to Vitezovic's verses, the city met its sad fate because the ban was not there to defend it, as he had already died in Pljesevica in an uneven fight with the Turks. Through the short narration on Knin, like with the content on Perény and the citizens of Senj, which also has no direct connection to the *Vita*, the poet highlighted his ideological concept about the symbolic value of cities and fortresses in marking the territory of the homeland.<sup>37</sup>

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37 "Therefore, the publication of *Croatia in Mourning*, with the financial support of Croatian social classes could be, on the one hand, interpreted as an attempt by representatives of the noble ruling oligarchy to ensure a representative and recognizably European model of historical memory, and on the other, to promote their own view of the political order of the Croatian Kingdom after the cessation of imminent Ottoman danger. This can be read most clearly from the symbolic status enjoyed in *Croatia in Mourning* by bans as deputy rulers (*proreges*) and the embodiment of the most important national political institution. Because, as a traditional component of the stratified political order, the function of the ban represents a symbol and a guarantee of its stability and an affirmation of the legalistic principle of political rule. The poetic emphasis on the virtues of bans in *Croatia in Mourning* also hints at the establishment of a new ethical and then political order, the regulatory principle of which becomes an uncompromising loyalty to the homeland, not primarily to the ruler. Thus, instead of an abstract vassal commitment to the king, from now on the main mobilization force for the liberation war becomes the sacred homeland ground." Z. BLAZEVIĆ, "Rađanje nacionalnoga epa: *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hr-*

As is evident in Istvanffy,<sup>38</sup> Knin, like some other fortresses during 1520, did not even have a crew to man it, and therefore, ban Berislavic was able to liberate it very easily from the wandering Turkish battalion which entered and held it just like Pavle Orlovic's Pec. This was only a few days before he was killed at Korenica, where he was ambushed when returning from the mission. The conflation of the historical and the fictional is quite obvious.

According to the *Vita*, ban Berislavic died in the mountain range above Frkasic, called *Đavolji Vrt* (the Devil's Garden). Vitezovic named the space "the Pljesivica Alps" (*Plisias alpes*), which can be understood as a periphrasis of today's name Pljesivica. While Berislavic was successfully pursuing looters with around three hundred horsemen and infantrymen, his horse stumbled, girths failed, and the ban found himself on the ground together with his saddle. No one noticed this because everyone was preoccupied with the pursuit, and the ban was left behind fixing his equipment. Meanwhile, a group of around sixty Turks was approaching, and as Berislavic was getting back on his horse in haste, one of them injured his right leg with an axe, breaking his bones below the knee:

(...) suddenly the Turks rushed him and endeavored to disarm him, still he did not have the opportunity to measure the strength of the enemy sword, but that of stones, axes, and similar kinds of blows. And even when he fell from his horse, after the condition of the first injury worsened and the saddle gave in, he continued to fight them.<sup>39</sup>

And while Berislavic, injured, fought the enemies, he saw, according to Mrnavic's narration, Petar Kruzic and called to him for help, but his companion only turned and ran away, "Meanwhile, while that one was running, the ban was finished off by blows dealt by the axes and stones."<sup>40</sup>

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vatske", in: P. R. VITEZOVIC, *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske - Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*, pp. 19-20.

38 MIKLOS ISTVANFFY, *Historiarum de rebus Hungaricis libri XXXIV.*, Coloniae Agrippinae, 1622.

39 M. PALAMETA, *Fikcionalnost Životopisa Petra Berislavića*, p. 183.

40 I. T. MRNAVIC, *Vita Petri Berislavi - Životopis Petra Berislavića*, p. 35 (translated from Latin into Croatian by Tamara Tvrtkovic).

fato namque ipse sinistro  
 Per Plisias alpes hostes venatus, in horum  
 Labitur insidias, sine milite, tum sine et armis:  
 Ut sceptro tantum Prorex et presbyter usus  
 Exstitit; egregie hoc sese defendit in hostes:  
 Sed plures unum facile excussere secures Sceptrum.

While hunting for foes in the Pljesevica mountain range,  
 by ill fate he fell into their trap,  
 without soldiers and also without weapons he was.  
 The bishop and viceroy only had a scepter in his hand,  
 only with it he defended himself bravely from the enemy.  
 But one scepter was by many axes swiftly cut down.

Mrnavic's extensive and literarily convincing narrative reconstruction of Berislavic's death has been reduced to a few details in the epic which are unequivocally connected only to the *Vita*. Even when Vitezovic deprives the ban of his sword and gives him a scepter instead as a sign of his exaltation and symbol of his momentarily helpless situation, a scepter which is easily cut down by many enemy axes, the connection to the source is not concealed in the least. This connection is especially reflected in the verses with the names of the two negative characters: first, the cardinal and the archbishop of Ostrogon, Toma Bakac, and second, Petar Kruzic - a point also noted by the commentary for these verses in the critical edition of the epic.<sup>41</sup> In the *Vita*, Mrnavic shaped these two as adversarial characters and opposed them to the main character. The ban's daily work also included conflicts with other powerful personages of the Kingdom. A particularly good example is that of Ivan Banffy, who married the widow of Franjo Berislavic and thought himself the owner of all the forts and lands the Berislavic family had in Bosnia and Slavonia. However, when all these strategic cities were taken by ban Petar, a great dispute ensued, led by the royal chancellery. The function of the story in the *Vita* is to introduce the main antagonists to the epic scene:

Ivan Banffy took that as a great injustice, which he intended to immediately rectify. And when he could not do it in any other way, he did it, they say, with the help of some Croatians, especially Petar Kruzic

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41 P. R. VITEZOVIC, *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske - Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*, p. 225.

and the archbishop Toma, both of whom encouraged him with great promises in the destruction of lord Berislavic.<sup>42</sup>

From such a passage by Mrnavic, both Toma Erdedi and Petar Kruzic, the latter being the one who did not want to help his ban and commander while he was injured and attacked by looters in Pljesivica, entered Vitezovic's epic:

Proregem solum plebs multa peremit,  
Krusicii Petri fraude has inductus ad aras  
Occubuit; Petrum magno corruperat aere  
Strigonii Praesul Thomas, homo avarus, honoris  
Virtutisque osor tanti Proregis iniquus.

The viceroy himself was killed by the great multitude, by the treachery of Petar Kruzic he fell onto that sacrificial altar. Petar was, in fact, bribed with a great wealth by the Bishop of Ostrogon, named Toma, an avaricious man and evil, who hated the viceroy because of his virtue and honors.

The final six verses, with their economic tone and listing of the high duties which the ban had observed during his life, are at the same time reminiscent of two passages at the end of the *Vita*. The first is from a letter by Emperor Maximilian II to Antun Vrancic which praises his close kinsman, the bishop and ban Petar Berislavic,<sup>43</sup> and the second is the damaged headstone inscription invented by Ivan Tomko Mrnavic, which emphasizes, along with the titles, the respect and love Berislavic's subjects had for him.<sup>44</sup> Again, Vitezovic played with the etymology of Berislavic's family name in order to motivate Petar's victory palm which he, like a martyr, carries in the heavens.

Occidit insignis Miles, divusque Sacerdos,  
Illyrici Prorex, Wesprimi Praesul, et ipse  
Thesauro Regis Praefectus, magnus in urbe  
Inque ora Senonum, Jajcensique arce Strategus,

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42 I. T. MRNAVIC, *Vita Petri Berislavi - Životopis Petra Berislavića*, p. 32 (translated from Latin into Croatian by Tamara Tvrtkovic).

43 *Same*, p. 37.

44 *Same*.

Tam merito Beriflav, quam nomine stirpis, habendus:  
Nunc martyr viridem gestit super aethera palmam.

Fell the famed soldier, fell the holy priest,  
Illyrian viceroy and the bishop of Vesprim, also the royal  
treasurer, they thought much of him in the city of Senj  
and throughout the coast as well, he was the commander of Jajce.  
Berislav he was by merit as well as by the name of his kin:  
now in the heavens he carries like a martyr a green palm.

It is certainly worth reflecting on the title of the "commander of Jajce", which the poet ascribed to Petar Berislavic (*Jajcensique arce Strategus*), and which he did not have at all. Vitezovic could not have found such information in Mrnavic's *Vita* as the primary and only source about Berislavic, even though the *Vita* is not lacking in both real and imaginary high functions of the ban. In the same way, it is hard to imagine, taking into consideration Vitezovic's dedication to archive research, that he did not stumble upon some document which implied that this function was held twice by Franjo Berislavic Grabarski, Petar's older cousin.

Taking into consideration the nature of the emotional background which permeates the whole epic, the aforementioned historical discrepancy is not relevant for the literary nature of the poetic work. It only served Vitezovic to evoke the "royal city of Jajce" as it was often called by humanist writers, or rather the whole Jajce area, as part of the homeland territory. Similarly, Vitezovic also introduced the episodes on Sinj and Knin.<sup>45</sup>

Looking at the selected excerpts of the epic from the perspective of space, it is interesting to ascertain the fate of the aforementioned fortresses at the moment of writing *Croatia in Mourning*, which Blažević observes in the whole epic as "the most prominent symbolic marker"<sup>46</sup> of homeland territory, that is, "the material reflection of the historical continuity and survival of the nobleman's *natio Croatica*".<sup>47</sup> In this sense, after the liberating actions and until the new borders were defined by the Karlovac Peace Treaty, when Vitezovic was

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45 Verses 124-130 and 141-146.

46 Z. BLAŽEVIĆ, "Rađanje nacionalnoga epa: *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske*", p. 13.

47 *Same*.

writing his epic, Knin and Sinj were taken by the Venetians. From Dubica to Jajce, everything remained in Turkish hands. Only Senj, "the symbolic epicenter of Croatia in mourning"<sup>48</sup> as the aforementioned author calls it, remains in the homeland. Therefore, the whole cited from *Plorantis Croatiae*, that was inspired by the content in Mrnavic's *Life of Petar Berislavic*, could be considered a representational excerpt of the whole epic on the level of his political concepts.

## Conclusion

The paper's starting point is Vitezovic's concise reference to Mrnavic along with an affirmative statement about his books. An extensive collection of biographies of saints of royal descent from Illyricum (*Regiae sanctitatis Illyricane foecunditas*) stands out among these books, in which Vitezovic could confirm his ideological-political positions on Croatia, that is, the royal right of the Habsburgs to the whole of Illyricum. The paper's focus is the episode on the battles of ban Petar Berislavic with the Turks in the epic *Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo*. In the sixty or so hexameter lines, Vitezovic used *The Life of Petar Berislavic Vita Peri Berislaii Bosnensis, episcopi Vespriensis, Dalmatiae, Croat(iae), Slauon(iae), Bosnaeque bani* (1620) by Ivan Tomko Mrnavic.

From Mrnavic's *Vita*, Vitezovic selected the narratives of the ban's victory at Dubica at the beginning of his state duty; the depiction of the horrible cold winter which killed both people and cattle in 1514, the death of Yunus Bey, the Bosnian Pasha during the siege of Sinj, who was slaughtered by an anonymous soldier feigning to be a defector, and Berislavic's persecution and cruel punishment of Yunus Bey's soldiers. At the end of the episode, Vitezovic put into verse Berislavic's heroic death in a Turkish ambush after the betrayal of Petar Kruzic. Vitezovic borrowed content from Mrnavic's mainly fictional prose and by contracting and reducing it to plot devices he versified it in hexameter verse. The whole selection of material and its re-stylization was especially conditioned by the ideological concept of the epic, by the position of the moment of composition, where the allegorical character of the motherland laments its grim fate.

In Vitezovic's epic, the characters of Croatian bans are the main protagonists who symbolize the political continuity of the Croatian

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48 *Same*.

Kingdom. In this respect, Mrnavic's literary creation of ban Berislavic, his virtues, his reputation with European rulers, and especially his courage and war efforts, and the fear he instilled in his enemies, was already shaped as the father of the homeland. The paper also points out that the title of "viceroy" (*prorex*), which Vitezovic bestows to all the bans in *Plorantis Croatiae* in order to emphasize their aforementioned symbolic role, was only used in older literature with the name of ban Berislavic.

Among the expansions and amendments to the narrative content in the episode, the descriptions of the royal fortress of Knin, which was conquered by the Turks shortly after Berislavic's death, and the verses about the uprising of the citizens of Senj against the unjust captain of Senj and ban Emerik Pereny are important. As the general opinion is that the descriptions of the fortresses and cities in the epic, as Vitezovic's markers of national space, are significant, these two expansions were motivated by the idea of historical rights. Of all the fortresses and cities mentioned in the episode on Berislavic, it is only the city of Senj, considered by the poet to be the epicenter of national space, that was not given to the Turks or the Venetians after the Karlovac Peace Treaty, which is why Vitezovic's Croatia is in mourning. Taking all of this into account, the episode on Berislavic is a representational whole within Vitezovic's *Plorantis Croatiae*.