Marija Krnić

PASSION & DEVOTION: PASSION PLAYS AND THE PERFORMANCE OF PIETY ON THE EASTERN ADRIATIC COAST

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

Central European University

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by

Marija Krnić

(Croatia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,

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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, Marija Krnić, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Budapest, 03 June 2014

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Signature

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INTRODUCTION

The borderline position which, much like today, the Eastern coast of the Adriatic held in the context of medieval Europe, makes this region especially interesting for research in the field of medieval drama. Despite the close proximity to the lands dominated by the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the Eastern Adriatic coast accepted Latin Christianity, which had special importance given the impact of inherited Catholic liturgy on the development of vernacular drama. Moreover, in spite of being near the Ottoman Empire and the permanent threat of further invasions from the southeast, the narrow belt of the Eastern Adriatic coast managed to remain beyond the reach of the Ottomans, which led to cultural development closely related to the tendencies in other parts of Europe. Finally, these impacts were further enhanced via the Venetian Republic, which became the ruler of Dalmatia from 1420. These features deeply affected the development of medieval religious vernacular drama, specifically the Passion play genre which is the focus of this thesis.

In this study, I will examine Passion plays from the Eastern Adriatic (altogether, five plays partially or fully preserved to this date), with a special focus on religious and social history. Therefore, instead of a traditional history-of-literature-approach, aiming to analyze literary artifacts *as* autonomous entities, I will focus on aspects of pious everyday life which these plays can help to illuminate. In contrast to approaches which deal exclusively with the textual domain, my intention will be to explore this domain in the interplay with the theatrical performance, as well as its assumptions and outcomes in the broader social context in which they were written and performed.

First, I will outline the context of the late medieval Passion devotion concept within which the vernacular Passion play emerged as a genre. In the second chapter, I turn to the theatrical aspects of genre, focusing mainly on its implicit performance. In the third chapter, I

provide a descriptive analysis of the corpus, followed by a discussion of the fundamental theatrical dimensions of the plays. Finally, in the fourth chapter I discuss the hybrid status of the plays, exploring ritual elements of the plays as part of the religious practices within which the genre originated.

MODELS OF EXPRESSION OF LATE MEDIEVAL DEVOTION TO THE PASSION OF CHRIST

The crucifixion and Passion of Christ, a principle event in the theology of salvation, undoubtedly occupied a central place in medieval artistic expression. This event was presented through pictorial presentations, written texts (as poems, prose meditations), and theatre. Since the description of the Passion and Crucifixion in the Gospel is very brief, each representation of this event had to become "the product of complex sets of imaginative fabrications."[1] As James H. Marrow notes: "It has always been a task of theologians and artists, as well as the other believers, to define, qualify, inflect, and interpret the Passion story, which is to say, to give form and meaning."[2] In this respect, it could be said that the Passion of Christ, as a fundamental element of medieval theology, was not only central for the artistic expression of the time, but that this was also true in reverse: that the artistic reworking of the Passion was indeed crucial for medieval theology, providing it with the content and imagery which proved essential for its further advancement. The theological and artistic elaborations of the Passion were therefore interrelated and complementary; while artistic representations shaped beliefs, behavior, and the attitude of laymen, at the same time they reflected the most prominent theological thoughts of the period.

From the fifth century – when it first appeared as a topic in artistic discourse – until the early modern period, representations of the Crucifixion changed substantially. As Marcia Kupfer states, the early versions were meant to fulfil a double function: to witness Christ's human nature (with the theme of Christ's incarnation), and to confirm his divinity (with the depiction of Christ's resurrection). As Christ's victory over death, not his suffering, held a central place in his representation, he was depicted with eyes wide open or barely shut, with

[1] James H. Marrow, "Inventing the Passion in the Late Middle Ages", in *The Passion Story*, ed. Marcia Kupfer (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 24.

the erect posture of a still vigorous body, and an inclined head.[3] By the end of the first millennium, the trend had changed and for the first time the figure of a dead Christ on the Cross appeared in visual depictions. This portrayal of Christ's suffering and death is the source and starting point of my research.

For centuries, devotion to the Passion of Christ played an important role in Christian culture.[4] However, it was in the late medieval time when this motif rose to prominence to become the most important religious theme in the artistic expression. In this chapter, I outline this deep transformation of the theological worldview in the late medieval period, which led to changes in the comprehension of Christ's humanity. I will point out the main characteristics of the devotional practices and genres which emerged as the consequence of the new late medieval imagery. Based on this, I will specify the peculiarities of Passion plays in the research context of late medieval Passion devotion, with the purpose of introducing the case study of an Eastern Adriatic corpus of Passion plays.

Passion devotion as a late medieval concept

The concept of Passion devotion in medieval Europe denoted a broad scope of social and religious practices which aimed to imitate Christ's suffering before and during Crucifixion. These practices can be best understood through the lens of a desire of pious men and women to approach the Divine through intimate knowledge and emphatic experience of Christ's humanity,[5] in contrast, so to say, to the wonder and awe which dominated the

[2] Ibid. 24.
[3] See Marcia Kupfer, *The Passion Story* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 1-21.
[4] One should be careful, however, as James H. Marrow warns, not to lapse into thinking that Christ's humanity and Passion was an invention of the late Middle Ages. To support this, he provides examples from the Greek East dating back to the second century and from sixth-century Western Europe. In the same manner, he emphasizes that the traces of meditation, an activity considered a typically late medieval practice, had already appeared in the eleventh century, James H. Marrow, *Passion Iconography in the Northern European Art of the Late Medieval Middle Ages and Early Renaissance. A Study of the Transformation of the Sacred Methaphor into Descriptive Narrative* (Kortrijk:Van Ghemmert Publishing, 1979), 5, 8.
[5] Marrow, *Passion Iconography in the Northern European Art*, 1.

religious practices of earlier centuries.[6] The concept of devotion to the Passion certainly already existed for centuries in Christian culture before coming to the fore in the late medieval period. However, in the period examined here this concept gained special prominence. Following Marrow,[7] this process of evolution can be divided into three phases. The first phase is characterized by the cultivation of new emotions expressed through the manifestation of love and tears upon viewing the Eucharist. This appeared as early as the late tenth and eleventh century.[8] The changes also affected the language of piety, in which the concepts of tears, intimacy, and tenderness became more important. In this context Christ's Passion, "as the most perfect expression of His humanity," became "an ideal subject for the stimulation, through empathy, of powerful religious emotions."[9] However, although forms of an effective devotion to the humanity and sufferings of Christ were present by this time, they were primarily personal and spontaneous.[10]

The second phase, starting with the thirteenth century, is marked dominantly by new efforts to systematize the ways of expressing Passion devotion. The profound changes in Western theology and spirituality, namely, the "interpretation of the Incarnation that led to a heightened emphasis on Christ's proprietary sacrifice of himself as a human on behalf of the whole human race",[11] led to a greater demand for devotional texts of a theological character. While theoretical treatises were written to provide a new understanding of Christ's humanity, theological manuals provided practical instructions for the non-clerics.[12] Passion narratives, hymns, and prayers found their special purpose in disseminating devotional meditation

[6]Alasdair A. MacDonald, *The Broken Body. Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), vii.
[7] See Marrow, *Passion Iconography in the Northern European Art*, 25. I use Marrow's periodization, which is based mostly upon the evolution of the written and pictorial narratives, to which I add elements of other social practices of Passion devotion.
[8] Ibid, 25.
[9] Ibid, 8.
[10] See, Marrow, *Passion* Iconography *in the Northern European Art*, 25.
[11] Thomas H. Bestul, *The Texts of the Passion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 35.

activity. However, for non-clerics artistic expression had an even greater importance in spreading the new modes of spirituality. The artistic practices held a special place due to their use of visual artefacts which served as instruments in the process of contemplation. In order to help a believer imagine and relive the entire experience of the Passion, Christ's figure on the Cross had to be present, displaying his wounds as a product of suffering.[13]

A significant effort in spreading the new spirituality was initiated by the Franciscans. Saint Francis, to whom Marrow assigns the leading role in developing a methodical approach to the devotion to Christ, established a practical progress thanks to two crucial events. The first was staging a Nativity play demonstrating the birth of Christ, in Greccio in 1223, an event which emphasised the human nature of Christ's existence. The second, and possibly the most important event in his life, was his stigmata experience when Christ's wounds appeared on his body at the end of his life, transforming Saint Francis' body into an immediate imitation of Christ's Passion. These two dramatic moments paved a way for future activities and writings of St Francis' order,[14] changing the focus from abstract and contemplative elements of Christ's life to concrete details, especially around the Passion.

In the final phase, which occurred by the fourteenth and fifteenth century, Marrow recognizes "tendencies towards intensely emotional religiosity", partly related to the phenomenon of woman mystic movements which were spreading across Europe. Mystics, especially women, were responsible for the development of a special form of Passion devotion through the re-enactment of Christ's suffering passion. With origins in the

[12] Bestul's study provides detailed insight into the evolution of the narrative genres in the presentation of the Passion. It distinguishes those which are symbolic from those which are more visual and concentrate on detailed presentation of the sufferings. See Bestul, *The Texts of the Passion*, 34-56.

[13] The example of how visual presentation and literature corresponded is nicely described by Marrow where he mentions the example of the Secret Passion, a series of fourteenth and fifteenth century texts, and the contemporary pictorial presentations. This study will serve below as a source for comparing the elements presented in the dramatic genre with visual art and literary narratives. See Marrow, "Inventing the Passion in the Late Middle Ages", 23-52.

[14] In this context, Bestul especially emphasises the work of Bonaventura, particularly his works *Lignum vitae* and *Vitis mystica*. On Franciscan engagement in this context see, Bestul, *The Texts of the Passion*, 43-56.

phenomena from the second phase of the development, the performances were staged in the form of a public event and were usually followed by the appearance of stigmata.[15] These activities were likely shaped by the influence of new concepts of the body and pain which emerged in the course of this evolution. In the new development of the concept, pain ceased to represent punishment for sins and became an expression of compassion with the suffering of Christ. Furthermore, according to Robert Swanson,[16] the bodily manifestation provided an expressive dimension crucial for the new practice of *imitatio Christi*, achieved through self-imposition of the stigmata, physical humiliation (flagellation as an experience matching Christ's physical suffering), and painful asceticism.

As described in periodization, the development of Passion devotion did not occur instantly at one point in history, but gradually developed in the course of several centuries. Transformations in the dominant theological patterns played the most important role in the process, but were largely supplemented by the artistic elaboration of the concept in spreading the new spirituality among broader layers of society (including not only clerics, but also laymen). Therefore, rather than only being influenced by theological innovations, the representation of the Passion in art played a crucial role in changing the concept itself.

As a result of these changes, by the fifteenth century the pictorial representation had developed from a metaphorical image to an image representing suffering elaborated in detail,[17] while the Passion narratives also came to be loaded with biblical and extra-biblical

[15] Here I am referring to the trance performance of the Passion by solo performers whose activity can be regarded as influential in the development of the Passion plays. For an analysis of the performativity of the Passion in the case of the mystical female performer Elisabeth of Spalbeek and of Margery Kempe see Jesse Njus "Performing the Passion: A Study on the Nature of Medieval Acting" Diss. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 2010), 60-162.

[16] Robert N. Swanson, "Passion and Practice: The Social and Ecclesiastical Implications of Passion Devotion in the Late Middle Ages," in *The Broken Body. Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 1-31.

[17] At this point I should also stress that through the centuries pictorial presentation of Christ had a devotional role although they did not contain realistic elements and additional details, or, in the other words, it was presented metaphorically. However, with the passing of time and under changing circumstances the motif changed in the pictorial presentation. For a broader discussion on the devotional role of images in the Eastern and Western church and on the evolution of the motif see H. O. van Os. "The Discovery of an Early Man of Sorrows on a Dominican Triptych," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 41 (1978): 65-75.

details.[18] However, among the medieval artistic practices the theatrical elaboration of Christ's Passion certainly provided the most spectacular results.

Theatrical Modelling of Passion Devotion

The medieval dramatic genre of Passion play which emerged as a special type of devotional practice and as a sub-genre of medieval vernacular drama originated in the new modes of spirituality which arose in the late tenth century. The dramatic celebration of Christ's body in the Eucharist, Saint Francis' re-enactment of Christ, and the female performance of *imitatio Christi* represented only some of the instances in Christian tradition from which the Passion plays can be traced. Furthermore, if the Passion of Christ provided a "vehicle through which the faithful imagine, absorb, and gain understanding of Christ's death" ,[19] Passion plays provided the most explicit form of its representation. There were two notable characteristics of Passion plays.

First, theatre performance is by definition corporal. Other forms of art, such as painting or literary texts, thanks to their intuitively intelligible mediation of meanings, have been pointed out as important for spreading new religious sentiments. However, the performance's ability to operate physically[20] made the genre of Passion plays a particularly powerful medium in achieving this goal. Jill Stevenson argues generally that communities throughout history, but especially in the Middle Ages, employed theatrical performances for religious purposes.

How did the exchange of meaning between the senders and the recipients of religious messages in medieval theatre take place? Stevenson seeks to explain this through a classic semiotic model, which he calls "performing literacy". In the medieval Passion devotion

[18] See, Marrow, "Inventing the Passion", 28-29.
[19] Kupfer, *The Passion Story*, 3.
[20] Jill Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture. Sensual Piety in Late Medieval York* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 17.

context, performing literacy can be defined as "a strategy of seeing in which they [audience] derived the devotional meaning from the rhythmic encounter with an image's material."[21] Based upon the York-cycle plays, the author then reproduces the imagery of the patterns which are recalled while watching (and participating) in the performance. This meaning, the argument goes, was embodied in the props which were used, the gestures which were made, the spatial surroundings and the like, providing a useful tool in approaching devotional plays within a community.

The second crucial characteristic of Passion plays is closely related to the first one; it concerns the ambiguous status of medieval theatre in society. Medieval theatre existed in a tight-knit connection to religious institutions. Moreover, the dissemination of the dominant values, thanks to properties of performing literacy, was one of its main social functions. The theatre, in a word, was there to teach piety. At the same time, it is questionable if the fulfilment of this function could ever be fully achieved. The play, when staged, became more than just an artistic representation – it became a public event, where the sacred content was necessarily exposed to public influence. In the case of Passion plays, the Gospel's sacred content, together with Christ as the main figure, became "a place where the tensions between the sacred and the profane, the individual and the collective" were played out.[22] Despite the aims and proclaimed goals, therefore, in the medieval theatre the originally sacred content was always exposed to the risk of being made profane.

Thanks to its ambiguous status, the Passion play provides intriguing material for studying late medieval society. If the body of Christ as a symbol is at the same time "shaping and shaped by the social vision of the religious culture",[23] the image of Christ in the theatrical performances can be analyzed as a product of theological meaning-making and an indicator

[21] Ibid., 41.
[22] See Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body. Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 2005), 21-43.
[23] Ibid., 2.

of the local social ideology of the community. In this way, reading of Passion plays carries the potential for uncovering the reflections of the community in which they were performed. I will refer to the urban communities on the Eastern Adriatic coast.

APPROACHES TO EASTERN ADRIATIC PASSION PLAYS

As elsewhere in medieval Europe, the Passion of Christ was one of the most widespread literary motifs in Croatian medieval drama, with the urban communities of northern Dalmatia as focal points. Plays containing elements of Christ's passion originated in Zadar, Nin, Šibenik, Biograd, and Knin, and to a lesser extent in other settlements of the eastern Adriatic coast. The reason for this can be found in the advanced economic development which these cities experienced in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, but also in the fact that the miscellanies in which the plays were found were geographically located in close proximity. Eventually, in the seventeenth century, the plays spread along the coast both north and south, from the island of Krk to Budva, which presently stands on the coast of Montenegro.[24]

In this chapter I will briefly describe the corpus of Croatian Passion plays, and reflect upon the previous research, pointing out lacunae which still need to be addressed. I will then elaborate the methodological approach which I use in exploring these issues.

The corpus of Eastern Adriatic medieval Passion plays

Since the end of the nineteenth century, when the first edition of Croatian medieval drama was published,[25] there have been several editions containing dramas which were characterized as medieval.[26] Most notably, the complete edition of anonymous religious

[24] See Franjo Fancev, "Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja" [Croatian sacral presentations], *Narodne starine* 11 (1932): 1-16.

[25] MatijaValjavec, ed., Crkvena prikazańa starohrvatska XVI. i XVII. vijeka [Croatian Sacral Representations from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries] (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akadedmija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1893).

[26] Franjo Fancev, ed., *Muka Spasitelja našega i Uskrsnuće Isukrstovo: dva hrvatska prikazanja 15. vijeka* [*The Passion of our Saviour and The Resurrection of Christ*: Two Croatian representations], (Zagreb:Akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1939); Nikola Batušić and Amir Kapetanović, ed., *Pasije* [*Passion Plays*] (Zagreb: Erasmus naklada – Udruga Pasionska baština, 1998); Slavomir Sambunjak, *Tkonski zbornik : hrvatsko glagoljski tekstovi iz 16. stoljeća* [The Tkon Miscellany: Croatian glagolitic texts from the sixteenth century] (Tkon: Knjžnica glagoljska baština, 2001); Amir Kapetanović, "Nezapaženi ulomci iz *Muke Kristove* (1514.) iz petrogradske Berčićeve zbirke," [Unnoticed Fragments of Muka Isuhrstova (The Passion of Christ, 1514) from Berčić's Petrograd Miscellany] *Rasprave Instituta za hrvatsko jeziko slovlje* 34 (2008): 201-216.

poetry of the Croatian Middle Ages from 2010[27] represented a significant contribution. As part of this corpus, Croatian medieval dramatic texts include five fully or partially preserved pieces which depict the Passion of the Christ.

Muka Isuhrstova **(The Passion of Christ, 1514)** from the Klimantović Miscellany II is the oldest Passion play known on the Eastern Adriatic coast. It was discovered and published just recently, in 2008[28], which is not surprising given its length (the play is preserved only in two short fragments, altogether 60 lines in length) and the fact that the miscellany which it was a part of has been kept in Saint Petersburg.[29] According to the colophons, the Klimantovic miscellany II dates back to 1514, when it was collected and transcribed by the Franciscan friar Šimun Klimantović in Glavotok on the island of Krk (it was most likely written in the town of Sali on Dugi Otok in the Zadar archipelago).[30]

It contains only two short fragments, but despite its fragmented state, the two preserved parts are still valuable for this research:

- the prologue, because it involves direct communication with the audience (through the character of an angel who represents the role of the prologue teller),
- the Judas scene as it is identical with the corresponding parts in the other two texts (this has a crucial significance for determining the identity of the texts).

[27] The introduction to this most complete edition of Croatian medieval poetry (poetry is term which the editors use due to the fact that all the genres are written in verse) also provides a systematized description of the whole Croatian medieval corpus written in verse. From the thematic classification it is noticeable that the passion topic is most widely present. See *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovno pjesništvo. Pjesme, plačevi i prikazanjana starohrvatskom jeziku* [Croatian medieval poetry. Poems, laments, and representations in the Old Croatian Language], ed. Amir Kapetanović, Dragica Malić, and Kristina Štrkalj Despot (Zagreb: Institut za hrvatskijeziki jezikoslovlje, 2010).
[28] Kapetanović, "Nezapaženi ulomci iz Muke Kristove," 209-12. This is also the only study dedicated to these fragments exclusively in which the content and the linguistic features are described. The second publication is in Kapetanović, Malić, Štrklaj Destpot, ed., *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovno pjesništvo,* 555-557.
[29] Kapetanović, "Nezapaženi ulomci iz Muke Kristove," 201-16.
[30] Fancev, "Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja," 3.

The undated ***Muka* (The *Passion*)**[31] was recorded in the *Tkon Miscellany* and contains 1905 lines. The *Tkon Miscellany*, in which it was found, contains different texts with various thematic contents – both religious and secular – in verse and prose.[32] The play was transcribed into the miscellany sometime in the period between 1492 and 1515 (the exact date is still unclear), most likely on the estate of Bernardin Frankopan, duke of Modruš.[33]

The first couple of introductory scenes of this play are missing. It starts with the scene of Mary Magdalene's repentance enhanced by Christ's speech. After this scene the plays includes the subsequent scenes: the entrance to Jerusalem, Judas' betrayal of Christ, Christ bidding farewell to his mother, the Last Supper, the scene in the Gethsemane garden, Judas's kiss, the trial in front of Annas and Caiaphas and then in front of Pilate and Herod. After the scenes of the trial, the play also contains the scene of John bringing the news to Virgin Mary, scene with Veronica, the crucifixion, Longinus repentance, the deposition of the body from the cross, the lamentation, and Peter's cry and repentance.

A cycle play***, Muka spasitelja našega* (The Passion of our Saviour, 1556)** recorded in the so-called *Play Miscellany* is the longest (3658 lines) and the only completely preserved play from Eastern Adriatic coast.[34] It originated in Vinodol, on the northern part of the Adriatic, by compiling several cases of the Passion poetry, the cries of the Virgin Mary, and also by adding a fragment from the *Passion* from the Tkon Miscellany.

This play contains depictions of the same scenes as in the *Passion* with some modifications: the Gospel motifs are described in a more detail, some scenes are expanded, and other scenes are additionally included. According to the stage direction, the play was

[31] First published in Franjo Fancev, ed., *Građa za povijest hrvatske književnosti XIV* [The Sources for the History of Croatian Literature, vol. 14] (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1939), 247-285. After that it was published in Sambunjak, 76-237; Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, ed., 559-619.
[32] Štefanić, *Glagoljski rukopisi Jugoslavenske akademije* II, 29.
[33] On the cultural activity of the region of Modruš out of which this play may have emerged see Tihomil Meštrović, "Počeci hrvatske drame i kazališta u Zadru," [The beginnings of Croatian drama and theatre in Zadar] in *Dani hvarskog kazališta*, 161-173.

supposed to be performed in two parts (on the Palm Sunday and Good Friday). However, experts[35] agree that in fact it was most probably performed within the period of three days: on the Palm Sunday (Lazarus' resurrection, the reaction of Jewish masters, Christ's speech in the temple, the scene in the house of the Simon the Leper, Christ's anticipation of his death); Maundy Thursday (the last supper, Judas' betrayal, the prayer in the Garden, Peter's denying of Christ, and trials); and Good Friday (the torment and judgment, path to Calvary and the crucifixion, the lamentations, the deposition of the body, and the scene of putting the body into the tomb).

The fourth text, commonly entitled **"Rijeka Fragment Containing the Role of the Virgin Mary"**[36] (from the second quarter if the sixteenth century) is only a brief fragment (118 lines). Possibly due to its length, the Rijeka Fragment has not caused much curiosity among researchers, with rare exceptions.[37] However, this fragment is specific in that it includes only one role, that of the Virgin Mary. It depicts the scene in which John brings Mary the news of Pilate's judgment, their attempt to visit Pilate, and lamentations during Christ's path to Calvary, but only from the perspective of Mary. Given the lack of replies of other characters, besides Mary, it can be assumed that the text was intended for the performer (in this case, the performer playing the role of Mary) to practice their role.[38]

The final play**, *Mišterij vele lip i slavan od Isus kako je s križa snet, zatim v grob postavljen* (A Very Nice and Glorious Mystery about Jesus' Deposition From the Cross**

[34] It was first published in Valjavec, *Crkvena prikazańa starohrvatska XVI. i XVII. vijeka,* 1-58. After that it was published in Batušić and Kapetanović, *Pasije*, 47-98 and Kapetanovi, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovno pjesništvo,* 619-739.

[35] Fancev, *Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja;* Perillo, *Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja*, Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovno pjesništvo.*

[36] Published by Vjeskoslav Štefanić, "Riječki fragmenti. Glagoljica i u Riječkoj općini," [Rijeka's fragments. Glagolitic script even in Rijeka's community] in *Zbornik historijskog institute Jugoslavenske akademije* 3, (1960): 224-7.

[37] See Štefanić, "Riječki fragmenti," 215-87.

[38] For the explanation of the theatrical usage see Štefanić, "Riječki fragmenti", 220; Batušić *Pasije,* 12-13; Josip Vučković "Emotions in Medieval Croatian Passion Plays and the Elicitation of Compassion," in *Pojžejno! Iskazivanje i poimanje emocija u hrvatskoj pisanoj kulturi srednjega i ranoga novoga vijeka* [*Sing wistfully! The expression and conceptualisation of emotions in medieval and Early Modern Croatian written culture*], ed. Amir Kapetanović (Zagreb: Institut za hrvatski jezik i jezikoslovlje, 2012), 119.

and How He was Taken to the Tomb, 1556)[39] is short (631 line) and not totally complete. This play, also recorded in the *Play Miscellany,* is a thematic continuation of *The Passion of Our Saviour*. The *Mystery about Jesus' Deposition* contains following scenes: Longinus's piercing of Christ's body; Mary and Martha's lamentation in front of the cross; Joseph and witnesses in front of Pilate; Jacob, Joseph and the Centurion in front of the cross; the Centurion speaking to Pilate; the Centurion in front of the cross together with Joseph and Nicodemus; Joseph and Nicodemus buying the ointment; the deposition of the body; treating of the body with ointment by Joseph, Nicodemus, Mary, Mary Magdalene, John, and Martha; placing the body into the tomb; the scene with Pharisees; closing of the tomb; and the Centurion's speech in front of the tomb.

Methodology

The corpus of medieval Croatian drama has so far been studied from several angles, scrutinizing its philological aspects,[40] textual and theatrical elements[41] (analyzing their

[39] It is first published in Valjavec, *Crkvena prikazańa starohrvatska XVI. i XVII. vijeka*, 58-68. After it was published in Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovno pjesništvo*, 770-790.

[40] See Kapetanović, "Nezapaženi ulomci iz *Muke Kristove*", 201-216; idem, "Najstarije hrvatsko pjesništvo" in *Hrvatsko srednjovjekovno pjesništvo*, xv-lix; Nikica Kolumbić, "Postanak i razvoj hrvatske srednjovjekovne pasionske poezije i drame" [The origin and development of Croatian medieval Passion poetry and drama], PhD Dissertation, University of Zadar, 1964; Vjekoslav Štefanić, *Glagoljski rukopisi Jugoslavenske akademije. I. dio, Biblija, apokrifii legende, litorgijski tekstovi, egzorcizmi i zapisi, molitvenici, teologija, crkveni govori (homiletika), pjesme* [Glagolitic manuscripts of the Yugoslav Academy part I, the Bible, apocrypha and legends, liturgical texts, exorcisms and their records, prayers, theology, sermons, songs] (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnost, 1969); Vjekoslav Štefanić, *Glagoljski rukopisi Jugoslavenske akademije II. dio:zbornici različitoj sadržaja, regule, statute, registry, varia indexi, album slika* [Glagolitic Manuscripts of the Yugoslav Academy, Part II: Miscellanies of Different Contents, Laws, Statutes, Registries, Indexes, Collection of Pictures] (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanost i umjetnosti, 1970); Kristina Štrkalj Despot, "Tekstualna kohezija u hrvatskoj srednjovjekovnoj drami" [Textual cohesion in Croatian medieval drama], *Croatica et Slavica Iadertina* 4 (2009): 65-87.

[41] See Nikola Batušić, *Povijest hrvatskog kazališta* [*History of Croatian Theatre*] (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1978); idem, "Hrvatsko srednjovjekovno kazalište" [Medieval Croatian theatre] in idem and Amir Kapetanović, ed., *Pasije*, 7-17; Dunja Fališevac, "Struktura i funkcija hrvatskih crkvenih prikazanja" [The structure and function of Croatian sacral representations] in *Dani Hvraskog kazališta* [The Days of Hvar's medieval and folklore drama and theatre (Split: Književni krug, 1985), 332-347; Francesco Saverio Perillo, *Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja* [Croatian Sacral Representations] (Split: Mogućnosti, 1978); Boris Senker, "Didaskalije u srednjovjekovnoj drami s teatrološkog aspekta" [Stage directions in medieval drama--theatrological aspects] in *Dani Hvaraskog kazališta*, 426-451; Franjo Fancev "Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja" [Croatian Sacral Presentations], *Narodne starine* 11 (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1932).

origins, dating; stage directions, stage props, and scenography), and genealogy.[42] However, several important questions remain unexplored: How were the plays performed? What was the reaction of the audience[43] (for example, regarding possible signs of the pious engagement of the audience)? And finally, what was the relation of a theatrical performance and the community where it was performed? I will focus on these issues, borrowing the main theoretical tools from Stevenson, Beckwith, and other authors described in the previous chapter. In doing so, crucial importance will be given to the shift from textual to performing aspects of Passion plays. In order to achieve this goal, two methodological approaches will be applied.

One single play or different plays? A debate on identity

The approach of "New Philology," as elaborated by Stephen G. Nichols and Bernard Cerquiglini since the 1990s, advocates a novel way of discovering textual meaning using variants in the manuscripts in a new way. Rather than analyzing different variants of a text with the aim of reconstructing one "original," ideal text, as in the traditional approach, the New Philologists consider the different variants of the text as originals in their own right, which then produce meaning under the different circumstances in which they were conceived.[44]

Why is this approach important for the study of Croatian Passion plays? I will explain this on the example of the play *Muka spasitelja našega* (The Passion of Our Saviour). In the scholarship on Croatian medieval literature, this play has traditionally been regarded as a

[42] See Adriana Car-Mihec, *Dnevnik triju žanrova* [Diary of three genres] (Zagreb: Hrvatskicentra ITI-UNESCO, 2003), Dunja Fališevac, "Genološki identitet hrvatske drame" [The genealogical identity of Croatian drama], *Republika* 7-8 (1992): 176-187; Kolumbić, "Postanak i razvoj hrvatske srednjovjekovne drame"; Fancev, "Hrvatsko crkvena prikazanja". This group of studies provides a somewhat questionable hypothesis for the origins of this corpus, denying connections with contemporary European drama. This hypothesis needs to be revised; this, however, will not be the topic of my study.

[43] The recent study by Vučković, "Emotions in Medieval Croatian Passion Plays," presents progress in the context of researching the reception of this corpus and in approaches to the plays in general. His study will be discussed more in the empirical chapters.

single play recorded in different miscellanies. Differences in the number of verses and various linguistic features were explained as a result of local characteristics in different contexts where the play was performed. This development, the argument goes, led to divergent paths through which the Passion play was recorded. A detailed comparative approach to these texts, however, brings this interpretation into question. If the differences between four versions of the same text (mainly concerning number of verses and length of the text), indeed, emerged solely as a result of various geographical contexts where it was performed, then how to account for other differences in Passion plays? Such differences may indicate, in contrast, that instead of four variations of the same play, there are in fact four separate plays of the same genre. By the same token, in my analyses, each text will be studied separately, which will allow me to distinguish between different strategies among the texts of presenting the Passion.

Implicit theatrical performance

Analyzing the texts as implicit theatrical performances rather than from external evidence is the second main methodological procedure.[45] In the plays studied here, this approach is facilitated by the fact that the actual texts were not written before, but after, the performance. Instead of serving as a template for the performance, the actual performance served as a template for the play in written form. This makes it possible to decode important information about the context of performance, for instance, regarding the reaction the audience experienced. The prologue, as a part of text where "the fourth wall is broken,"[46] serves this purpose. In the prologue, no theatrical illusion is present, and the actors communicate directly with the audience, allowing the researcher to recognize various

[44] See Stephan G. Nichols, "Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 1-10.
[45] This approach is elaborated in Marco De Marinis, *Capire il teatro. Lineamenti di unanuova teatrologia* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2008).

possible patterns of communication between the audience and actors (this, for instance, yields information about the stage setting). Finally, the stage directions, written in the second person singular or plural, provide instructions to the actors on how to behave during the performance, indicating how the play was performed in reality. These textual and paratextual indications of the performance will serve as pieces of a puzzle which I will try to put together in the attempt to get an image of the performance of this corpus of plays.

[46] This is a theatrical term which refers to all theatrical acts, by which it is implied that that the things presented on the scene are illusion.

STAGING THE PASSION PLAYS

The Passion play genre, even though building on essentially identical material basis (i.e., the Gospels), contains a variety of motifs used to depict the story of Christ's suffering and Crucifixion and is characterized by different strategies of expressing devotion to the Passion. In order to elaborate these varieties within the corpus of Passion plays from the Eastern coast of the Adriatic, in this chapter I will explore these differences in two fundamental dimensions: first, on the levels of content, where each of the plays will be described individually; and second, in their performing perspective, where I will provide a structural analysis of the whole corpus.

The *Passion of Christ,* 1514 – Klimantović Misscellany II

This play is preserved in two fragments only. The first fragment of the play, typically for the genre of Passion plays, begins with the Angels' prologue, which is announced in the stage directions in order to prepare the audience for the events which will follow and to guide their reception. This can be demonstrated from the following segment:

> *He will die on the cross*
> *To save you all from the death,*
> *As it was said in the Gospel,*
> *And by that he will give you the Heaven,*
> *By dying for you, sweet Jesus.*
> *Set your mind on that*
> *And cordially listen to me.* [47]

The second fragment depicts the conversation of Judas with Caiaphas and the Centurion, in which they negotiate the delivery of Christ and the amount of money which Judas will receive, with an especially interesting auto-reflexive description of the classic motif of selling one's soul to the devil (on which I will elaborate more in one of the following sections):

Now I have the money
Which I wanted to acquire so much
And if by this I ́m giving my soul to the devil
I don ́t mind.[48]

The *Passion,* Tkon Miscellany(first quarter of the sixteenth century)

The first part of the play is missing, leaving the complete number of verses not entirely certain (it is unclear how many scenes from the first part are lost). The first scene shows Mary Magdalene before and after hearing Christ's sermon. Unlike Passion plays from other parts of Europe (Maastricht[49], Benediktbeuern, Arras)[50], in which Mary Magdalen's worldliness is emphasized through a detailed description of her clothing and dance sequences, in the Passion from the Tkon miscellany this is announced only in the stage directions (*First, there goes Mary Magdalene, nicely dressed and acting vainly*[51]), while her transformation is presented through a long penitent monologue directed to the audience after her encounter with Christ.

The next scene shows Christ's glorious entrance into Jerusalem, followed by the scene of Judas' betrayal of Christ (which is much shorter than in the Klimantović Miscellany II), the scene of Christ bidding farewell to his mother, and the Last Supper during which the Eucharist is established. While most scenes are not significantly different from biblical dramas in other parts of Europe, the scene in the Garden is an important exception:[52] the appearance of the allegory of the Seven Virtues. Faith, Hope, Prudence, Temperance,

[47] "Za nas će umuriti na križ v(i)se/ Da vas smrtivečneizbavi,/ k(a)ko S(v)etopismopravi,/terevam raj udili/umrivšiza vas I(sus) , mili. /Na to pametpostavite,/srčeno me vsislišite. Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 555.
[48] *Ovo pinez i jur ja imih /ke dobiti veleželih/Ako svragu dušu daju/li da budu, tim ne haju.* Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 556.
[49] As, for instance, Maastricht's case described in the study of Carla Dauven-Van Knippenberg, "Borderline Texts: the Case of the Maastricht (Ripuarian) Passion Play," in *Urban Theatre in the Low Countries*, Strietman, Elsa, and Peter Happé, eds., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 37-52.
[50] See Lynette R. Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 118.
[51] Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*,559.
[52] Judging by the detailed list of motifs provided by Muir, *Biblical Drama*, 126-42.

Fortitude, Justice, and Love, one by one come to speak to Christ, encouraging him to finish his mission.[53] If he does not, each of the Virtues will lose its value in the world, as, for instance, the Virtue of Prudence:

> *Why you tremble while you pray,*
> *Do you prefer not to die?*
> *Either you ransom the people*
> *Or you mistreat prudence!*
> *It is therefore wisdom that*
> *One finishes what one has started.* [54]

This peaceful, emotional, and harmonious scene comes to an end as Judas and the soldiers enter the Garden. What follows is a dynamic scene with emphatic theatrically and visually attractive moments which begin with Judas' kiss, continues with the miraculous moment of cutting off and healing Malchus' ear, and ends with Christ's arrest.[55] Even though the theatricality of the event, which contains the sword fight between Peter and the soldiers who seek to arrest Jesus, helps explain its popularity (most Passion plays from the period use this motif), in the case of the Passion play from Tkon miscellany this is even more so given the contrast to the previous scene in the garden.

After the arrest, Jesus is put on trial, first in before Caiaphas and Annas, and then in front of Pilate and Herod, with the scene in which Peter denies Christ serving as an *intermezzo* between the two trials. Following Peter's long and penitent monologue, the play goes on to show Pilate's inquisition. The torturing of Christ, however, is mentioned only in the stage directions:

(*Here Pilate takes Jesus inside and makes him crowned, bitten, and castigated),*[56] implying that the audience did not witness the violence on stage.

[53] The origin of this motif in the play is still to be discovered; in this study it will be discussed only in the context of performance.
[54] "Ča trepčuć tako moliš/ al brž ne umriti voliš?/ Ali ti je plk odkupiti/ ali mudrost pogrditi/ Mudrost vsa ka tako stoji: / ča j'ki počal da nadstoji." Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*,580.
[55] See Muir, *Biblical Drama*, 131.
[56] Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 597.

In another long and penitent monologue following Pilate's inquisition, Judas shows his remorse. However, unlike other examples of Passion plays in which Judas' suicide is explicitly shown, the Passion from Tkon miscellany includes the mention of it, but does not show it in the scene.[57] It is merely indicated in Judas words:

> *For I don't have anywhere to calm myself,*
> *I'm gonna finish my life,*
> *Dedicate my soul to suffering.*
> *There I'll finish my life,*
> *I ṁ going to hang myself.*[58]

The path to the Calvary in this play includes emotional lamentations by the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Veronica over the suffering of Christ, who is also present in the scene (unlike the Gospel version, in the play Christ falls to the ground only twice; after the first fall he talks to the daughters of Jerusalem and the second time he falls down Veronica wipes his face with her veil.) There is no special bridge to the scene of the Crucifixion. This is introduced and explained only in one stage direction (*So they brought him and crucified him, and the thieves, as well…*),[59] followed by a penitent monologue of the thief crucified on the right side of Jesus.

As an act of mercy, Longinus stabs Christ's body one final time in order to end his suffering. After this his blindness is miraculously cured. After the staging of Christ's death his body is taken down from the cross accompanied by lamentations of Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, John the Apostle, Mary of Jacob, and Peter, which brings the play to an end.

The *Passion of Our Savior*, 1556 – The Play Miscellany

This play contains depictions of the scenes elaborated in the play analyzed in the previous chapter, with some modifications: the Gospel motifs are described in more detail,

[57] See Muir, *Biblical drama*, 132.
[58] "Pokleniman di umiriti/ život tuž ni grenskončati/ dušu moju v mukedati/ Tim ću život moj skončati, /gremsam se beobisiti." Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP* 602.
[59] Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 608.

some scenes are expanded, and other scenes are additionally included. Considering that all other contents of the play are identical to the Passion play from Tkon, in the following paragraphs I will point out only parts of the play which differ from the former: first the scene of raising Lazarus from the dead; second, the conversion of Mary Magdalene; and finally, a description of Christ's torture and crucifixion, as well as the role of the Centurion in this event.

After the usual beginning with the prologue of the Angel, this play introduces the character of Lazarus. (This scene was probably part of the previously described play as well, but this remains a matter of conjecture as the beginning of the Tkon play has been lost.) The miraculous resuscitation of Lazarus precedes the conversation of Caiaphas and Annas. In the play, the two Pharisees are shown as worried because of Christ's achievements and, in order to stop him, they plot his death. The Lazarus episode, therefore, acts as a trigger for the following sequence of events.

The second main difference from the previous play concerns the conversion of Mary Magdalene, represented in a more detailed manner than in the previously described play. For instance, the *Passion of Our Savior* contains the scene of Mary Magdalene buying ointment from the pharmacist in order to salve Christ's body, which serves as a devotional expression of her conversion. As a curiosity, it can be added that the purchase of the ointment is criticized by Judas since the money spent on ointment should rather be shared with the poor. However, in contrast to other European plays in which Judas uses the accusation of "opulence" when justifying his act of betrayal, this event is not mentioned later in this play.

Third, the two plays differ in the description of Christ's crucifixion. In contrast to *The Passion of Christ* where the torment is mentioned only in one stage direction and is not shown on stage, in *The Passion of our Savior* this moment is much more elaborated, primarily in the scene in which Christ is cruelly flogged, abused, and shamefully crowned.

Each of the actors in the scene then reflects upon his activity and explains what he has done. Finally Pilate sums up the torment in these words:

> *This man was cruelly tortured,*
> *He was flogged very stingingly,*
> *He suffered a lot hard pain*
> *Which was that hard, I can see, that*
> *He can't stand on his feet.* [60]

After Jesus is tortured, Mary, Mary Magdalene, Martha, and John go to see Pilate, begging for his life. However, they are cruelly stopped by the Centurion, a character who will have an important role in the scene of the Crucifixion. Even though excelling in cruelty during the torture and crucifixion, it is interesting to note that the Centurion is also the first one to admit his guilt. He expresses his grief through a long monologue of penitence, and finally by hugging the cross where just a while ago he had helped crucify Jesus. In comparison to other European Passion plays, it is worth noting the unusual part given to the Centurion, firstly in the role of the main negative character, and then as a convert. [61]

Besides these three main differences, the *Passion of our Savior* differs from the earlier play in several other ways. In the scene of the Last Supper, which is more elaborated then in the Passion from the Tkon Miscellany, all the Apostles are shown as actively involved characters. After Christ announces that he will be betrayed by one of them, each of them provides his own defense in the short monologues. Secondly, in a number of scenes Judas is accompanied by the Devil, who leads him to the Jews on the way to betraying Christ. Finally, the last words of the play are said by the Angel, who in this case serves as a mediator who leads the audience from the theatrical illusion to their everyday reality.

[60] "Mučenčlo vikov bi kruto, / biči fruštan vele ļuto, / dosta j' tarpilbrit ke muke / ke su bile, vidim, tuke/ da ne more ne nogah stati," Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 699.
[61] On the role of the Centurion in other European drama see Muir, *Biblical Drama*, 135-42.

Very Nice and Glorious Mystery of Jesus's Deposition from the Cross and How he was Taken to the Tomb) – 1556 Play Miscellany

The Mystery of Jesus' Deposition is the fourth Passion play from the corpus of East Adriatic Passion plays which I describe in this section. However, before moving to the description of the content, it is necessary to discuss the controversy over its identity.

The Passion plays described previously differ in length, the number of motifs which they depict, and in the way those motifs are presented. Yet, both the *Passion* and the *Passion of our Savior* (the fragments from the Klimantović Miscellany II are too short to be considered here) depict events from the life of Christ (most notably the Crucifixion). The fourth Passion play, however, contains events which occurred only after Christ's death. What is the relevance of this aspect of the play for the debate on its status and origins? The dramatic time of the play (or, in narratological terms, the sujet), together with the fact that it was found in the Play Miscellany (just like the *Passion)*, in my view quite likely led to the confusion on its identity.

The *Mystery of Jesus' Deposition* was first published[62] in 1893 as part of the cycle play *The Passion of our Savior*. The fact that the play covered only events after Christ's death led the editor to the conclusion that the play had not been written as an independent piece. On the contrary, the dramatic time sequence only followed the events covered in the Passion of our Savior, which made it reasonable to conclude that the *Mystery of Jesus' Deposition* only constituted the second part of the *Passion of our Savior*. This has, for instance, been argued by Francesco Saverio Perillo, who regards this play served merely as a template for The *Passion of Our Savior*, and does not think it should not be regarded as an independent work. Several aspects of the work, however, call this interpretation into question.

[62] Valjavec, *Crkvena prikazańa starohrvatska* 58-68.

First, the title of the play is mentioned in the stage direction: *Here begins the Very Nice and Glorious Mystery of Jesus' Deposition from the Cross and How he was Taken to the Tomb*. Second, the play contains a prologue and an epilogue, both spoken by the character of the Angel, which signals a beginning and an end of an individual and coherent whole. Finally, the play as a whole is self-explanatory for the audience; it does not depend on external references in that it provides the answers to the questions it poses.[63] I now turn to the content of the play.

The *Mystery of Jesus' Deposition* is the part of the Passion story which begins with the moment of Longinus piercing Christ's body for the last time, depicts the deposition of the body from the cross and its entombment. Two features of the play make it especially interesting. The first one is the treatment of the body. While taking Christ from the Cross, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and the Virgin Mary provide a dedicated and emotional recitation celebrating each part of the body. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus also prepare an expensive ointment which they bought from the pharmacist for the wounds– one of the rare Passion plays in the European corpus which contains a mention of the treatment of the body with ointment.[64]

The second important feature concerns a paratextual aspect in which the reader is warned that a part of the play, involving Peter, is missing. The lost part, the stage directions continue, can be found in some other writing: *The rest, what misses here, from Peter ś part, try to find there on the paper. After Peter finishes, the Angel gives the blessing.*[65] This stage direction is indicative of the patchwork method used for constructing medieval Passion plays.

[63] This analysis is in accordance with other authors such as Nikica Kolumbić, *Po običaju začanjavac* [Following the tradition of 'začinjavci'] (Split: Književnikrug, 1994), for whom the *Mystery about Jesus' Deposition* represents an autonomous play which was merely inspired by one of the Passion plays analyzed earlier in this chapter; and editors of two later editions of the play who published it as an autonomous work – Batušić and Kapetanović, *Pasije*, 29-45, and Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 770-91 These authors show good intuition in rejecting the earlier hypothesis.

[64] See Muir, *Biblical drama*, 138.

[65] "Ostalo ča tu manka od Petra išći tamo naj provo bahara(t). i pokle Petar svarši, Angje(l) da bl(a)goslov," Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 789.

It implies that the play was composed of several different texts which the anonymous author combined to create the final product.

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The analysis of the textual content of these Eastern Adriatic Passion plays provides a descriptive account of the whole corpus: on the one hand, this resulted in an individual analysis of each play while, on the other hand, it allowed comparative insight on the level of the corpus. What can be learned from this comparative overview? Even though the plays do not show large content variations (which is not surprising given the limited scope of motifs which were available), different strategies were employed when using these elements. Monologues, lamentations, visual information, and supplementing motifs from the Gospels with external characters and stories, are various means through which the authors of Passion plays achieved originality in among the representatives of the genre. Below I turn to the structural analysis of the performance.

Time of performance

The close relationship between medieval theatre and religious rites determined several periods within a year's span when theatre production was especially active. The periods of the most vivid theatrical activity revolved around the three most important Christian holidays: Easter, when the performances were thematically related to the Passion and Resurrection; Christmas, with the tradition of Nativity plays; and Corpus Christi, during the summer festivities,[66] which traditionally included plays containing various Biblical motifs. Given that the sources from the Eastern Adriatic do not indicate the existence of Nativity plays, it can be concluded that the Passion plays analyzed in here were performed either during Easter or in

[66] Miri Rubin notes that: "The Play of Corpus Christi has been used to describe a variety of dramatic performances which took place in summer around the feast of Corpus Christi (which could occur around 21 May and 24 June)". See Miri Rubin *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991) 273.

the period of Corpus Christi, when most plays in most European countries were performed. However, even though the period of Corpus Christi cannot be ruled out completely, two arguments indicate that the Passion plays from the Eastern Adriatic were performed primarily during the Easter season.

First, the tradition of Corpus Christi never had an important social role on the Adriatic coast,[67] as in Northern Europe (perhaps climate conditions can help to explain this difference: unlike urban communities in Northern Europe where festivities could be organized only during summer, in the short periods between "never-ending winter", the warm Mediterranean climate allowed the organization of open-air activities in other seasons of the year, e.g., spring[68]). The second argument can be found in the *Passion of Our Saviour*, where stage directions (the first part of the play: *The act of the Passion of Our Saviour starts, firstly on the Palm day*;[69] second part of the play: *The beginning of the act is on Good Friday;*[70]), unambiguously determine the staging of the play in the period around Easter.

Finally, I turn to the duration of the plays. The examples taken from the *Passion of Our Saviour* clearly imply that the play was performed over several days (the first part on Palm Sunday, the second part on Good Friday). As for the other plays in the corpus, even though no evidence exists on the duration question, it is reasonable to assume that neither of them was performed over several days. Due to their length and the few technical requirements for the performance, both *The Passion* and *The Mystery of Jesus' Deposition* were most likely performed on only one day (given that The *Passion* from Klimantović

[67] On the broader context of festivities and religiosity in Dalmatia see Bernardin Škunca, *Zakrižen na otoku Hvaru* [Following the cross on the island of Hvar] (Hvar: Biskupski ordijat, 2013), 137-50.

[68] When contextualising the York Mystery cycle Pamela King notes that when approaching the time of performance of the plays pragmatically, Corpus Christi day clearly becomes the holiday which fell closest to the longest day, offered the best promise of good weather that Northern England can hope for. See Pamela King, *The York Mystery Cycle and the Worship of the City* (London: Queen Mary, University of London, 2006), 8.

[69] *Počińačin od Muke Spasiteļa našega, najprvo na Cvitnicu*. Kapetanović, Malić, Štrklaj Despot, ed., *HSP*, 619.

[70] "Počet je čina na Veliki Petak," . Kapetanović, Malić, Štrklaj Despot, ed., *HSP*, 691. Štefanić, however warns that in the manuscript, that the scene in which Christ announces his death ends with the words *Hic finis dominice*. Moreover, the next scene is introduced with the sign of the cross and the capital letter A. This brings to the conclusion the play was performed within the three days. See Štefanić, *Glagoljski rukopisi*, 291.

Miscellany 2 is preserved only in one short fragment, it is difficult to decide on the duration of its performance).

Place of performance

Unlike the temporal dimension of passion plays, which was provided from the stage directions, the spatial dimension is more difficult to reconstruct. In the absence of written sources which would give a hint of how the performances were staged, this aspect remains obscure to historical analysis.[71] Some help, however, comes from the stage directions and the spatial relations implied in the text.

The first direction from the *Passion* is indicative in this sense: *Angel, after placing yourself on the convenient place…*[72] The adjective *convenient,* which is used to describe the position of the character, implies that the performance should not happen on the fixed common stage. The performer[73] in the role of the Angel is instructed to stand at an appropriate place where he can be seen. This in turn implies that no place on the stage is predefined. An alternative is the possibility of staging this prologue on the *trovats* or *postants*, smaller improvised wooden stages which were used for the appearance of the characters of Angels.[74]

Furthermore, both the *Passion* and the *Passion of Our Saviour* contain directions for movement; the reader of the dramatic text can imagine the characters moving from one place to another, while saying monologues. This is visible from the example of short preserved fragments in the Klimantović Miscellany. In the betrayal scene Judas utters the words:

Come upstairs and let's start moving

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[71]The attempt to provide a description of the performance aspects of Croatian medieval drama was provided by Francesco Saverio Perillo, *Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja* [*Croatian Church Presentations*] (Split: Mogućnosti, 1978).

[72] "Ańel stavšina mestu podobnu….," Kapetanović, Malić, Štrklaj Despot, ed., *HSP*, 619.

[73] I am avoiding using the expression "actor" because at that time there were no professional actors.

[74] Here I refer to the data provided by Turin's manuscript MS. X 29 which contains notes for staging the Passion play. The description and possible reconstruction is provided by Véronique Plesch, "Notes for the Staging of a Late Medieval Passion Plays" in *Material Culture and Medieval Drama*, ed. Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999).

let ś arrest him
come upstairs and let's start moving
we shall not stay here any longer[75]

The entrance of Christ into Jerusalem also provides an indication of space (both in the *Passion* and the *Passion of our Saviour* which contain this scene). Christ enters Jerusalem on a donkey until he reaches the gate of the city, as in an example from the *Passion of our Saviour*: *Here Jesus with his Apostils ride a donkey towards to city of Jerusalem. Children, when noticing Jesus reaching the gates of the church, come to him…*[76] The imagined city gates are represented in the text as the most important part of the city and a point of gravitation for other characters is the church door. In the case of the *Passion of Our Saviour*, which is performed over three days, this can lead to the conclusion that the same location was used for the most important parts of each day – the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the deposition of Christ's body – which occur after the characters gather around the gates.

In an attempt to provide a description of the conditions in which Croatian medieval drama was performed, Savero Perillo gives the following proposition: On the right of the audience and on the left of the Good is hell; on the other side is heaven; in the middle is a space with no fixed meaning. As an underlying assumption, the performance of passion plays in Perillo's[77] view occurred on a fixed stage. In my analysis, however, this seems highly unlikely. As seen in excerpts quoted in the analysis, numerous elements of the three preserved passion plays indicate spatial movements which could not be achieved on a simple conventional stage. The same applies to numerous events presented in the plays that could

[75] "Stani gori i pojdimo/ isa dagauhitimo/ stan ʾ tegoriterepojimo/već ne stojimo. Kapetanović, Malić, Štrklaj Despot, ed., HSP, 555.
[76] "Totu Isus s učenici svojimi i naosl(a)cu ja j(a) jući gradu Jerus(o)limu i vidivši dica Isusa, priš(a)dšina vrata crikv(e)na, pojdusurot ńemu govoreći." Kapetanović, Malić, Štrklaj Despot, ed., *HSP*, 625.
[77] Perillo uncritically took the example of the French play *Résurection* from the eleventh century, provided a description of it, and concluded that the "disposition of the stage in Croatian religious theatre, should not differ a lot." By making this conclusion based on the applying analogy to the description of the historical context of the performance he omitted recognising the importance of four to five centuries of temporal distance, the evolution of the religious theatre, and, finally, omits regarding the signals of the special framework the texts. See Perillo *Hrvatska crkvena prikazanja*, 65.

not fit on a stage without developed *mise en scène* instruments, which appeared only in the subsequent centuries.

As a solution for these problems, there are indications in all three plays that the passion plays were staged in several places across town rather than on one fixed stage. The hypothesis of the movable performance, moreover, is additionally supported by the tradition of processional expressions of Passion devotion which were conducted in the form of a moving procession (or processional drama, as Wiles defines it[78]), whereby different parts of the play were performed in different parts of the town, as the wagons continued to move.[79] Even though there is no evidence that Corpus Christi processions occurred on the Eastern Adriatic coast, there is good reason to believe that religious processions equivalent to Corpus Christi existed in medieval communities of the region, in which case they might had left an impact in the emergence of movable theatrical performances organized within passion plays.

Acting in the Passion play

The performance dimension of the Passion plays includes a series of intriguing questions: who performed the plays? What was the identity and social background of the performers? How did they talk, move on the stage, and in what manner did they present the content of the plays? These questions can be answered using two types of sources: the medieval statutes and inventories of confraternities whose members often performed in Passion plays, and the texts of the plays analyzed in this chapter.

The concept of confraternities referred to civic associations (even though organized in a predominantly religious spirit) founded and regulated on the level of urban communities, in

[78] See Wiles' view on the processional space in Corpus Christi's performances in this context, David Wiles, *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 63-92.
[79] For the varieties of types of dramatic forms that evolved for celebration see Rubin *Corpus Christi*, 271-287. See also Penny Granger, *The N-Town Play: Drama and Liturgy in Medieval East Anglia* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2009) and Richard Baedle, ed. *Cambridge Companion to the Medieval English Theatre*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

which citizens gathered with two main purposes: organizing charity work and exercising devotional practices. Confraternities (or "bratovštine" as they were called in Croatian), typical for the Eastern Adriatic coast, represented the main centers of sociability in this region (despite their name, the confraternities included male as well as female members, meaning that the sociability within associations was not bound by gender lines).[80] Unsurprisingly, given their importance for both social and religious activities within towns, the statues of several confraternities contain mention of organizing Passion plays, for instance, in obliging their members to sing *The Passion* each Friday during Lent. Moreover, the inventories of the confraternities mention the props for the performance.[81] (These findings are in accordance with studies on Italian confraternities[82] confirming their involvement in performing medieval theatre, and Passion plays, in particular.) Even though further studies on the involvement of confraternities in staging Passion plays would be of great importance, by now it suffices to say that civic associations of religious background played a crucial role in the development of religious theatre in late medieval times thanks to their unique position in providing material means, an organizational background, and a social infrastructure.

While the statutes and inventories of confraternities provide useful information on the social context in which Passion plays were staged, the second important sources of information are to be found in the texts of the Passion plays themselves. More precisely, the stage directions, which once provided instructions to the performers, nowadays are the main source of information on how the plays were performed, which in this case concerns three aspects: stage movement, stage speech, and stage gestures.

[80] On Eastern Adriatic confraternities see Tomislav Raukar, *Studies about Medieval Dalmatia* (Split: Književni krug, 2007).
[81] See Josip Bratulić "Srednjovjekovne bratovštine i crkvena prikazanja" [Medieval confraternities and sacral representations] in *Dani hvarskog kazališta*, 452-7.
[82] See Cesare Molinari, *Storia del teatro* (Bari: Laterza, 2008), 60-71.

As seen in the previous section, the stage directions contain instructions which allow the reconstruction of the actors' spatial movement; the fact that performers moved while holding long monologues implies a highly dynamic the performance. Furthermore, besides the movement aspect of the plays, the stage directions provide information on stage speech. The first stage direction in the *Passion of Christ*, the one which introduces the Angel, says: *Say it devotionally.*[83] The result of this direction reflects in Angel's first speech: *I'm calling you all in a crying voice. Hear the suffering of Jesus*. The Angel's reply teaches two things about the speech employed in Passion plays: first, it points out the lack of acting competence among the performers. Why else would the character feel obliged to explicitly refer to the type of emotion he is supposed to imitate (i.e., a crying voice), instead of merely imitating it? Secondly (or alternatively), the explicit reference to the supposed emotion might indicate the size of the audience. In the case of an audience too large to follow performer'sactions, it can be argued, the performer might have felt a need to additionally stress the emotion he needed to mediate to the public.

Finally, besides the manipulative power of voice, the stage directions from the plays reveal the low autonomy the performers had with respect to the text. As can be seen from the example of Mary Magdalene's repentance (*And then, as he finishes his speech, he starts walking towards Simon the Leper, and then, Magdalene, as you understood the speech of Jesus, repent by wringing your fingers and start saying…*[84]), the gestures of performers were prescribed. Rather than relying on the acting abilities of the performers (which may be a direct relationship with a lack thereof in the case of stage speech), the writers therefore attempted to limit the performer's autonomy in interpretation.

[83] *Reci ga devoto*, Kapetanović, Malić, Štrklaj Despot, ed., *HSP*, 555.
[84] Kapetanović, Malić, Štrklaj Despot, ed., *HSP*, 631.

PASSION PLAYS BETWEEN RITUAL AND CIVIC THEATRE: PUBLIC CONSUMPTION OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST

The dramatic genre of the Passion play, as was shown earlier in this thesis, is characterized by a fundamental ambiguity. On the one hand, Passion plays are characterized by their religious background, which is most clearly reflected in the choice of biblical content as their main theme. On the other hand, Passion plays belonged at the same time to an essentially lay and civic domain of medieval social life – not only because they constituted a nucleus of what would eventually become civic theatre, but primarily because they were organized by laymen and outside the direct sphere of Church influence. In the previous chapter I discussed the latter aspect of the genre, demonstrating the importance which confraternities on the Eastern Adriatic took in staging Passion plays. In this chapter, however, the focus will be put more on the original ambiguity of Passion plays and their role as a mediator between two spheres.

Even though this aspect has traditionally been less discussed in the literature, since the 1990s the ambiguity of Passion plays has become prominent in the works of several authors. By exploring the York Cycle play, various researchers have analyzed medieval religious vernacular drama as public events of high social importance.[85] In their studies, the theatrical event is revealed as a place of contestation between various social groups based on different social, religious, and political divides. In this chapter, I am applying their approach to the corpus of Eastern Adriatic Passion plays with special regard for peculiarities of the corpus and its hybrid status.

[85] Here I refer primarily to the works of Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God. Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001); Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture*; and King, *The York Mystery Cycle and the Worship of the City*..

The Passion play as a ritual

In the previous chapter the theatrical aspects of Eastern Adriatic corpus were examined through ontological dimensions (time and space), as well as through the main characteristics of performance. In the analysis several features atypical for the institution of civic theatre became visible, which I intend to discuss in the following paragraphs from the perspective of social rituals.

The first aspect is related to the temporal dimension of performance which was, as I have shown, fixed and dependent upon important religious dates (in the case of Passion plays on the Eastern Adriatic, this was Holy Week). According to the evidence from the para-textual elements of the plays analyzed, I concluded that the plays were performed repetitively, on annual basis and always on fixed dates. Furthermore, the performance usually included identical parts from the Gospel, even though this changed with the passing of time and the numbers of performances.

The next important feature concerns the movement on stage and to the stage (or the movement to any location where performance was held). This includes a number of scenes in which Christ was moving in a group with the Apostles, most notably the scene depicting his entry into Jerusalem (in the plays, the *mise en scène* is provided by the gate of the church) and the scene in which the Apostles confronted Judas and the soldiers: *Here Judas is slowly heading with the soldiers*[86] and *Here Jesus with his Apostles starts moving towards Judas*[87]. In these scenes it is possible to reconstruct movement which closely resembles that traditionally found in religious processions.

Finally, the last feature which is atypical for civic theatre concerns the role of the audience in the performance. Besides the anticipation of the emotional engagement of the

[86] *Tu Ijuda polako prihaja s vojsku*, Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 585.

audience – which was enhanced through the role of the Angel in the prologues and through mirror characters who encouraged the spectators to express their compassion[88] – there are signals in the texts which suggest that the audience was actively engaged in the performance. The entry of Christ into Jerusalem again is indicative. When entering the city in the *Passion* his reception is suggested in the stage directions with these words: *After they welcome Jesus with branches, they fall on their knees saying:*

> *Glory, to the king of all glory*
> *Your words make miracles.* [89]
> *miracles.*

Furthermore, in the *Passion of our Savior* the same scene is described in these words: *Here Jesus is riding on a donkey towards the city of Jerusalem with his Apostles; when children saw Jesus heading to the door of the church, they started moving towards to him*.[90] The reconstruction of both scenes shows that, besides Jesus and the Apostles (the characters in the play), the performance included persons who were not *dramatis personae* but simple spectators who took part in the scene. In contrast to civic theatre, the boundary between the performers and the audience, therefore, appears to have been far more permeable.

According to these features of the performances reconstructed from the plays, Passion play performance in the Eastern Adriatic can be described as repetitive, stylized, and formal. Adding to this the self-identifying function through the participation on behalf of the spectators, the Passion plays begin to resemble the social functions of rituals closely. As described by Conrad Phillip Kottak, rituals are "formal, invariant, stylized, earnest acts in which people subordinate their particular beliefs to a social collectivity."[91] Formality and stylization in the Eastern Adriatic corpus of Passion plays are visible through movement as

[87] *Tu pojdeI(su)s proti Ijudi sa učeniki*, Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 586.
[88] For the role of emotions in medieval Croatian Passion plays, especially regarding elicitation of compassion, see Vučković "Emocije u hrvatskom srednjovjekovnim prikazanjima muke".
[89] "Kada pridupred I(su)sa s kitami, poklekšireku: / Zdrav si kraļu mnoge slave, / od teberič čudne prave!" Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 563.
[90] *Totu Isus s učenici svojimiinaosl(a)cu jah(a)jući gradu Jerus(o)limu; i vidiši dica Isusa*

well as through the fixed date of performance.[92] Furthermore, the social collectivity of people is reflected in the active engagement of all participants, the performers and the audience. As for the third part of the definition – invariability – due to the Gospel providing a basis for performance, the scope of possible performances is certainly limited, even though, in this respect Kottak's definition has to be amended by acknowledging that the repetition of rituals may be less rigid since it can be modified appropriately "according to the individual situation."[93]

Sacred Images and the Functions of Ritual

What holds society together and how can it manage to preserve itself and to perpetuate its own existence? In order to understand this fundamental puzzle of a newly established discipline, sociology, Émile Durkheim, a major proponent of structural functionalism, found the answer in the existence of social ritual. A ritual, in Durkheim's view, represented a crucial mechanism for "ensuring the unconscious priority of communal identification,"[94] by providing the "rules of conduct" governing how people should act in the presence of sacred things.[95] Furthermore, if a Passion play can indeed be regarded as ritual, then the image of Christ clearly represented a pivotal case of such a sacred image. In the plays analyzed in this study, this included three main articulations: the torture of Christ's body, the act of crucifixion, and the deposition of the body.

In case of the *Passion*, sacred images of Christ's suffering are hidden from the public, and only alluded to in stage directions. (For instance, *Here Pilate takes Jesus inside and*

[91] Conrad Phillip Kottak, *Cultural Anthropology. Appreciating Cultural Diversity*, 14th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011), 308.
[92] On the broad context of Eastern festivities and religiosity see Škunca, *Zakrižen na otoku Hvaru* .
[93] Gerd Althoff, "The Variability of Rituals in the Middle Ages," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. G. Althoff et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 76.
[94] See Catharine Bell, *Ritual. Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2009), 23.
[95] Bell, *Ritual*, 24.

makes him crowned, beaten, and castigated.[96] This direction implies that Jesus was "taken inside" and suggests that the act of torturing happened in a separate space divided physically from the audience). What the audience can see is only the result of the torturing, Christ's beaten body, not the torture itself.[97] In other plays, in contrast, violence and suffering are not hidden from the audience. Whereas the spectators of the *Passion* could not see the torture, but only use their imaginations to visualize the act, the *Passion of our Savior* contains a detailed elaboration of the torture. The *Mystery about Jesus' Deposition* is characterized by a significant usage of body-oriented discourse and treatment of the body. The fourth play, the *Passion of Christ,* is preserved only in fragments and does not entail the role of Christ. However, despite the differences among the plays, from Durkheim's perspective all these variations in which the main sacred image is presented contributed to the preservation of the community where the ritual took place.

By achieving unity with God, the Passion plays, according to Durkheim's theory of social ritual, expressed "the wholeness of society".[98] While worshiping the sacred images with which the society identified, the Passion plays can therefore be regarded as social rituals which confirm the existing social order and allow further functioning of society, making the Passion plays highly peculiar in the context of broader theatrical traditions. Surely it cannot be disputed that theatre was often used with a similar purpose; one has only to think of its role in nationalist movements of the nineteenth century in which theatre, one of the main realms in the public sphere of the time, played a crucial role in shaping national consciousness. Indeed, few other mechanisms were so susceptible to establishing the new

[96] Tu Pilat popeļa Isusa vrnut(a)r i učini da kruniti i biti i pošpotati. Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP,* 597.

[97] The same principle functions when presenting the Crucifixion ("So they brought him and crucified him, and the thieves as well…") and Deposition ("Here Nicodemus cries, while they are taking him off the cross"), where the audience can see Christ hanging on the Cross and hear the cry of sorrowful followers, they do not witness the processes which result in these images.

[98] Mervyn James "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town," *Past & Present* 98 (1983): 3-29.

mode of social collective and national identity among the broader layers of society.[99] Two traits, however, distinguish the ritualistic nature of Passion plays from ritual functions found in other theatrical forms.

First, theatre performances do not occur in regular cycles and are therefore contingent. In contrast to this, the Passion plays lacked the moment of contingency: the fixed schedule of their performance allowed a firmer basis for re-establishing the collectivity, which was in this way achieved performatively. Second, the involvement of the audience in the civic theatre is passive. The spectrum of their activities includes clapping, cheering, or even yawning(!), but the theatre audience, even though giving the essential purpose of each performance (there is no reason to perform without an audience), does not help constitute the performance.[100] As for audience participation in Passion plays, however, this aspect was, as was shown above, essential for the performance.

Thanks to these properties, it can be said that in the context of medieval urban communities Passion plays represented a strong ideological tool through which the community could strengthen group cohesion by re-establishing the importance of sacred images within the group. In contrast to civic theatre (whose ideological potential should certainly not be underestimated), the rituals carried out in the form of Passion plays not only reflected the dominant social values (in this case, the values of Church teachings), but also could coerce individuals into accepting these values. At the same time, and this is the final point of this section, I want to point out that the dependence on the participation of individuals represented a hazard. If an active participation of the audience represented the very assumption of a successfully conducted ritual, then the leverage is shifted from the

[99] Even though, in the case of the Croatian theatrical tradition this has been studied for the period of Croatian national renewal (see Batušić, *Povijest hrvatskog teatra*), similar research on the role of theatre in the state-building project of the late twentieth century would be worthwhile.

[100] This, however, significantly changes in post dramatic theatre in the late twentieth century, which in some variants denies the importance of the written text and bases the performance only upon the interaction between the performers and audience. See Hans-Thies Lehman, *Postdramatic Theatre* (London: Routledge, 2006).

authorities to the people themselves. In this respect, the question arises of how the society could secure that the people would in fact recognize themselves in the ritual (and therefore, how society could avert the risk of "democratic" rejection of Church doctrines).

In contrast to the ideological tools provided by classic forms of representation (theatre performance, mass media), the ritualistic Passion plays, as can be seen, required extra effort in assuring the participation of the individuals. I will now try to demonstrate that the answer to this question lies in the process of contextualization through which the Passion plays were adjusted to local conditions.

Passion plays, Context, Community

Even a brief look into the medieval genre of Passion plays reveals that they consist of a universal set of symbols and sacred images. The motifs of torturing Christ, the Crucifixion, and the deposition of Christ's body represented the quintessence of events elaborated in Passion plays. A scrupulous analysis, however, also reveals that these motifs do not appear *in abstracto,* but as part of concrete realizations. As a result, the corpus of European Passion plays includes significant variations which appeared across different contexts.

However, the contextual variations might not seem particularly surprising. Above I have indicated that this phenomenon can be regarded through an additional point of view, related, firstly, to the ritualistic nature of Passion play performances, and secondly, to the imperative of securing the participation of citizens in the ritualistic practice. In order to motivate members of the community to take part in the event, contingent features of local cultures were included into the plays, with the purpose of making them more familiar to the audience. Four ways in which this was achieved can be mentioned:

- The space where Passion plays were performed, which was public open space in towns where they were shown. Even though the fictive localities

depicted in the Passion story were obviously set into Jerusalem, the audiences could, naturally, observe the events only in the spatial framework of their cities. The *Passion of our Savior* can be taken as an example. The scene of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem should, according to the stage directions, take place in front of the church (due to the symbolic meaning of the Church in the eyes of the religious community, this choice of space is hardly surprising): *Here, Jesus on the donkey with his Apostles is heading towards the city of Jerusalem; children, after noticing that Jesus reached the gate of the church, started heading towards to him…*[101] As a result, the viewer of the play was faced not only with the impression that he or she was a direct witness of Christ's Passion, but, moreover, that Christ was a member of his or her community. In this way, the presentation of Christ's body, the central sacred image depicted in the ritual, was crucially shaped by the topography of the city where the performance was held.[102]

- The second way in which the Passion plays were contextualized and adjusted to the given community concerns the material objects used in the performance.[103] This is clearly represented in the scene of the torment which, besides the violent beating and whipping, includes the scenes of vilification through various stage props, which is illustrated by the Centurion's words:

Come on, pass me this crown,
Full of prickly pricks,
Here, crown the king
And then bow to him,
Give him a scarlet sheet, you people,

[101] "Totu Isus s učenici svojimi i na osl(a)ca jahajući gradu Jerusolimu, i vidivši dica Isusa, priš(a)dši na vrata crkvena, pojdusuprotonjemu", Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 625.
[102] Understanding the processional space, Beckwith advocates, based on the Bourdieu's and Bell's critical reading of Durkheim, the image of the space as the site of the tensions. Although Beckwith's interpretation is a valuable source of inspiration, the sources which Beckwith used for insight into the heterogeneity of York's society, which was reproduced in drama, in my case are not available. More on sacred space and ritual dimension of the York Cycle plays see in Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God. Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christ Plays*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 23-41.
[103] See Stevenson's study on the sacred object in the plays on the York Cycle's case, Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture*, 54.

And put the stick in his hand. [104]

As can be seen from this example, the props used in the performance originated from an imaginary close to the audience; for instance, the mace used in the torture was replaced by a stick. The purpose of using familiar objects was to situate the action of the plays in the material world of the spectators. This way, the performance would draw the attention of the audience to the similarities between the characters and themselves, with the goal of emphasizing the humanness of the sacred characters in the play.[105] In this way the tortured and humiliated Christ was shown to be more familiar and closer to the audience.

- The third type of contextualization refers to the lack of clear boundaries between audience and performers, due to which the audience often appeared to become an active part of the performance. The dramatic scene of torment during Christ's trial in the *Passion of our Savior* provides a good example. According to the stage directions, during this scene the performer playing the character of John stands far off from the scene of torment: *Here, John, by staying away from them…*[106] In practice, this probably meant that the performer was placed among the audience, and from this position he commented the action happening on the stage: *Oh God from Heavens, do you see how your son is perishing?*[107] *Oh, have mercy, don't flog him hard like that.*"[108]

On the one hand, John can be seen as a "mirror character"[109] with the task of providing the audience with instructions on how to react to the acts of violence. On the other hand and at the same time, as part of the audience, the performer is seen as one of them and therefore his words can be perceived as the voice of the audience. Finally, given that the

[104] "Nu daj simo tu krunu,/oštra trnja mnogo punu/ovdi kraļa okrunite/ter se ńemu poklonite/škarlata mu svat'tesvitu,/v rukedajte mu bakitu", Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP,* .698
[105] See Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture*, 54.
[106] "Tu, Ivan stavši s daleka", Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP,* 697.
[107] "O nebeski Gospodine/Vidiš sina kako gine!" Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 697.
[108] "Oh smiljenja vi imajte/ter ga tako ne fruštajte", Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 698.

performer is physically incorporated in the audience, the spectators who surround him become a crucial component of the re-enactment of Christ's Passion, representing Christ's contemporaries who witnessed the historical events.

- The fourth aspect of contextualization includes cases when segments of daily life were incorporated into the plays. One of the instances in which the influence of daily life on a Passion play can be established is the case when an existing person from the community was included in a play to make it easier for the audience to identify themselves with the content of the story and to understand it in terms of contemporary social relations. An example for such usage can be found in the character of the pharmacist in The *Passion of our Savior*.

The Passion story contains a mention of the pharmacist who sold the ointment to Mary Magdalene,[110] yet in the *Passion of our Savior* this character is elaborated to a deeper level. This refers mostly to the scene in which Mary Magdalene buys the ointment for Christ's body, when she has to engage in bargaining with the stingy pharmacist. Various interpretations can be proposed to explain the exception found in the character of the pharmacist in this play,[111] in my opinion, however, it can be explained through the daily life perspective. Namely, the character of the stingy merchant is a prototype which can easily be found in any society. That allows the audience to imagine the member of their society in this role and to identify themselves as the society which is presented in the play.

By the same token, the inclusion of daily life motifs also concerns the introduction of tales otherwise unrelated in the Passion story. The scene in which the

[109] For a detailed elaboration of mirror characters in Eastern Adriatic corpus of Passion plays see Vučković, "Emocije u hrvatskom srednjovjekovnim prikazanjima muke".
[110] See Muir, *Biblical Drama*, 126-42.
[111] Gerardus Leeuw recognizes the appearance of the merchant's character as the clear sign of the secularization of the sacred content. See Gerardus Leeuw *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: OUP), 94-95. See also Curt F. Bühler and Carl Selmer in their text "The Melk Salbenkrämerspiel: An

Seven Virtues visit Christ in the garden (both in *The Passion* and *The Passion of Our Savior*) represent such a case. The scene is well elaborated, especially with regard to the description of the Virtues. For example, the Virtue Love: *Here comes Love in a red dress, carrying a heart pierced with an arrow on a stick and a garland around it.*[112]

The motif of the Seven Virtues corresponds well to the case of the pharmacist. Even though lack of evidence leaves the space open to different interpretations, here, too, I propose the hypothesis that including the Seven Virtues in the play can be explained through the daily life perspective. This part may first have been performed separately from the Passion plays, achieved a good reception, after which the authors, i.e., compilers of the plays, decided to include it in the plays in order to please the audience.

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The aim of this chapter is to illuminate the ritual aspects of the Passion plays, especially in the context of Passion devotion and the way in which medieval communities from the Eastern Adriatic expressed their religious beliefs. This was achieved in three parts. First, I examined the properties of Passion plays which fit the conceptualization of social rituals. Second, I used Durkheim's theory of ritual to analyze the social functions which Passion plays as rituals were used to fill, discovering that the high engagement of society in the devotional performance emerged as a result of the ritual nature of the genre. Finally, after establishing that the imperative of active participation of the audience imposed adjustability and contextualization in staging by a universal set of fables and symbols, I went on to discuss how this is reflected in the corpus of Eastern Adriatic Passion plays.

Unpublished Middle High German Mercator Play," *PMLA* 63 (1948): 21-64, where the authors explain how this short role in German theatre tradition subsequently developed into sub-genre of secular drama.

[112]"Tu Ļubav, u sviti čarljeni noseći sardce prostiļeno na šćap i okolu ńega vinac", Kapetanović, Malić, Štrkalj Despot, *HSP*, 674.

CONCLUSION

The Passion plays in Eastern Adriatic urban communities played a crucial role in expressing Passion devotion. In this thesis, my aim was to analyze theatrical practices included in performing Passion plays. After all four plays from the corpus were described, they were analyzed from the perspective of social history, which allowed me to make broader conclusion on the outlook of theatre performances of the time and to use the reconstruction of the performances in order to describe the broader social setting in which they took place. In this study, the description and reconstruction of Passion plays and their performance was not a goal in itself. In the second part of the empirical analysis, my aim was to use these findings in order to provide a deeper theoretical understanding of their broader social role. In this part, therefore, I explored ritual aspects of the performance which, as I showed, served to demonstrate the piety of the community where they were played out.

I examined two strategies which were especially important in enhancing the ritualistic capacity of performances. Firstly, in the analysis it was shown that the audience, in contrast to the passive role which spectators traditionally have held in the history of European theatre, made a constitutive part of the performance. Secondly, I demonstrate that, in order to secure the active engagement of the audience, the sacred content was contextualized and adjusted to local traditions. The purpose of this, as I have demonstrated, was to raise the level of familiarization of the audience with the religious content the Passion story, which as a result brought a higher level of expression of Passion devotion.

Due to restricted sources and limited scope of this study, several important questions remained unanswered. First of all, the origin of the Passion plays from the Eastern Adriatic corpus. The experts on Croatian medieval drama advocate an autogenetic development of the Passion plays from Passion poetry, while rejecting the possibility of the connection with liturgical rituals. However, I believe I have shown that the similarities of the Passion plays

analyzed here to popular processional rituals made it worthwhile to question the dominant theory on autogenetic development. Other models of development should be examined, such as transnational history and the ritual origins of Western drama. Second, the origins of several elements of the plays, such as the scenes including the pharmacist or the garden with the Seven Virtues, are not entirely clear. If Passion plays cover the identical set of motifs from the Gospel, then why are these specific elements absent from plays from other European contexts? I advocate the necessity of approaching this issue in further studies using the methods of social history. Finally, the gender aspect of the Passion play performance opens up space for intriguing research in future scholarship. In the analysis it was mentioned that the confraternities, which in the Eastern Adriatic context organized and performed the plays, included both men and women. Moreover, good reasons exist to believe that the scene with the Seven Virtues included female characters. The question therefore arises whether Passion plays included female actors (which would make them exceptional in the history of medieval drama). Even though in this study I could not go into deeper analysis of these questions, further studies should help understand these issues.

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