The Most Significant Manuscript Sources of Medieval Croatian Vernacular Verse

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Abstract The first part of the article gives a brief overview of the history of Croatian literacy up to the first written record of poetry in the Old Croatian language. The second part of the article is an overview of the four most important collections of early Croatian verse written in the Old Croatian language: the Glagolitic Parisian Songbook (1380), Picić's Hymnal in Latin script (1471), Klimantović’s Glagolitic cycle of eschatological poems (1501–1514), and the Osor-Hvar Miscellany (1533). Picić’s Hymnal and the Osor-Hvar Miscellany’s entire contents are presented, as they are both trilingual (Croatian – Latin – Italian) and can therefore represent the paradigm of medieval Croatian multilingualism.

Keywords Medieval Songbooks, Medieval Hymnals, Medieval Miscellanies, Medieval Croatian Verse, Croatian literacy

1. Introduction

The literary scene in unitary Medieval Europe, where the same poets wrote both in Latin and in their own vernaculars, has been and still is the subject of both scholarly and public intensive interest. However, information on the development of literacy, language, and literature in the Croatian cultural and historical area (on the eastern Adriatic coast and at the very edge of the Roman Empire) has never been included in overviews of European Medievalism, despite the fact that it would make an interesting chapter due to the parallel use of three scripts (Latin, Glagolitic and Cyrillic) and four languages (Latin, Old Church Slavonic and Old Croatian, with the addition of Italian in the 16th century). Multilingualism and multiscriptism are the most relevant and distinctive characteristics of Croatian Medievalism.

This paper will provide a very brief overview of the history of Croatian literacy up to the first written record of poetry in the Old Croatian language, and a comprehensive overview of the four most prominent (quantitatively and qualitatively) manuscript sources of early Croatian verse (out of the 42 sources of texts for the book Croatian Medieval Poetry [7]): the Glagolitic Parisian Songbook (1380), Picić's Hymnal in Latin script (1471), Klimantović’s Glagolitic cycle of eschatological poems (1501–1514), and the Osor-Hvar Miscellany (1533). Picić’s Hymnal and the Osor-Hvar Miscellany’s entire contents are presented, as they are both trilingual (Croatian – Latin – Italian) and can therefore represent the paradigm of medieval Croatian multilingualism. The overview provides extensive citations of poems and their translations to English to serve as impetus for international literary historians and theoreticians to recognize the wealth and diversity of early Croatian verse.

1.1. Up to the First Written Record of Vernacular Poetry

Proto-Croats arrived in the former Roman provinces of Pannonia and Dalmatia in the 7th century AD from White Croatia, a region north of the Carpathians. They became acculturated to Roman civilization in religion, written communication, and, to a certain extent, in language as well (traces of the Roman substratum are still present in contemporary Croatian, especially in maritime vocabulary). Thus, literacy among the South Slavs is strongly tied to the adoption of Christianity. At the beginning of the 9th century, Frankish lordship over “Croatia” finally ended a centuries-long struggle between the Byzantine and Roman churches for control over this territory, and Croatia became a part of western European medieval civilization.

The only preserved written explanation of the first stage of
the development of Slavic literacy is the treatise O pismenina (On Letters), written in the late 9th century, but preserved only in a 14th century transcription. It was written by a historically unreliable witness named Čmorizac Hrabar, a Macedonian monk who belonged to the second generation of students of the first missionaries to the Slavs, Cyril and Methodius. According to his testimony, three phases of Slavic literacy can be differentiated. The first phase refers to the period during which the Slavs were still pagans. Hrabar says that “before Christianization, the Slavs used lines and scratches for reading and writing” [2, p.161], hence some kind of a runic script. The second stage was the time of Christianization, when the Slavs entered an organized church hierarchy and encountered the long tradition of Greek and Latin literacy. According to Hrabar “the Slavs did not have their own letters; since Christianization they have been trying hard to write Slavic words in Latin or Greek letters, but unsystematically.”

Sporadic Croatian words and names written on surviving monuments and tablets from that early period provide evidence of how foreign and Slavic scribes tried to use Latin letters to write Slavic names and titles containing specific Slavic phonemes (especially palatal consonants). For example, Prince Višeslav’s name was written VUISSASCLAVO on his baptismal font (800 AD).

The third phase was, according to Hrabar, Cyril and Methodius’ mission of Christianization, which was initiated by Moravian prince Rastislav and approved by the Byzantine court. Constantine, later called Cyril, invented a new Slavic script that ingeniously solved the problem of writing phonemes specific to Slavic languages. He also translated liturgical books into Old Church Slavonic, and began his mission in Moravia in 863 AD, which later ended with the expulsion of their students after the death of Methodius.3

As a result, Slavic liturgy and the Glagolitic script entered the Croatian lands from two different directions: from the north, carried by Cyril and Methodius’ students coming from Moravia and Pannonia, and from the south, brought by their students from new Glagolitic centers in Bulgaria (Preslav) and Macedonia (Ohrid) [4, p. 17-19].

After the 12th century, the southern path was reserved exclusively for the entry of the Cyrillic script, for which reason the Cyrillic script was most widespread in Bosnia and Dalmatia, where a specific type of Cyrillic script, called Bosančica, was used [5, p. 66-92].

As mentioned above, after the 12th century, the southern path of Glagolitic entry into the Croatian lands was also the path of entry for the Cyrillic script. By the end of the 9th century, the political views of Bulgarian Tsar Simeon and his wishes to assimilate Byzantine culture in Bulgaria had led to the willful abandonment of the newly created Glagolitic script and the adoption of the Greek script for use in Slavic liturgy and royal administration. However, the adoption of the Greek script did not mean unsystematic writing. The Greek script was reformed and adapted to Slavic phonology, and, importantly, the model for that adaptation was the Glagolitic script. Hence, the Cyrillic script is simply the Greek script reformed on the basis of the Glagolitic script.

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The Glagolitic script was used by Glagolitic monks and was used in the writing of graphemes designating palatals. Nevertheless, written Croatian heritage shows that it was widely used throughout Croatian territory since the 14th century, as were the other two scripts. Finally, in the mid-16th century, the Latin script won the battle for predominance.

These three scripts coexisted and intertwined during the Middle Ages, and so did the languages: Latin, Old Church Slavonic, Old Croatian, and later Italian, coexisted and were all used, albeit not for the same purposes. Old Church Slavonic and Latin were liturgical languages, Old Croatian was the vernacular, and Italian was sporadically used on the Adriatic coast, as well as in hymnals and miscellanies.

3 There is no historically reliable evidence of the very first religious services held in the Croatian language. The oldest testimony of the use of native Croatian language in liturgy dates to 925 AD, when Pope John X writes to bishop Ivan of Solin and the other bishops under his jurisdiction about his concern at the widespread use of the Croatian language in liturgy (known as Methodi doctrina).

4 “The Church of Rome tolerated the use of the vernacular in church services in Croatia, and in 1248 at Lyons, Pope Innocent IV. formally granted permission for the use of Glagolitic liturgy, but only in localities in which it was already in use.” [3, p.12]

2. Medieval Croatian Vernacular Poetry

Medieval Croatian literature was generally part of medieval European literature in a number of ways, and it was defined by properties and poetics common to the entire medieval Christian cultural area. Religious themes were
predominant. Catholic clerics were the intellectual center of society, and their literature was produced in the greatest quantity, just as was the case in all other medieval European cultures. This literature was tightly connected with clerical, religious, practical, liturgical, and spiritual needs. Croatian Medieval ‘poets’ also shared the general medieval attitude towards authorship, which differs to a large extent from the modern attitude. Texts were freely compiled, redirected, changed with every new performance, and they ‘lived’ independently of their first compiler (the exceptions being Biblical texts)\(^5\).

Since, in manuscript culture, every individual book was a unique, material object of luxury, poems lived in oral literature, and their 'lives' depended upon how readily they could be remembered. It is believed that the vast majority of medieval texts written in verse may have originally arisen because of the rarity of books and the accompanying need to commit texts to memory, and it is surely easier to memorize verse than prose. [6, p. 113].

If we compare medieval Croatian literary creation with verse in other medieval European literatures, the first thing that becomes apparent is that medieval Croatian literature lacks a large anonymous epic poem written in the vernacular (such as the Old English Beowulf, the Middle High German Nibelungenlied, the Old East Slavic Слово о полку Игореве / Tale of Igor's Campaign, and the Old French Chanson de Roland). Another important thing to notice is that secular writings, which are usually the most attractive to literary critics and historians, were rare and sporadic. For these reasons, early Croatian verse remained outside of the focus of medievalists for a long time, even in Croatia. However, Medieval Croatian poetry is rich enough to deserve the attention of researchers. A large number of religious hymns (both liturgical and non-liturgical) have been preserved from this period. The rare secular poems are witness to a rich oral literary tradition that has been lost due to the fact that literacy was mostly a clerical privilege. Each of these rare secular writings is valuable as literature, and is unique in form and content. It is therefore obvious that they are mere representatives of a literary tradition that was once much richer. Aside from the relatively short religious poems, several Medieval Croatian versions of Planctus Mariae have also survived, as have dramatizations of Christ’s Passion (Passion Plays) and the dramatization of Saint Margaret’s Passion – all in all, a respectable corpus of vernacular texts.

The vast majority of these early Croatian poems are AA rhymed isosyllabic (mostly octosyllabic). This type of verse is undoubtedly connected with Christian hymnody, but is most probably also connected with the oral tradition. It is known that, while medieval Latin verse was still being written in the old quantitative meters, a new more popular form arose called the sequence, based on accentual meters in which metrical feet were based on stressed syllables rather than vowel length.

The oldest record of this type of verse in the Old Croatian language is a poem consisting of a few rhyming couplets written in a Missal from 1368 AD (Misal kneza Novaka). (Younger manuscripts have shown that this is just one part of a larger eschatological poem)\(^6\)

\[
\begin{align*}
I\text{ pomislji vsaki hr\v{s}t\v{t}janin} & \quad \text{Let every Christian keep in mind} \\
da\ v s v e t ni\v{s}are ni & \quad \text{that this world is nothing} \\
jere gdo ga ve\v{c}e \v{f}ubi & \quad \text{and he who loves it more} \\
ta ga br\v{z}e zgubi. & \quad \text{loses it more readily.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
Nu jo\v{c}e pomislji vsaki sada & \quad \text{And let everyone think now} \\
\v{c}a se najde ot nas tada & \quad \text{what shall become of us} \\
gda se dula strahom smete, & \quad \text{when our souls are harrowed in fear} \\
a dila nam se skr\v{t}i ne te. & \quad \text{And all our deeds are unveiled.}
\end{align*}
\]

2.1. Parisian Songbook (1380)

The Parisian Songbook (Pariška pjesmarica) from 1380 AD is assumed to be the real beginning of Croatian poetry.\(^7\) This collection of poems is written in the Glagolitic script, and is a part of a larger miscellany known as Pariški zbornik (Parish Miscellany).\(^8\) The miscellany contains an Old Church Slavonic missal, breviary and psalter, as well as 10 Croatian vernacular poems at the very end of the miscellany (193b–199b). The vernacular part of the miscellany is known as the Parisian Songbook, and it is indeed a kind of anthology that represents Croatian Medieval poetry as a whole: there are two Christmas poems in it, two eschatological poems, one hymn devoted to the Virgin Mary, one hymn devoted to Jesus, one passion poem, one hymn devoted to St. George and one to St. Michael, and one secular poem. Many of these poems are written in the typical Croatian octosyllabic medieval verse, which shows that this kind of verse had already been established as a prototype and was very productive by the end of the 14th century.

However, Pisan svetogo Jurja (‘The Poem of St. George’), is written in an atypical dodecasyllabic verse. This poem is a very short and simplified version of the legend of Saint George and the Dragon (containing only 67 lines).\(^9\) The legend was very popular during the Middle Ages, as it was a part of the Golden Legend (Legenda Aurea). The plot in the Croatian version in verse follows the plot in the Golden Legend, except for the fact that the Town of Selinus (Silene) is replaced with the similar Croatian toponym Solin.\(^10\)

6 All poems are cited from [7]. This song is written in five more medieval versions: four in Glagolitic script and one in Latin script (for transcriptions of all versions, see [7, pp. 121-137]).

7 More information on this hymnal in [7,8,9,10].

8 It is stored at the French National Library (Bibliothèque Nationale) in Paris (sign. Code slave 11).

9 More on the Croatian version in [41,42,43,44].

10 The town had a pond where a dragon dwelled. To appease the dragon, the people of Solun used to feed it two sheep every day, and when the sheep failed, they fed it their children, chosen by lottery. It happened that the lot fell on the king's only daughter, who was of exceptional beauty. The king, distraught with grief, told the people they could have all his gold and silver and half of his kingdom if his daughter were spared; the people refused. The daughter was sent out to the lake, dressed as a bride, to be fed to the dragon. Saint George by chance rode past the lake. The princess, trembling, sought to send him away, but George vowed to remain. The dragon reared out of the lake while they were conversing. Saint George fortified himself with the

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5 “There was no copyright on written material, and scribes thought nothing of adapting, editing, and ‘improving’ the material they were working on, introducing their own favorite spellings, to match their market of one, and to bring up to date the material they had to hand” [6, p. 4].
One of the most interesting hymns in this hymn-book is Svět se konča ("The world is ending"). It is a secular satiric hymn that openly speaks about the moral and ethical decadence of the clerics, blaming them as corrupt and sinful hypocrites who worship their stomachs more readily than they worship God. Many Croatian Medievalists have selected this poem as proof that artistic poetry in Old Croatian Language had already reached maturity as early as the 14th century. Some even consider it the best poem of Medieval Croatian literature in both form and content.

One of the most beautiful songs in this hymnal, even if judged by modern criteria, is a lyrical prayer in verse Zač mi tužiš, duše? ("Why are you sad, my soul?"). It is also written in a very atypical verse (non-isosyllabic, but with rhyme), which some researchers assumed was connected with Byzantine poetry.

Zač mi tužiš, duše, iznemagajući dragostju?
Pošli ljubav po Isusa da istanče isčeljenje s radostju.
I kada ti pride, ljubovem se k njemu vedući,

V redovnicih, ki čtu Sveto evanjelje, 
imela bi pravda biti i srećenje,
a sada je opaženie i prevaženje 
i vskoumu dobru dělu razorenje

Ot istini oči svoji uklonili,
u pohoteh sega svita zabludili,
k bezakonju srce svoje priklonili,
svoj 'mu tilu, a ne Bogu ugodili.

(...)
Grodni, biskupi i opati
misle, Boga ostavitevi, li o zlati.
Duhaovna rči ot nih se ne more imit
ako im se piniže prije ne plati.

(...)
Mnozi ot nih, ki ako bi v sviti stali,
skoat bi pasili, i kopali, i orali
a sada su previt trubah podpasali,
kum kako Boga služe velji i mali

Monks, who the Holy Gospel read,
righteous and virtuous should be,
but debauched and immoral they be,
and bring ruin to every good deed.

(...)
From the truth, their eyes they have hid,
and in worldly lust they sin,
To villainy their hearts they have bent,
their bodies, and not God, do they please.

(...)
Cardinals, bishops and abbots,
Have abandoned God and care only for gold,
No spiritual word do they utter,
Unless money be paid for it first.

(...)
Many of them, if laics they had remained,
Would have herded livestock, dug and plowed,
And now they belt up their fat stomach
and worship it like a God, old and young

Why are you sad, why are you feeble my soul?
Send your love to Jesus and you will rise healed with joy.
And when he comes to you, let your love leads you towards him,
And speak to him these words:
"Sing, Jesus, my love,
do not go far from me,
for in this valley of tears,
how could I be merry without you?"

2.2. Picić's Hymnal (1471)

The oldest medieval Croatian hymnal in Latin script is Picić's Hymnal, which is directly dated to 1471. The Bodleian Library in Oxford holds a collection of devotional writings in Latin, Italian, and Croatian, called the Oxford Latin Miscellany. It contains 117 leather-bound pages written by several different hands, mostly in fine and legible late 15th century Gothic hand. It consists mainly of hymns (more than 30 hymns in Italian, more than 15 hymns in Latin, and only 4 poems in Old Croatian). There are also some writings in prose, such as instructions for a good confession in Italian (Avvertimenti per ben confessarsi), some sermons in Latin, a short catechism in Latin, and some prayers in Latin and Italian.

A large part of the collection (about a third) was written by Matija Picić, who left a note with his signature and the date (in Latin!): Hoc quinternum scripsit p(res)b(yte)r Matheus de Pćicho de Arbo. Sub An(n)o d(o)m(i)ni MCCCCLXX (in Latin!). I use the name Picić's Hymnal to denote only the part of the collection dated, written out and signed by Matija Picić, who was canon of Rab, and afterwards archdeacon of the Rab cathedral. Picić's Hymnal consists of one Italian poem, several Latin poems and four Old Croatian poems with a Čakavian dialectal base. These poems were doubtlessly very popular at the time in all three languages, for they are part of many medieval miscellanies and collections of devotional writings, as well as later sources.

The Croatian poems in the hymnal are undoubtedly Čakavian, and they have many Čakavian phonological features in common (reduced vowels turn into full vowels; nasal /ŋ/ after the palatals /j/, /č/, /ž/; the palatal stop */d/ > */j/; a word-final /l/ does not change into a vowel; the preservation of the consonantal clusters /čl-, čr-; rhotacism; */št/ > */šč/ and so on). The consonantal cluster /čt/ turns into /št/, with the single exception of čtijemo. Along with these dominant phonological traits, there are also the usual doublets and deviations which are a characteristic of all medieval texts. The reflexes of the phoneme /ɛ/ are ikavian
and ekavian without consistent obedience to the Meyer and Jakubinski rule. Not one of the recorded texts displays any metathesis in the consonantal cluster /vs/. As for their morphological features, one should be mentioned: in voc. sing. masc. the old ending -u (sinu) is attested from the u-paradigm of the masculine gender; in loc. sing. masc. and neut. the older ending -i (v Bozi, na krži) is more frequent, but in some cases the more recent ending is found, -u (v plaču, v dvoru); in voc. sing. fem. the -o for non-palatal stems and the -e for palatal (Gospoje, vdovice) and exceptionally non-palatal stems too (Gospe); nom. and voc. plur. masc. in -e occurs (Židove, karštiane, popove, grobce); non-syncretism of dat. loc. and instr. plurals.

Some early-16th century historical sources confirm that a person named Matija Picić did indeed live on the island of Rab at the time the hymnal was written and that he was primicerius of the cathedral, meaning that he was in charge of the choir and singers and that his hymnal saw real practical liturgical use. The following are the songs he wrote with his own hand into the miscellany:

1. A very famous Latin hymn devoted to Jesus Christ, Dulcis Jesu memoria, which is typically attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux, but has recently also been attributed to English Cistercian St. Aelred because its earliest versions have been found in English manuscripts.

2. The Latin hymn Amor Jesus dulcissimus, also attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

3. The Italian hymn O Jesu dolce, o infinito amor, attributed to famous Italian bishop and poet Leonard Giustiniani.

4. A Latin hymn about the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, Ave fuit prima salus, authored by Jacobonus Tudertinus [11, no. 1801].

5. The famous Latin Christmas hymn Verbum caro factum est, known by its first verse In hoc anni circulo, is often attributed to Jacobus de Benedictis (Jacopone da Todi).

6. The very famous liturgical hymn Stabat mater dolorosa, authored by Jacobus de Benedictis (Jacopone da Todi) [11, no. 1946]. This liturgical hymn is also very well-known in its many vernacular renderings.

7. A very well-known Christmas song in Old Croatian, entitled Va se vrime godišća (‘At this time of the year’), which is the Latin hymn In hoc anni circulo rendered in vernacular.

8. The famous Latin lauda devoted to the Virgin Mary Gaude flore virginali, attributed to St. Anselm [11, no. 6808].


10. A Latin hymn devoted to the Virgin Mary Gaude, virgo mater Christi, often attributed to St. Bonaventura [11, no. 7019].

11. A Latin hymn about Francis of Assisi, Franciscus vir catolicus, sometimes attributed to St. Bonaventura [11, no. 6544].

12. An eschatological poem in Old Croatian, Plači sarcem i s očima (‘Cry with your heart and your eyes’).

13. A Croatian eschatological poem, Sudac strašan oče priti (‘The Terrible Judge will come’).

14. A version of Planctus Mariae (Mary’s Complaint) in the Croatian vernacular.

From this overview of the content of Picić’s Hymnal, it is obvious that all of the poems it contains were very popular, and were most likely sung as well. Many of them are still in use in liturgical singing, and some of them, set to music by famous composers, have become a part of the world’s classical music heritage. This hymnal is particularly interesting, as it provides evidence that hymns were sung in all three languages in Medieval Croatia. Since the Latin hymns in the book are well-known, we will narrow our attention to the Croatian poems.

As mentioned above, both the original Latin version and the Croatian vernacular version of In hoc anni circulo are written in this manuscript, and they both begin with the Latin biblical quote Verbum caro factum est de Virgine Maria (which also appears as a chorus repeated after every stanza in the Latin version). The Croatian version is quite significant for the history of Croatian culture as it is one of the oldest and longest-lived Croatian poems, and remains popular across all of Croatia even today. Many versions of it can also be found in many other medieval Croatian miscellanies even older than this one [7].

This poem chronologically retells the story of the birth of Jesus as described in the Bible. Metrically, this version follows the Latin original (heptasyllabic AAA -rhyming tercets with a non-rhyming chorus). Its poetic language is very simple, and so are its poetic images, which are almost banal or demystified. Biblical scenes are deprived of symbolic and metaphorical value in order to be made understandable to the vast majority of people. The human characteristics of the divine figures are accentuated to allow people to identify themselves with the scenes.

12 The planctus Mariae was a very popular form in European medieval drama in diverse versions and adaptations. This could have surely stimulated the spread of this poem in medieval Croatia, but it is often stressed that Croatian religious drama was original and not directly dependent on European analogous texts within the same genre. It is assumed that St. Anselmo’s dialogical scripts Planctus Beatae Virginis was the original source of all European versions of the planctus. See: [12,13,14,15,17,18,19].

13 In all Croatian Glagolitic versions of this song, the Latin word carum in this chorus was misinterpreted as dear instead of body and it is written as: Riće je draga stvorena... (‘the word was made dear!’ instead of ‘the word was made flesh’)
and Sudac strašan oče priti ('The Terrible Judge will come'). The latter is actually a Croatian vernacular rendering of the famous Latin hymn Dies irae, written originally by Franciscan Thomas de Celano in the mid-13th century in an atmosphere of general expectation of the Judgment Day. Both songs illustrate the worthlessness, transience, and brevity of life, and God’s unmercifully righteous Judgment. These themes were appropriate for use during funeral rites, and were widely used on this occasion (inscriptions in other miscellanies prove that they were actually intended to be sung during funeral rites, and some of these songs are still in use for these purposes).

_Planctus Mariae_ in the Croatian vernacular is the last Croatian text written in Picić’s Hymnal, _Planctus Mariae_ (‘Lament of the Virgin Mary’) is a direct outpouring of Mary’s grief for the death of her son. The _planctus Mariae_ was a very popular literary form in all of Medieval Europe, and versions of it (in verse and in prose) are recorded in almost all European vernaculars [30,31,32]. The connections between these vernacular versions and their Latin models are obvious [33,34,35]: _Planctus Beatae Virginis_, written in the early 12th century by St. Anselm of Canterbury; _Libre de passione Christi et doloribus et planctus Matris eius_, which is attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux; and a very popular song by Jacobus de Benedictis (Jacopone da Todi) entitled _Stabat mater dolorosa_. These vernacular remakes of the Latin models (in the form of _planctae_ or passion plays) share great similarities, regardless of whether they are in French, English, German, Italian, Irish, Icelandic or Croatian. However, not many of them are direct translations of the Latin templates.

Of course, all of these versions share a common plot, but they have many other properties in common as well: monotonous circumstantiality and loose connections between dialogical sequences; the straightforwardness of folk diction with the influence of highly stylized Biblical diction; honest but sometimes melodramatic emotionality; the anonymity of their authors (compilers), who only modified an existing frame and were satisfied with the mere addition of certain episodes, etc. However, what unifies all of these versions is the very simple and honest faith of those who wrote/compiled/translated them, of those who performed them, and of those to whom the performance was addressed. The role of the audience must not be underestimated here – medieval audiences were neither educated, nor did they have refined taste. However, they were simultaneously very pious and superstitious, they adored miracles and magic, and they believed strongly in life after death and in the supernatural in general. The survival of the early drama was directly dependent on such audiences, just as drama in general in all times and places is always determined by the taste and education of its audience.

Picić’s is the oldest known Croatian version of the _planctus_ in verse (while there are younger versions in both Latin and Glagolitic miscellanies). The version of the _planctus_ from Picić’s Hymnal is the only Croatian version that does not contain any explicit stage directions in prose. Considering the fact that stage directions indicating which character speaks (or sings) which part are missing, one may assume that the entire text is ‘retold’ by a narrator. Stage directions’ indicating character changes and describing the manner of speech or situations are always retold by the narrator in the third person; they are written in verse and integrated into the body of the poem. For example:

_Gospoji pride on plačeći, teško i gorko udeševi ter joj reče ove riči, tako joj ondi na navisti: to the Lady he came crying hard and bitterly was he sighing and these are words he told her and in this way he declared to her_

The _planctus_ was not deprived of didactic function either: its ‘task’ was to move listeners, to evoke their sympathy for a mother mourning her child. This poetic form undoubtedly fulfilled this task successfully through the use of many touching or even pitiful poetic images of Mary’s pain and despair:

_Slišavši Gospa take glasi vse oskabe svoji vlasi, plakati poča vele grozno, do neba vapiti vele močno, parsi bijale tad vajjuči, lica daraže tugujući... When the Lady heard such voices she pulled out all her hair, and began to weep ever so terribly, thunderously, she cried out to heaven, beating at her breast in agony and tearing at her face in mourning...

These lyrical and deeply moving descriptions of maternal pain are alternated with epic, narrative, impersonal descriptions of paschal events, which are often reduced to sequencing them in chronological order. Poetically, Mary’s dialogical sequences of dialogue are the most impressive: she is fully humanized in her terrible pain, not celebrated as the Mother of God, but as the mother of a man, depicted in warm images of gentle motherly concern that make the tragedy of the moment even more unbearable:

_Ovo ti je majka two, sinko dragi, nigo moja, koga divom žeļno rodih, mojim mlikom sama dojih. Look, this here is your mother my dear son, my care, to whom I gave Virgin birth, for nine months I carried you_  

_Devet miseci tebe nosih, to the Lady he came crying hard and bitterly was he sighing and these are words he told her and in this way he declared to her_  

Ovdje ofijicalj od dvora Pilatova B(ala)(z)enu Gospoju vele stentaše ne dajući njež pristupiti k hrižu ni k Pilatu, a ona se vsa previnu da se malo ne upade, a Ivanju s Marijami udrža i dvigova je i kad se vsta, reče ovi versi vsiško okolje stojejo, vajjuči i plačeći (Here, the officers from Pilat’s court harshly harass the Blessed Mother, not allowing her to approach the cross or Pilate; and she bends down, almost fainting, and John with the two Marys holds her and lifts her up, and when she stands up, weeping and crying, she says these words to those standing arround her).
The poetic value of her sequences is not only connected to their content, but also to their form, which is forceful and refined, making use of different forms of repetition (onomatopoeic, anaphoric, epiphoric repetitions, syntactic parallelisms etc.)

Ojme sinko, žeļo moja, Woe, my son, my desire
ojme, tužna majka tvoja! Woe, grievous is your mother
Oboj mani, jar do vika, Woe is me, now and forever,
jer ma rana nima lika! for my wound is incurable!
Ojme, tugo i dreselje, Woe, sadness and sorrow,
ojme, zgubih vse veselje Woe, all my joy is lost.
Ojme sinko, tugo moja, Woe, my son, my sorrow,
ojme, smarti britka tvoja... Woe, harsh is your death...

(...) Is that heavenly soldier
Je li ono nebeski vojnik,Is that heavenly soldier, svezan za garlo kako razbojnik? tied by the neck like a robber?
je li ono na našoj dici Is that on our pride's head
tornova kruna na glavici? a crown of thorns?
Je li ono Ius blagi,Is that the gentle Jesus,
tvoj meštar i Bog pravi? Is your teacher and your true God?
(...)
oño ti je dobro tvoje, There you see your precious one,
majko žalosna in Gospoje! sorrowful mother and Lady!
oño ti je cesar nebeski There is the king of heaven
kino t' nosi on križ teški! who carries a heavy cross!
Ono ti je, pozi tudi, There he is, look now,
tvoj sin ženi, tužna mati! your sad son, you sorrowful mother!
Ono ti je lice slavno, There is his glorious face
ko je od grških poplavano? spit upon by the wicked!

In all Croatian versions of the planetus, as in this one, Mary's prayer to the cross is the strongest part of the poem poetically:

Prikloni se, drivo krža, Oh, wood of the cross, bend over me,
d sa ka mni sin približa! and bring my son closer to me,
Ka mni prigini vite tvoje, bend your branches over me,
da s' počuša tuge moje. so my sorrows can rest.
A da bi mi parvo znati that he would receive his death upon you,
da če na tebi smrt prijati my sorrowful son, my pride,
moj sin ženi, moja dika, my great, great sadness,
tugo moja ter velika, I would have cherished you,
ja bih tebe nigovala, and watered you with my own tears
ter suzami zalivala each day and night,
poe vse danke i vse noći and hope that I would be able
jeda bi mi kažko moći to persuade you to bend over me
umoliti da se prignes ter me k sinka gori dvigneš, and lift me up to be with my son.

The poems are written in the Čakavian Ikavian dialect of the Old Croatian language, which is to be expected given that Klimantović hailed from the island of Ugljan near Zadar and worked on the islands of Dugi Otok, Rab and Krk.

2.3. Klimantović's Miscellany I (1501–1512)

Klimantović's Miscellany I is a Glagolitic manuscript

17 There are three Glagolitic miscellanies by Klimantović, the oldest and the most extensive of which is known as Klimantović's Miscellany I. Initially, all three miscellanies were part of Berčić's collection of Glagolitic manuscripts. However, while the Yugoslavian Academy of Arts and Sciences at the time was unable to purchase the entire collection, a part of it ended up in St. Petersburg (Klimantović’s Miscellany II. and III.) and is now held at the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg (sign. Bč 1 i Bč 2). Klimantović’s Miscellany I is held at the Franciscan monastery of St. Francis Xavier in Zagreb (A copy is held at the Croatian National Archive, sign G-94). Aside from these miscellanies, Klimantović left us two more manuscripts: Konstitucije or Indulgencije (Constitutions or Indulgences) and a 1540 appeal to the Doge of Venice for his monastery in Glavotok to be exempted containing Medieval spiritual and liturgical prose and poetry. It has been dated to 1501–1512, and its authorship is attributed to friar Šimun Klimantović. The Miscellany contains the richest and most diverse collection of medieval Croatian eschatological poems. Some of these poems were undoubtedly very popular and are known from other medieval or more recent sources as well, but some of them are found only here. Klimantović's cycle of eschatological poems was intended for use during funeral rites. The cycle is entitled Šekvencije mrtvih ('Poems of the Dead'). The eschatological poems are found between pp. 70r–80v in the following order: Plačnu pěsan, bratja, vspojmo ('Brothers, let us sing a tearful song') with Klimantović's instruction Ova je gredoču po mrtvaca ('This is to be sung on the way to retrieve the corpse'); Bratjā, brata sprovodimo ('Brothers, let us perform the funeral rites for our brother'); Šekvencija na sprovodu ('Poem for the funeral'); Tu mislimo, bratja, ča smo ('Let us think here, brothers, on what we are') with the instruction Šekvencija nad grobom, kada telo v grob položet ('A poem to be sung over the grave, when the body is laid in the grave'); Nu pomisti, o človiče ('Do think, o man') with the instruction Šekvencija nad junakom mrtvim ('A poem for a fallen hero'); Bratjā, v mladost ne ufajte ('Brothers, place not your hope in youth') with the instruction Šekvencija nad mladim junakom ('A poem for a young fallen hero'); Plačino svrem i očima ('Let us cry with our heart and eyes') with the instruction Šekvencija pokle se zakopa človik ('A poem after a man has been buried'); Nu poslušaj, Božji puče ('Hearken, people of God') with the instruction Šekvencija pokušati človika ('Poem for the people after a man has been buried'), and finally Draga bratja i sestrice ('Dear brothers and sisters') with the instruction Šekvencija za brata dragoga ('A poem for a dear brother'). A Croatian adaptation of Dies irae is also found in this Miscellany, however not as a part of the Poems for the dead, but as a part of the Mass for the dead.

from payments [21, p. 80].

18 Friar Šimun Klimantović, a Franciscan Tertiary, was born cca. 1460 in Lukoran on the island of Ugljan, and died after 1540 in Glavotok on the island of Krk. Information about his life has been largely reconstructed from his inscriptions in his miscellanies. For more on Šimun Klimantović, see [21, pp. 77–79].

19 Since he was extraordinarily diligent and productive, leaving a surprising number of self-referential inscriptions for medieval times, the earliest researchers of his life were convinced he was a Glagolitic writer, poet, Croatian Glagolitic literate etc. [22,23,24]. The results of more recent research have shown (especially due to the fact that many, often older versions of 'his' poems have been discovered) that he was, as far as poetry was concerned, only a copyist, a scribe, or, at best, a redactor of old and largely known Medieval religious poems that were often folk poems as well. 20 It is obvious from these inscriptions that brothers and sometimes sisters are often apophasized, sometimes as early as the first line. Although these might refer to Christian brothers and sisters in general, it is almost certain that these apophases refer to the members of medieval religious brotherhoods (fraternitates, confraternitates), which played an exceptionally important religious, social and cultural role in taking care of the sick, the poor, the dead (by organizing funerals), churches, chapels etc. Most importantly, they are to thank for preserving and spreading the tradition of religious folk piety.
Characteristics of Old Church Slavonic are also found sporadically in the language of the poems, and they serve a stylistic function.

Klimantović’s records of the eschatological poems are the most notable Croatian vernacular examples of the preoccupation with the Last Things (death, judgment, hell, heaven, and purgatory in the Catholic teaching), with the final destiny of the human soul and its afterlife (individual eschatology), as well as with the final destiny of the world in general (general eschatology). Medieval literature is generally determined by Christian eschatology and never questions its tenets, but rather accepts them as dogma. Memento mori and the famous Biblical line "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and to dust thou shalt return" echoes through all of the poems in the Miscellany. This obsession with death reflects the late Medieval atmosphere of fright of the announced forthcoming end of the world, characteristic of European spirituality after the 13th century. One of the best poetic descriptions of this atmosphere of fright is Thomas de Celano's hymn Dies irae, which was adapted to Old Croatian and is found in many medieval and more recent manuscripts, among others in Klimantović's Miscellany I under the title Sudac gněvan hočet priti ('The Wrathful Judge will come'). In this culture, man was prepared for his death since the day he was born. He thought, sung and wrote about death — it was a part of life, and therefore less of a taboo than it would later become in the Modern era [40]. Cemeteries were always placed in the center of the town or village, next to the church, which was the center of social life [40, p. 121].

It is obvious that funeral ceremonies played a central role in this spiritual atmosphere as a direct encounter with death and an appropriate occasion upon which to pass a strong didactic message to those still living. It is, then, to be expected that funerary poems place a lighter accent on mourning the dead than on the didactic excursions of the lyrical subjects. Sometimes the lyrical subject is the deceased, who directs those still living to lead a virtuous life and an appropriate occasion upon which to pass a strong didactic message to those still living. It is, then, to be expected that funerary poems place a lighter accent on mourning the dead than on the didactic excursions of the lyrical subjects. Sometimes the lyrical subject is the deceased, who directs those still living to lead a virtuous life and to renounce their short and transient earthly life so as to be deserving of eternal life.

Some poems describe funeral ceremonies, give advice and rules as to the attainment of eternal life, and frighten Christian folk with realistic descriptions of the Judgment Day (Dies irae).

Some poems are focused on illustrating the transience and brevity of life (especially that of youth and beauty), often through detailed descriptions of the putrefaction of the human body. Outlining the transience of the body, which was created from dust and will return to dust, is often naturalistic, with explicit physical motifs such as the consumption of the body by worms, the decay and rotting of flesh, the loss and decomposition of the nose, hair, teeth etc.

Klimantović’s cycle of funeral poems constitutes a complete and well-rounded unit, consisting of a funeral ‘performance’ that creatively and exhaustively moves between differing themes and motifs within the limits of the eschatological thematic framework. The living and the dead participate in this ‘performance’ dynamically and in equal measure, as do the explicit and implicit audience [25].

2.4. Osor-Hvar Miscellany (1533)

The Osor-Hvar Miscellany 21 is another highly representative trilingual source of early Croatian verse. It was written in Latin script and in three languages: Croatian, Latin and Italian. It is a typical late medieval or early Modern miscellany of religious writings, composed for practical monastic or parochial use, in this case Franciscan. It is restricted to only devotional themes, but is nevertheless very diverse, as it brings together liturgy and catechism, folk and “artistic” poetry and prose, anonymity and authorship, medieval Christian morality and early modern Humanism, and even Petrarchian influence. It bears witness to the vernacular, oral and fraternal tradition, as well as to the tradition of Latin hymnody on which Medieval Croatian devotional verse was largely built.

On the first written page, this manuscript is directly dated to 1533. However, it is obvious that some of its parts were written earlier. It consists of 162 leather-bound pages, and was written by several different hands. Its content includes some dodécasyllabic poems attributed to Marko Marulić, the most significant late Medieval and early Renaissance Croatian writer. It also contains octosyllabic folk fraternal songs, catechisms, the Rules of the Franciscan Order, prayers, and a few spiritual texts in prose. There are several thematic units in the miscellany:

I. The first part contains 13 practical Franciscan texts in Latin: the Concession of Pope Leon X (1513 – 1521) for the Franciscans; the Ten Commandments (Decem precepta Divine legis); the Seven Deadly Sins (Septem peccata mortalia); the five senses (Quinque sentimenta corporis); the

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21 More on this source in [26].
Rules of the Franciscan Order (Infra scripta sunt precepta regule nostre que sunt numero 33 ad similitudinem numeri anorum Domini nostri Iesu Christi et nota que capitulorum regule sunt 12 ad similitudinem 12 apostolorum); the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy (Septem opera misericordiae spiritualae); the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy (Septem opera misericordiae corporales); the Seven Sacraments (Septem sacramenta Ecclesie); the Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Septem dona Spiritu [!] Sancti); Seven beatitudes (Septem beatitudines); Seven virtues – three theological and four cardinal (7 sunt principales virtutes, tres theolggiae et quattuor cardinales); Holy Days of Obligation – Feasts of Precept (Festivitates de precepto Ecclesie hec sunt); Holy Days of Opportunity (Festivitates de consuetudine).

II. The second thematic unit is dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It contains octosyllabic folk poems, one poem by Marulić, and one prayer, all in Old Croatian.

III. The third thematic unit contains catechisms and liturgical texts on indulgences in Old Croatian: the Apostles’ Creed (Virovanje malo, ča jest 12 čliani svete vire katoličaske); a prayer for 80,000 years of indulgences in prose (Molitva osamdeset tisuć godiš čroščenja, rečena devoto [na] srkušenje od grehov); a prayer for 15,000 years of indulgences in prose (Molitva 15 tisuć let proščenja); a dodecasyllabic poem in an honor of Virgin Mary (Zdrava, o Dvice mnogo milostiva).

IV. The fourth thematic unit is also in Old Croatian. It contains devotional poems in honor of divine figures and saints. These poems are often Croatian vernacular versions of famous Latin hymns: Lauda in honor of St. Francis; a few anonymous non-folk dodecasyllabic poems in the honor of Jesus and the Virgin Mary, one poem by Marulić (Od uvišenja Gospina – De asumptione Domine) containing a translation of the Latin Magnificat; a dodecasyllabic non-folk translation of the famous Latin hymn Te Deum laudamus (Tebe hvalimo, Bože); a Croatian translation of St. Bonaventure's Laudismus de sancta Cruce (Kontemplacion svetoga križa). At the end of this unit, there is a very interesting octosyllabic folk contrast between the soul and the body.

V. The fifth unit contains didactic prose about St. Francis and St. Bernard.

VI. The sixth unit contains more dodecasyllabic poems in Old Croatian, some of which have been proven to be Marulić’s, and two sonnets in Italian written by Marko Marulić. There is only one folk octosyllabic poem in this part: Isusova mačila (‘Instruments of Jesus’ Passion’), a poem in which the angel Gabriel shows seven Instruments of the Passion to Christ. The youngest, the longest and the most beautiful version of the planctus Mariae is also found in this miscellany.

VII. The seventh unit contains ritual texts in Latin (benedictions and prayers): Benedictio enudo de cubili; Or(at)i o in(n) mane dice(n)da; Benedictio de domo exeundo; In introitu ecclesie oratio devotissima; Ad accipendum aqua benedicta [!] or(at)i; A[d] petendum [?] devocienem or(aci)o;

VIII. The eighth unit contains non-folk poetry, mainly attributed to Marulić. The most famous among the poems is Marulić’s Slavič (a translation of St Bonaventure’s Philomena).

IX. The last unit contains mainly folk poems and one dodecasyllabic translation of St. Bonaventure’s Meditatio de passione Jesu Christi. The most interesting item in this unit is an octosyllabic folk poem Cesar, kralje, hercegove (‘Caesar, kings, Herzegs’). The only secular poem in the entire miscellany, it features a resentful lyrical subject who complains about the immorality and greed of the secular feudal rulers, somewhat similar to the song Svit se konča (‘The world is ending’), however this poem leaves out the church rulers. The last couplet contradicts the modest and humble content of the entire miscellany, as the lyrical subject dares to question God’s justice:

Zašto do dopuščaš, Bože, da pravedna neprav zemože? that the righteous be beaten by the wicked?

2.5. Other sources of Medieval Croatian poetry

There are, of course, many interesting texts in verse in other medieval Croatian miscellanies. Here, a few of the most interesting and most relevant will be presented.

Šibenska molitva (A Prayer from Šibenik’) is a lyrical prayer, transcribed by a Franciscan known as Paul from Šibenik. Medievalists agree without exception that it is the masterpiece of medieval Croatian literature. It is a lyrical lauda with litanic rhythm celebrating the Virgin Mary. It was believed that the poem was a translation of a Latin or Italian lauda, but a direct model has never been found. It is the product of intimate religious inspiration and lyrical emotionality on one hand, and intellectual religious thought on the other.

O blažena! O prisvivna! O presvita! Svarhu vsih blaženih Bogom živim uvišena! Vsimi Božjimi darji urešena! O prisivna prije vsega vika! Bogom živim zbrana! O umižena Divo Marije! 

(...)

Gospoje, ti si mati nevoljnih sirot. 
Gospoje, ti si uštenje žalostnih udovic. 
Gospoje, ti si veselje dreselih mužacij i udovic i divic. 
Gospoje, ti si skupjenje dlžnih. 
Gospoje, ti si izbavljenje uznih i jatih. 
Gospoje, ti si vse užišve vsih vernih, nevoljnih in žalostnih.

O blessed! O holy! O illustrious! Blessed above all! Exalted by the living God! With all God’s gifts embellished! O illustrious before time began! Chosen by the Living God! O humble Virgin Mary!

(...)

Lady, you are mother to miserable orphans. 
Lady, you are comfort to grieving widows. 
Lady, you are joy to sad spouses, widows and virgins. 
Lady, you are redemption to debtors. 
Lady, you are liberation to the confined.
Lady, you are refuge to all the pious, dolorous and mournful. (…)

The oldest Croatian misogynistic song is found in the Glagolitic *Tkon Miscellany* from the beginning of the 16th century. Despite the fact that misogynistic themes were very popular in the European Middle Ages, a direct template for the Old Croatian version has not been found. This song deliberately mirrors the misogynistic tradition that had prevailed since antiquity.

Everyone, beware of woman as of an angry, evil snake, monks beware especially, for you are God’s servants.

She hunts night and day and many souls are her prey. Her face, legs, breasts she shows To burn thee with sin. She speaks ever so sweetly and allures you mount her. She will even leave you blind And unable to see God.

Her wicked love will make you even forget your own name You will spend all your fortune only to make love to her You will abandon food and drink only to please the woman. And no man has yet been born who could please a woman in all. In four forms she appears, None of which is ever sated. And these are the wicked forms of a virgin and a young woman: fire, hell and earth and a bottomless well. Fire always eats wood, and never says: enough! Hell that swallows souls with no fullness in sight. were it to rain all year the earth would utter not a word. The bottomless well can never be filled up. Thus is every woman, always wanting of lewdness an ever-hungry evil wolf-bitch and very, very thirsty.

“A ti, divojoša sviljava, zapni patačta do gorla da ti se dojke ne vide, da mene žela ne bude. Na tvoje dojke gledaju vranoga koža zakovah i moje dražba ja ostah i mojega gospodina. A ti, divojoša sviljava, vasm vidarice na glavu, a vidrlicu na ruku ter mi dva pojmo na vodu kroz te mi luge zelene, na one hladne studence!” Oni jidoše na vodu kroz te mi luge zelene, na one hladne studence (…)

“O, you naughty girl, button your shirt up to the neck, so that your breasts are hidden and desire shan’t awaken me. Looking at your breasts I would bewitch my black horse and leave my companions and even my master. And, you, o, naughty girl, put a bucket on your head and take a pitcher in your hand and let the two of us fetch water through the green woods, up to those cold springs.” They have gone to fetch water through the green woods up to those cold springs. (…)
dated to 1501–1512 by friar Šimun Klimantović. The Miscellany contains the richest and most diverse collection of medieval Croatian eschatological poems.

The Osor-Hvar Miscellany (1530) is a trilingual source of early Croatian verse. It was written in Latin script, and in three languages: Croatian, Latin and Italian. It is a typical late medieval or early Modern miscellany of religious writings restricted to devotional themes.

If compared to other medieval European literatures, medieval Croatian literary production lacks a large anonymous epic poem written in the vernacular, and it lacks secular writings. However, this overview shows that medieval Croatian poetry was indeed very rich and diverse, and that a respectable amount of it has been preserved despite the fact that secular poems have mostly been lost due to the fact that literacy was exclusively a clerical privilege. The poems presented here are witness to the vernacular, oral and fraternal tradition, as well as to the tradition of Latin hymnody upon which medieval Croatian devotional verse was largely built.

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