

STAGING THE EASTER *OFFICIUM* IN MEDIEVAL POLAND: ASPECTS OF PRODUCTION AND PERFORMANCE

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Introduction

Forms of Easter observance were extremely rich in medieval Poland. The main features of these celebrations included: spectacular Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday processions, Feet Washing and the Lord's Supper ceremony on Holy Thursday, the Way of the Cross and Deposition of the Cross on Good Friday, as well as the custom of erecting Easter sepulchres in churches—the central sites for the Paschal Triduum events, and for the staging of the *Visitatio Sepulchri* plays. All these ceremonies belong to the liturgical theatre and fall somewhere between the liturgy of the Mass, the Liturgy of Hours and vernacular Biblical plays.

The present study of a corpus of liturgical ceremonies and plays from the thirteenth-sixteenth century aims to describe the specific features of these records from literary and performance aspects.¹ The research is also meant to facilitate the on-stage reconstruction of early religious theatre. The terminology I apply in the course of the study is modern because the questions regarding the works under consideration are ultimately modern ones. The classification of the plays themselves is also a fairly recent invention and in many respects it is still a matter to be resolved.² I accept the approach suggested recently by Michael L. Norton³ in which

¹ The present paper is based on the MA thesis with the same title defended at the Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest in June 1999. The dissertation contains a list of the primary sources discovered so far, extensive discussion of the secondary literature as well as an Appendix listing the works selected for the present discussion within the larger corpus of the ceremonies from Poland. It also provides the manuscript reference numbers and their present location.

² The term 'liturgical drama' was first applied in the nineteenth-century to describe a large collection of texts. See Julian Lewański, *Średniowieczne gatunki dramatyczno-teatralne: Dramat liturgiczny* (Medieval drama and theatre genres: Liturgical drama) in *Poetyka: Zarys encyklopedyczny* (Poetics: An Outline), ed. Maria Renata Mayenowa, vol. 3, part 1 (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich, 1966), 3.

³ In his study of the literary and musical parts of the antiphons in the *Visitations*, Norton observed two independent traditions within the corpus of these texts: "The older, and highly inconstant, tradition of the West and the largely ignored, albeit certainly prodigious tradition of the East." Michael L. Norton, "Of Stages and Types in *Visitatio Sepulchri*," in *Drama in the Middle Ages: Comparative and Critical Essays: Second Series*, AMS Studies in the Middle Ages 18, ed. Clifford Davidson (New York: AMS Press, 1991): 85.

he suggests grouping texts according to their provenance and musical notation. Music was one of the components of liturgical and theatrical sign-systems. While I include the topic in the selected bibliography, I choose to omit this vast and absolutely indispensable area of research from my work, since I cannot deal with all the aspects of liturgical performance in the present paper. Instead, I have decided to concentrate on the literary and performative ‘texts’ of the ceremonies and focus on reconstruction work. One reason for doing so is also the fact that musical notation is missing from all but one of the texts I am studying.⁴

The criteria for the selection of dramatic records for the present study were elaborated rubrics interpolated into the liturgical text. On the textual level they were treated as glosses, but they would become stage directions on the level of theatrical script. For the textual analysis I selected texts from different locations, such as Brzeg, Nysa, Wrocław, while the main focus falls on Cracow and Poznań records. The texts are discussed in the order they would have been performed and experienced in the context of the Holy Week.

Materials that support the second part of the research are, unfortunately, rather limited. I consulted manuscript editions referring to the members of the Cracow chapter as well as cathedral inventories. They cannot be directly related to the dramatic records since historical records precede the dramatic by at least eighty years. In the case of the positioning of the Easter sepulchre I followed examples from the neighbouring regions of Germany and Bohemia. Not all the archives have been explored in search of liturgical plays and ceremonies’ documentation. The results of the research are tentative because I expect further analyses of sources to add to my own in the future.⁵

⁴ “Visitatio Sepulchri” MS Br. Mus. K. 21, f. 76r–77r in Wrocław University Library.

⁵ Ceremonies relating to Cracow were discovered by Stanisław Windakiewicz at the beginning of the 20th century and published in: Stanisław Windakiewicz, *Dramat liturgiczny w Polsce średniowiecznej* (Liturgical Drama in Medieval Poland) (Cracow: Akademia Umiejętności, 1903).

An enlarged collection of dramatic texts was published by Julian Lewański in *Dramaty Staropolskie: Antologia* (Early Polish drama: Anthology), vol. 1–2, (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1959). Discussion of the early religious theatre in Poland within the broader European context is conducted by the same author in: *Studia nad dramatem polskiego Odrodzenia* (Studies in Polish Renaissance drama) (Wrocław: Zakład im. Ossolińskich, 1956), *Średniowieczne gatunki, Dramat i teatr średniowiecza i renesansu w Polsce* (Polish drama and theatre of the Middle Ages and Renaissance) (Warsaw: PWN, 1981). See also his recent overview of theatrical practice in medieval Polish churches: “Tajemnica Ofiary i Odkupienia w średniowiecznym polskim teatrze liturgicznym” (The mystery of sacrifice and redemption in Polish medieval liturgical theatre), in *Dramat i teatr religijny w Polsce* (Religious drama and theatre in Poland), ed. Irena Sławińska and Wojciech Kaczmarek (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1991): 7–32. Lewański encountered 30 *Visitatio Sepulchri* plays in Poland.

The chronological principle for the classification of the liturgical plays was introduced in the path-breaking studies of German scholars: Carl Lange, *Die lateinischen Osterfeiern* (Munich: n.p., 1887), Gustav Milchsack, *Die lateinischen Osterfeiern* (Wolfenbüttel: n.p., 1880). The same approach was

Theoretical grounds for the research have been defined along three lines. First, the text-theory that emerged in the field of literary studies has been applied to describe the complex text or 'script' of the liturgical plays under consideration.⁶ Liturgical drama records have been approached as a dramatic text and as performance text. Dramatic text means the script or simply the record that survives in the liturgical book. The performance text takes into account the actors, setting, properties, and stage movement. A proper description of the entire performance has to base itself on the performance text rather than exclusively on the dramatic text.

Issues concerning the reception of the dramatic text and attempts at its reconstruction have their own, specific problems.⁷ It is only modern scholarship that has started taking an interest in theatrical and dramatic space, the intended audience, and historical performance description, or the so-called performance-centred criticism.⁸ Thus, it is the purpose of the present work to analyse the available source material and, by applying modern drama and text reception theories, to recover the rich liturgical performance repertoire of the past. I hope the research will ultimately assist modern liturgical drama productions.

assumed by Karl Young in *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933). The evolutionary and chronological treatment of the plays was challenged by O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), and by Helmut de Boor, *Die Textgeschichte der lateinischen Osterfeiern* (Tübingen: n.p., 1967).

⁶ A concise overview of the text-oriented literary theories and their relation to theatrical practice and reconstruction has been included in Grzegorz Sinko, *Opis przedstawienia teatralnego: Problem semiotyczny* (Description of a theatrical performance: A semiotic problem) (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1982). The work also defines the main problems in the reconstruction of a theatrical performance.

⁷ The context of a liturgical performance, its production process and the audience have recently attracted a lot of scholarly attention. Clifford Davidson has explored the material aspect of religious plays: *Material Culture and Medieval Drama*, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 25 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1999), also see: *Drama in the Middle Ages: Comparative and Critical Essays*, AMS Studies in the Middle Ages 18, ed. C. Davidson (New York: AMS Press, 1991). Lynette Muir has done extensive research on medieval western and central European religious plays with special regard to the issue of the performance practice: *Liturgy and Drama in the Anglo-Norman Adam*, Medium Aevum Monographs 3 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995). The most recent collection of essays on medieval play production and the community's contribution towards the staging of religious performances is: *Drama and the Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe*, ed. A. Hindley (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999).

⁸ J. L. Styan has initiated performance criticism with the titles: *The Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 1977), *The Dramatic Experience* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), *Drama, Stage, and Audience* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975). Alan Dessen is interested in recreating performance context of past theatrical plays in: *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), *Elizabethan Drama and the Viewer's Eye* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

Dramatic Text and Performance Text

Medieval liturgical drama relies solely on written evidence and is transmitted by means of script. The literary aspects, the grammar of the text, are set up according to the language and structure of the liturgy. Liturgy nourishes drama in all possible ways: it supplies its imagery, its basic formulas; it grants drama its cyclical continuity or even results in certain parts of the texts being discarded.

The textual aspect of liturgical drama calls forth a second dimension, its performative aspect. Thus, theatrical performance, in this case, a religious performance, is also a “text” in the semiotic sense: an entity independent of the language of its composition but governed by its own sign-system and performance grammar. It is only by taking into account these two dimensions of drama as a text that several medieval theatrical performances can be approached and an attempt can be made at their reconstruction.

On a purely literary level, the structure of the liturgical drama is a singular phenomenon in the history of literature. The question of originality or authorial interference rarely applies to this slowly emerging mosaic-work: a harmonious combination of antiphons, tropes, sequences, hymns, responsories, or tracts. Along with these liturgical structural implications, one more significant feature of the dramatic text can be discerned: it can be called an ‘open text,’ thus suggesting further elaboration, innumerable insertions, rearrangements, and omissions from the basic narrative. The openness of the liturgical dramatic text entails an intertextual relationship connecting drama, liturgy, and the Bible, which brings about endless interpretative possibilities. The term that highlights this complex relationship is the ‘gloss.’⁹ The glossing relationship may be postulated for the type of connection that existed between the Bible and the liturgy, as well as between liturgy and liturgical drama. This relationship implies a hierarchical ordering of the texts, and, as such, it subdues the text of the liturgical drama through the formulas of the Christian liturgy to the Holy Scripture. Moreover, to follow Patrick Diehl’s suggestions, “not only is the liturgy as a whole a gloss upon the Bible but like the Bible it involves glossing relationships governing its own economy.”¹⁰ The same theoretical model, in fact, is

⁹ Indeed, “(...) in the area of religious literature and art, at least, it is possible to view all ‘texts’ as a direct or indirect ‘gloss’ upon the Scriptures, which themselves offer many internal examples of ‘glossing’ (...).” Patrick S. Diehl, *The Medieval European Religious Lyric: An Ars Poetica* (Berkeley University of California Press, 1985), 11–13. The term “gloss” corresponds to the notion of “commentary” in medieval writing. Speaking about the constituent parts of liturgical drama records I hereby follow Diehl’s metaphor of the gloss or a detailed exposition on the source text that grew on its margins.

¹⁰ Diehl, 12.

also applicable to dramatic ceremonies and plays. However splendid they seem to be as ornaments, the earliest religious performances always highlight the central theme around which the liturgy of a particular feast revolves. Thus, they may be treated as elaborate glosses on the liturgy, and through liturgy, on the Biblical narrative.

The Easter Cycle

The first dramatic ceremony of the Easter cycle celebrations, the Palm Sunday Procession (*Processio in Ramis Palmarum*), has been known in Cracow since the thirteenth century and by the fifteenth century the tradition of staging Christ's entry in Jerusalem was well-established in the churches of Cracow, Kielce, and many other wealthy parishes. Already the earliest records of the ceremony from the area of Poland display the powerful dynamism that was to become its most distinctive feature in the sixteenth century. This dynamism is generated by a large number of participants and by the element of journey, that is, the re-enactment of Christ's passing through the gates of Jerusalem. An early Cracow version of the *Processio* starts with the antiphon *Cum adpropinquaret Dominus*.¹¹ According to the rubrics it is supposed to accompany the coming of the congregation towards the church. The same synchronisation of movement and text occurs a moment later when the procession enters the city gates¹² and a cantor sings the antiphon *Ingrédiente Domino*. The final reference to movement that coincides with the dynamic liturgical text may be found in the rubrics towards the end of the ceremony when the clerics throw palms in front of the cross and chant the antiphon: *Pueri Hebreorum [tollentes ramos olivarum, obviaverunt Domino clamantes et dicentes: 'Osanna in excelsis!]*.¹³ Later on they spread the ceremonial robes before the cross, the gesture accompanied by yet another antiphon, *Pueri Hebreorum [vestimenta prostruebat in via]*.¹⁴ A fifteenth-century *Processio* from Kielce, apart from the elements just mentioned in connection with the Cracow version contains further examples of liturgical texts referring to movement that is dramatically underlined by the information in the rubrics. The other text is more specific about the number and age of the participants: these are the boys from the *schola cantorum* who represent the Hebrew youth; they

¹¹ "Processio Pro Dominica Palmarum," (henceforth *Processio I*) in *Antiphonarium Saeculi XIII*, fol. 18v., MS 83 in Cracow Chapter Library, ed. Lewański, in *Dramaty*, 126. Hereafter, the page numbers beside the liturgical plays will refer to this edition, unless stated otherwise.

¹² Usually the *Processio* began from a distant point in the city and moved towards the church in a symbolic recognition of Christ's voyage.

¹³ *Processio I*, 128.

¹⁴ *Processio I*, 128.

are supposed to wear the *albae* and to hold palm branches in the direction of the cross. As in the Cracow version, they spread their clothes, but they also throw flowers as the antiphon: *Occurunt turbe cum floribus et palmis/ Redemptori Domino* is being chanted.¹⁵ As the cross is being carried forward, the children sing: *Huic omnes occurramus [cum ymnis et canticis,/ glorificantes et dicentes : 'Benedictus Dominus']*.¹⁶ At this point the central role of the choir is taken over by two priests: one of them kneels down and adores the cross, while the other one touches the cross with a palm branch, singing: *[Scrip]tum est [enim percuciam pastorem et] disperg[entur oves gregis]*.¹⁷ This illustration of the text by means of gesture is carried further as the one who is prostrated, gets up and sings: *[Postquam autem surrexero, prece]d[am vos in Galileam]*.¹⁸ Thus, the text of the performance visualises, illustrates, or even glosses the text of the liturgical phrase. However simple this denotational device may appear, it is also a highly effective one because it refers to several parts of the narrative simultaneously. While it situates the congregation in the historical past, it also represents eternal truths, as for example, in the scene with the two priests, where one personifies the rising Christ as he stands up from the knees; and another one symbolically re-enacts the Passion, as he touches the cross with a palm branch.

The ceremony of the Lord's Supper (*Caena Domini*) conducted on Maundy Thursday organises a theatrical space differently from the Palm Sunday Procession. One of the elaborate forms of the ceremony has been recorded in the sixteenth-century manuscript from the collegiate church of St. Mary Magdalene in Poznań.¹⁹ The ceremony is combined with the *Mandatum*, that is, the washing of the feet of the lower clergy or the poor of the parish by the senior clergy on Holy Thursday.²⁰ The first rubric states that every year, on Maundy Thursday, the members of the local fraternity of the lay priests are obliged to perform (*representare debent*)²¹ the Supper

¹⁵ "Processio pro Dominica Palmarum," (henceforth *Processio* 2) in *Missale saeculi XV*, fol. 95v–97., MS in Kielce Chapter Library, ed. by Lewański, *Dramaty*, 144.

¹⁶ *Processio* 2, 146.

¹⁷ *Processio* 2, 146.

¹⁸ *Processio* 2, 146.

¹⁹ "De Locione Pedum in Die Sancto Jovis," (henceforth *Caena Domini*) in *Privilegia et Obligationes ac Alia Munimenta Literaria*, fol. 7–8r, MS C 19 in Archivum Collegiate Mariae Magdalенаe Posnaniensis, ed. Lewański, *Dramaty*, 154.

²⁰ See discussion of the *Caena Domini* in Medieval Europe in Young, i.98–100. The ceremony is sometimes called the *Mandatum* after Christ's words, *Mandatum novum do vobis: ut diligatis invicem, sicut dilexi vos*.

²¹ *Caena Domini*, 154. The use of the vocabulary in this case is crucial. Although the manuscript has *representare debet*, and Lewański corrects it into *debent*, still the idea of building fiction is conveyed by the use of the *representare*.

of Our Lord who “on a day before he suffered, washed the feet of his disciples, and left a commandment for us to wash each other’s feet as a sign of humility and charity” [tr. mine].²² This passage may be regarded as a gloss on the Gospel passage (John 13:1–15), and, at the same time, as a commentary on the liturgical text that would be chanted during the ceremony. This *Caena Domini* office record sets the scene for a static representation: the action takes place around the table. The ceremony also incorporates an element of processional movement.²³ The procession does not overshadow the main event in which all the priests gather around the table and the senior priest repeats the gesture of Christ: washing the feet of the apostles. Thus, as in the case of the *Processio Palmarum*, we see how the Biblical passage is translated into scenic movement with the synchronisation of text and gesture.

The ceremony of the Deposition of the Cross (*Depositio Crucis*) was usually prescribed for the time after the service on Good Friday. The cross symbolises Christ who was entombed until Easter Sunday. The continuation of the ceremony in some churches was the *Elevatio Crucis* movement. This involved taking the cross from the Easter sepulchre before or at the end of the matin service on Easter morning.²⁴ The ceremony had a long-lasting history in Poland, since we encounter records of the dramatisation in the fourteenth and fifteenth-century parish churches in Nysa and Poznań as well as in sixteenth-century Cracow.²⁵ Let us dwell on the fourteenth-century record surviving in St. James’ Church in Nysa. Like the previously discussed text, the visual part of the ceremony is carefully orchestrated to match the existing liturgical material. The cross is carried to the chant of the responsorium: *Recessit pastor Ierusalem luge/Ecce quomodo moritur*.²⁶ The appropriate verses are supposed to fill the time that the priest and the assisting clerics need to walk in a procession to the sepulchre. We read that the cross-bearer is preceded by the clerics carrying banners, candles, the holy water container, and a thurible filled with incense.²⁷ After the cross is deposited it should be sprinkled with the holy water and incensed. Moreover, two pieces of cloth are to be used: one to be put under the cross, the other to be laid over it. The sombre tone of the Deposition and slow movement towards the symbolic sepulchre bring connotations with Christ’s burial as medieval clergymen imagined it.

²² *Caena Domini*, 154.

²³ *Caena Domini*, 156.

²⁴ See Young, i.112–148, where the *Depositio* and the *Elevatio* are discussed in detail.

²⁵ *Depositio*, 163, 656, 657.

²⁶ *Depositio*, 163.

²⁷ *Depositio*, 162.

Attempts to trace the Holy Week narrative represented in the theatralised ceremonies inevitably lead to a discussion of the texts directly related to Easter Sunday. The *Visitatio Sepulchri* play is the main point in the majority of Easter cycles and includes a variety of texts and theatrical solutions. The fabric of the Easter story is built up of minute discoveries, private revelations, epiphanies that add to the central discovery of the empty tomb and the presentation of the burial shrouds of Christ to the congregation. The dramatic representation of the Easter morning events is part of this yearning to witness the invisible, to understand and to visualise the context of the Resurrection and the events that followed it.

The earliest Visitation play in Poland comes from a thirteenth-century manuscript.²⁸ It belongs to the ceremonies of the Wawel cathedral, though monastic influences and use by the Tyniec monastery community cannot be excluded. The cathedral in Wawel boasts several other Visitation plays, which supposedly stem from a Saxon text.²⁹ After this thirteenth-century record we encounter another *Officium Sepulchri* in the mid-fifteenth century, and later in 1471.³⁰ The Cracow records of the *Officium Visitatio Sepulchri* have a great appeal for literary criticism due to their origin and preservation within the same community through several centuries. Stanisław Windakiewicz claims that they all belong to the Cracow chapter and that they are part of the rich liturgical tradition of Cracow Cathedral.³¹ In the light of this assertion all three texts may be viewed as instances of the flourishing *Visitatio* tradition. The Cracow Visitations show considerable uniformity in the textual material. The antiphons and verses are identical, and only slight variations can be found in the fifteenth-century text where an Angel chants an additional antiphon: *Venite et videte locum, ubi positus erat dominus, alleluia aevia*.³² Similarly, the rubrics are almost identical in all three texts. In contrast to the *Cracow Visitatio 1*, which includes two Angels, two later texts have only one Angel addressing the three Marys. Moreover, the choir in two others replaces a cantor from the earliest play. This fact points to the growth of the Cracow chapter community

²⁸ The transmission of the Visitation plays in Poland has been studied by Windakiewicz and Lewański. They traced down every single dramatic record scattered in the wealth of the liturgical books collection. "Visitatio Sepulchri," (henceforth *Cracow Visitatio 1*) in *Antiphonarium Saeculi XIII*, fol. 22v., MS 83 in Cracow Chapter Library, ed. Lewański, *Dramaty*, 98–103.

²⁹ Windakiewicz, 17.

³⁰ "Visitatio Sepulchri," (henceforth *Cracow Visitatio 2*) in *Antiphonarium de Tempore*, fol. 244–245., MS 79 in Cracow Chapter Library, ed. Windakiewicz, *Dramat liturgiczny*, 13–14; "Visitatio Sepulchri," (henceforth *Cracow Visitatio 3*) in *Antiphonarium de Tempore & de Sanctis*, fol. 116–117., MS 85 Cracow Chapter Library, ed. Windakiewicz, 15.

³¹ Windakiewicz, 10–17.

³² *Cracow Visitatio 2* in Windakiewicz, 14. The 1471 version replaces the last *aevia* with another *Alleluia*. cf. *Cracow Visitatio 3* in Windakiewicz, 15.

and to the increasing role of the entire clerical community in staging the Easter narrative.

The three texts under consideration have a tendency to enlarge the liturgical part at the cost of the rubrics. While the earliest record provides full stage directions and only the *incipita* of the antiphons, the fifteenth-century version gives full antiphons and the rubrics are shorter. The apparent neglect of the rubrics in later texts, less focus on the detailed description of the movement or actors but instead, the use of the fictitious names for the *dramatis personae*, like Angels, Women, etc., show that there existed a performing community that knew the conventions of Visitation staging, and, consequently, did not need a list of props or extensive description of the dramatic movement in order to present the event to the congregation. Behind these rubrics can be detected an underlying attempt to create fiction, to generate illusion. Thus, we have two clerics representing Mary Magdalene and Mary, James's mother, who imitate a vivid conversation while chanting an antiphon. The rubrics say: *fratres (...), quasi inter se colloquentes, voce submissiori canunt hunc versum.*³³ Another passage in the rubrics that discloses its own conventionality appears a few scenes later, when the Apostles, "as if running,"³⁴ hurry to see the empty tomb. All these instances of establishing ways of acting which belong to the theatre proper point not only to the great reverence that the dramatic gesture enjoyed as an "information-vehicle," but they also witness a belief that liturgical chant and ceremonial movement may be transformed for dramatic or illustrative purposes. A person traversing the church, for example, had a special appeal in the liturgical theatre. The movement was at the core of these dramatised ceremonies and it must have had broad symbolic connotations that are by now largely lost to the modern public.

Another instance of the changing flow of the stage movement, as far as it can be deciphered from the text, is the scene of the sepulchre inspection. *Cracow Visitatio 1* has an explicit rubric that tells the Marys to enter the sepulchre, and having incensed it, to return to the choir.³⁵ This particular gesture is placed in between the two antiphons: "*Non est hic,*" and "*Ad monumentum venimus.*" Although it is not accompanied by a separate antiphon, the movement is clearly there and cannot be overlooked by the actors. In contrast to this case, rubrics from a later date omit the passage about entering the sepulchre. Perhaps by that time it was no longer a solid structure and therefore it could not be entered. Still more important

³³ *Cracow Visitatio 1*, 98.

³⁴ (...) *duo ex fratribus quasi cursum ostentantes, properant ad sepulchrum. Cracow Visitatio 1*, 100.

³⁵ *Illis ita canentibus fratres prenotati intrant sepulchrum. Et thurificato sepulcro exeuntes redeunt per choram canendo versiculum: Ad monumentum uenimus. Cracow Visitatio 1*, 98.

JOLANTA SZPILEWSKA

is the fact that an echo of the movement of inspecting the tomb is conveyed in the antiphon *venite et videte* which is a real invitation to behold the object itself and thus to apprehend the great Christian mystery. Although the rubrics are silent, the liturgical part speaks out, and as a result, we can point to the attempt to translate the non-verbal message into the part that was sung.

Three other records of the Visitation plays that the present work is concerned with come from the Western provinces of Poland, the town of Brzeg in Silesia and Poznań.³⁶ The Silesian version comes from a small parish church from the turn of the fifteenth century while the other two records belong to the theatrical tradition of the Poznań cathedral. One of the Poznań texts dates from the fifteenth century, the other is the printed Visitation from 1533. The Silesian manuscript repeats word by word the *Cracow Visitatio 1* record while providing the full text of the antiphons. This is worth mentioning since it is the only surviving Visitation with musical notation. It shows how musical, liturgical, and rubrical material has been accommodated on the manuscript page for the purpose of a dramatisation staged in Brzeg. This invaluable record brings together three media of expression: music, movement, and word, and at the same time it allows the missing antiphonal passages from the Cracow manuscript family to be filled in.

The two Poznań records clearly set themselves apart from the Cracow tradition. Although the story behind the ceremony remains intact, both the liturgical part and rubrics vary when compared with previously discussed texts. The analysis of the Poznań records shows what new possibilities and solutions were used in constructing the performance, managing the acting community and utilising the available space in this act of prayer, worship, but also entertainment that the Visitation was supposed to be. The fifteenth-century Poznań Visitation does not include the scene of the Marys entering the tomb and censing it. They just approach it, lean over the sepulchre and go back with the shrouds. Moreover, this version omits the scene of the so-called Race of the Apostles. Even though the three Marys are told by the Angels to take the message to the apostles in the usual *Non est hic* antiphon, the Apostles do not rush towards the sepulchre to check the report and to bring the *sudarium*. Instead, the three Marys take the shrouds and carry them to the altar.³⁷

³⁶ "Visitatio Sepulchri," (henceforth *Brzeg Visitatio*) in *Antiphonarium Bregense Saeculi XIV/XV*, f. 76r–77r, MS in Wrocław University Library, Br. Mus. K. 21, ed. Lewański, *Dramaty*, 106–111; "Visitatio Sepulchri," (henceforth *Poznań Visitatio 1*) in *Rubrica Posnaniensis Ecclesiae Saeculi XV*, f. 156r–157r, MS 188 in Raczyński Library in Poznań, ed. Lewański, *Dramaty*, 112–115.

"Visitatio Sepulchri," (henceforth *Poznań Visitatio 2*) in *Agenda Secundum Cursum et Rubricam ecclesiae Cathedralis Posnaniensis*, Lipsiae 1533, f. XLIIv–XLVv, ed. Lewański, *Dramaty*, 118–121.

³⁷ *Poznań Visitatio 1*, 114.



The entire record, starting from the opening scene, makes the choir more visible than the Cracow Visitations. The choir appears in what might be called the Prologue scene or the procession in which the choir comes in. Another procession of the choir coincides with the chanting of the verse *Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro*,³⁸ and it occurs at the end of the play. This may be called the play's Epilogue starting with the scene when the Marys go back to the choir after having displayed the shrouds at the altar. On their way back they intone *Victime paschali laudes*, the eleventh-century sequence by Wipo of St. Gall. This piece is then taken over by the choir. The singers join in, and, through the chant, they confirm the discovery of the Marys. The Apostles' report does not appear in the play. Thus, the choir both initiates and crowns the play.

The latest known record of the Visitation play in medieval Poland is the 1533 agenda printed in Leipzig for the use of the Poznań cathedral. The agenda introduces the Race of the Apostles, the scene missing from the previous play. The Race, however, appears only at the level of antiphonal narrative, there is no actual dramatic representation of the Apostles rushing forward to discover the empty tomb. The entire ceremony is therefore more static, since the stage movement is not introduced to the extent that we had observed in the Cracow plays. The overall structure of the ceremony is clearly influenced by the antiphonal type of singing prescribed for the matins service where parts of the prayers were distributed between the two choirs. The final rubrics note that the ceremony belongs to the Easter matins, and not to the opening of the Mass, as happened in some other Visitation texts.³⁹ This fact points to the existence of a considerable number of priests in attendance, and it also explains the static and well-balanced structure of the 1533 Visitation. It is important to note the double movement in the direction of the sepulchre in the play. First, the choir approaches it.⁴⁰ After this introductory movement three priests representing the three Marys make their way from the sacristy to the sepulchre. Interestingly, they do not come directly out from the group, but rather walk from the sacristy, being thus visually and positionally separated. Furthermore, since all the "actors" of the ceremony gather around the tomb, there is no walking back to the altar in order to display the shrouds. The altar space becomes the place for the choir to remain. The entire action thus concentrates on one point, the sepulchre. The gesture of showing the shrouds is also simplified: this time the clerics who impersonate the Angels display the *sudaria* from the tomb.⁴¹ It is no longer a

³⁸ *Poznań Visitatio 1*, 114.

³⁹ *Poznań Visitatio 1*, 120.

⁴⁰ *Poznań Visitatio 1*, 118.

⁴¹ *Poznań Visitatio 1*, 119.

JOLANTA SZPILEWSKA

movement assigned to the three Marys, it now belongs to the Angels. All these details are absent from the Cracow records where the displaying of the shrouds took place at the altar, the site of the Mass celebration. The altar had also strong connotations with the sepulchre, and thus it was one of the two prominent places in the ceremony. In the Poznań Visitation the altar has disappeared from the dramatic setting. And, instead, the sepulchre gained considerably in importance.

Having examined the dramatic records from a literary aspect, we can see how through the metaphoric employment of props and gestures, a complex relation between 'historical' and 'eternal' space and time is built into the Palm Procession, Lord's Supper, Deposition of the Cross, and *Visitatio Sepulchri* ceremonies. The performance text, as it can be deciphered from the written sources, may be said to extend along two planes: the historical and the spiritual. Members of the congregation could relate these two levels, the historical and the spiritual, to their own place in salvation history.

Cracow and Poznań: Two Centers of Theatrical Activity

Cathedral and chapter library holdings in Cracow, Wrocław, and Poznań attest to the manifold theatrical activities that involved the clergy as well as laymen. The two ceremonies from Cracow come from the same codex, *Antiphonarium Saeculi XIII*. The *Processio* record can be found in folio 18, and the *Visitatio* just four pages further on, in folio 22. This fact clearly demonstrates that the *officia* marked two crucial points in the Easter narrative, staged in a particular place by the community, with the antiphonal at hand: the *Processio* initiates the Holy Week and sets the tone for the ceremonies of the Paschal Triduum; the *Visitatio* dramatically crowns the entire week. The two texts supplement each other in terms of the narrative as well as the theatrical devices used for the same Easter celebration.

Lewański dates the first *Visitatio* codex to before the year 1253, since that was the year of the canonisation of Saint Stanislaus, the second patron saint of the Cracow Cathedral and of Poland. The dating of the codex is based on the fact that neither of the litanies in the codex mentions the name of this important saint. Thus, it would seem that the antiphonal was in use before Stanislaus' canonisation.⁴²

⁴² Lewański, "Tajemnica Ofiary i Odkupienia": 9. The author supposes that the ceremony must have been written down at the turn of the twelfth century. He also derives four Silesian and twenty-six Polish manuscripts from this particular archetype. Julian Lewański treats the two Cracow records as the source for the major part of the extra-liturgical ceremonies in Poland. For example, the *Cracow Visitatio 2*, *Cracow Visitatio 3*, as well as the *Wrocław Visitatio* or *Brzeg Visitatio*, all are thought to come from the family of manuscripts relating to the *Cracow Visitatio 1*.

Traditionally, the manuscript has always belonged to the chapter.⁴³ Windakiewicz points out that the record may have been used in a monastic milieu, basing his claim on the reference to *fratrum conventus* at the opening of the *Visitatio* text.⁴⁴ Lewański, however, attributes the ceremonies to the Cracow chapter milieu. He points out that in the Middle Ages the expression might refer either to a monastic community or to the community of the canon priests.⁴⁵

In contrast to the Cracow text, the *Poznań Visitatio 1* does not have an accompanying *Processio* record. While the Cracow records mark the initial stage in the history of liturgical plays in Poland, which began at the turn of the twelfth century, the *Poznań Visitatio* is set in the late medieval period. The manuscript *Rubrica Posnaniensis ecclesie*, which contains the Visitation, is dated to around 1470. Not only is it a much later version of this world-famous play, but it also has a different source, since the Race of the Apostles, the scene present in all Cracow Visitations, is missing from the Poznań version. All in all, the *Poznań Visitatio* has been selected for reconstruction since it includes some theatrical solutions absent from the Cracow version. These will serve to illustrate the diverse staging traditions of liturgical plays in Poland.

Liturgical and extra-liturgical activity in the Wawel cathedral was orchestrated by the community of canons who also acted in the two ceremonies from the first half of the thirteenth century. The chapter was formally organised around 1103. In this year Galo of Beauvais, who was one of the pupils and colleagues of Ivo of Chartres, later bishop of Paris, visited Poland as a papal legate and bestowed a constitution on the Cracow chapter. During his visit to Poland, Galo inquired into the needs of the emerging Cracow community of priests at the cathedral, and ordered a copy of selected ecclesiastical regulations to be sent to Cracow. This codex survives in the Chapter Library as *Decreta Romanorum Pontificum*.⁴⁶ The codex of Galo is a

Windakiewicz in his description of the Cracow codex mentions that the Gothic inscription on the cover "Antiphonarium Cod. mem. saec. XIV" was later corrected to "saec. XII." He does not, however, explain why the earlier dating is to be preferred. See Windakiewicz, 10.

⁴³ Inventory compiled by Rev. Ignacy Polkowski, "Katalog rękopisów kapitulnych katedry krakowskiej" (A Catalogue of the Cracow chapter manuscripts) in *Archiwum do dziejów literatury i oświaty w Polsce*, vol. 3 (Cracow: n.p., 1884): 49. Our codex is mentioned as no. 51. See also Windakiewicz, 10.

⁴⁴ Windakiewicz, 11.

⁴⁵ "Therefore we cannot relate the texts to one of the Cracow monasteries or any of the monasteries in the vicinity of Cracow [Tyniec, or Mogiła].... Rather, the note [on p. 103], *episcopus si adest* allows the [Visitatio] antiphonal to be related to the Wawel Cathedral." Lewański, *Dramaty*, 650.

⁴⁶ For the details of this visit see P. David, "Un disciple d'Yves de Chartres en Pologne—Galon de Paris et le droit canonique," in *La Pologne au VII Congrès International des Sciences Historiques* (Warsaw: n.p., 1933). Also see Paweł Szczaniecki, O.S.B. *Śłużba Boża w dawnej Polsce: Studia o Mszy Św.* (Divine Service in early Poland: Studies on the Holy Mass) (Poznań: Księgarnia Św. Wojciecha, 1962), 32.

The codex is catalogued in Polkowski, *Catalogue*, 61–78.

significant source for the early history of the chapter not only because it helps us to understand the circumstances in which the community of canons emerged. It also shows how Western liturgical norms were adopted in Cracow. Its last pages include two inventories of the chapter dating from 1101 and 1110.⁴⁷ The first inventory was compiled when the cathedral had been in existence for more than ten years. It was when Duke Ladislaus Herman handed the Cracow bishopric to Czesław that the bishop decided to prevent possible thefts and thus ordered the inventorying of the treasury.⁴⁸ Although the inventory is much earlier than the record of the *Processio* and *Visitatio*, it still can give us a clue as to what kind of objects the chapter had at its disposal.

The clerics on Wawel Hill were supposed to pray in common. The two Easter ceremonies, therefore, can be seen as a form of worship kept alive by a considerable number of canons. A document from 1219, that is the approximate date when the *Processio* and the *Visitatio* were introduced at Wawel, gives a list of canons together with their names and positions held.⁴⁹ Thus, we encounter twenty-two clerics, among them six officials: a dean, a parish priest, an archdeacon, a cantor, and a keeper. The rest are seven presbyters, four deacons, and five subdeacons. The court of the Cracow bishop thus seems to have been composed of a considerable community of clerics leading a life of prayer and penitence. We may assume that theatrical activity was part of this life, meant to assist the Easter celebrations.

Let us now observe how the two ceremonies fit into the life of the Cracow chapter and its church, what message it conveyed to the congregation. The *Processio I* starts far outside the city walls. On the way back to the church three antiphons are being intoned *Cum adpropinquaret Dominus*, *Ante sex Dies*, and *Cum audisset populus*.⁵⁰ The first antiphon recalls the biblical scene of Christ entering Jerusalem.⁵¹ The second antiphon re-tells the Palm Sunday scene in which children come to meet the Lord along his route. The third antiphon that was chanted during the procession also referred to children greeting the Lord. All in all, it should be noted that the time prescribed for the chanting of the antiphons was sufficient for the procession to

⁴⁷ Szczaniecki, 33. Next inventory comes only from 1563. See: *Inwentarz katedry wawelskiej z roku 1563* (Inventory of the Cracow Cathedral from 1563), *Źródła do dziejów Wawelu 10* (Cracow: Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki, 1979) ed. Adam Bochniak. The inventories of 1101 and 1110 are described in great detail in Mrozowski, *Ornamenta Ecclesiae*, exhibition catalogue, 44–59.

⁴⁸ *Quibus complacuit ut ornamenta ecclesie inscripta haberentur, id circo ne quis clericorum vel custodum posset aliquid subtrahere*. Monumenta PH, Vol. 1, 376 in Mrozowski, 44.

⁴⁹ Mrozowski, 34.

⁵⁰ *Processio I*, 11.

⁵¹ Since the Cracow record gives only the *incipita* of the antiphons, their full version can be supplemented from the identical text of the *Processio 2*, 131–132.

cover a distance from outside the city walls to the city gates, and then, from the gates to the cathedral. Still more time for walking enabled the singing of the *Gloria laus et honor* hymn following the last of the three antiphons. The hymn has thirty-five stanzas and is chanted by clerics standing in an elevated place.⁵² The next part of the ceremony begins when the procession enters the city beyond the walls. It was an act of great symbolic value, since it had to coincide with the *Ingremente Domino* antiphon. Judging from the choice of the liturgical material, the act of entering the city was endowed with historical and theological meaning. It not only recalled the entry of Jesus in the city of Jerusalem, but also prefigured the entry of the entire congregation in the heavenly Jerusalem. Finally, the last episode of the procession was the act of entering the church accompanied by an antiphon *Turba multa*.⁵³ After the antiphon has been completed, the cross is raised, and there follows the *Vexilla regis* hymn with the additional verses of the *O crux ave*, and *Te summa Deus trinitas*. The adoration of the cross continues and the clerics first throw the palms and spread the vestments in front of the cross. The final antiphon *Occurrunt turbe* is followed by the introit verse *Domine ne longe*, and so the Palm Sunday Mass commences.

In terms of kinetics and proxemics, the ceremony appears to develop along a single line. The entire movement is directed forward, the final destination being the cathedral church, and, more specifically, the cross is the object to be venerated both by the actors and the audience of the ceremony. The ceremony itself has three crucial points that are underlined by the appropriate liturgical text. First is the passing through the city gates; then crossing the threshold of the cathedral, and, finally, the moment of halting by the Cross. The entire ceremonial movement thus appears to be a continuum with important breaks occurring at regular intervals.

The act of crossing certain borders seems to be significant for the meaning of the Palm Sunday festivity. Theologically, the holiday marks the end of Christ's journey through earthly life, the end of his preaching activity. On Palm Sunday He is passing to the last stage of His life, the Sacrifice of the Cross. He will encounter the Cross at the end of this journey, just as the people taking part in the procession come across this powerful symbol at the end of their act of devotion. Interestingly enough, the participants of the *Processio* see the prefiguration of the Crucifixion in the cross that was exhibited for adoration as well as in the selected hymns about the Holy Cross that accompany the action itself. Thus, although the script of the *Processio* does not give the exact details as to which gates the procession should enter, it is still

⁵² (...) *Pueri in eminentiori loco constituti canunt ymnium. Processio 1*, 126.

⁵³ *Processio 2*, 132.

important to note the linear development of the ceremony, and to keep the moments of transition synchronised with the liturgical text. All in all, the ceremony seems to limit the acting space for both the actors and the audience, as the procession moves from the open space to the enclosed space of the cathedral. Undoubtedly, the contrast between daylight and candlelight made the focus on the Cross more dramatic and spectacular.

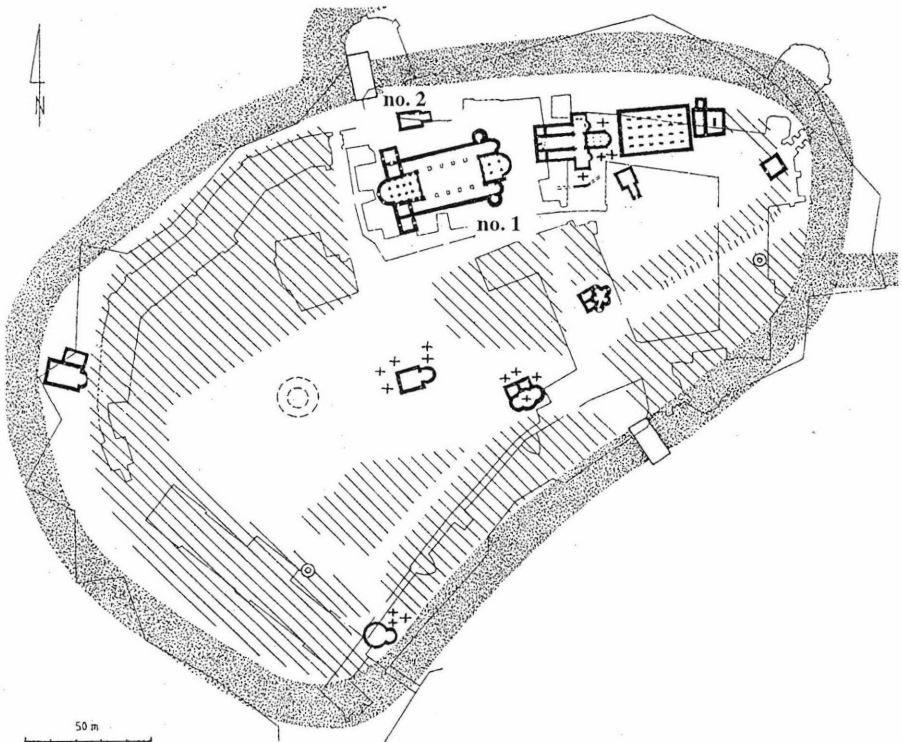


Fig. 1. Topography of the Wawel Hill in the tenth-twelfth century.

Source: *Chryścianizacja Polski południowej*

no. 1. St. Waclaw cathedral; no. 2. Gate 1

(The christianization of southern Poland). *Rola Krakowa w dziejach narodu.*

Ed. Jan M. Małacki. Cracow: Secesja, 1994.

The sombre tone of the Palm Sunday procession reappears at the beginning of the *Cracow Visitatio I*. Since we have noted already that the number of available actors ranged between 20 and 24, we can now calculate that the main actors included three priests impersonating the three Marys, two clerics representing the Angels, and

two canons taking on the role of the Apostles Peter and John. The number of the supporting actors was thus between 13 and 17, including the cantor. At the beginning of the Visitation play the choir comes out into the middle of the church while chanting the responsorium after *Gloria Patri*. Assuming that the common medieval practice of leaving the central nave free for the ceremonies is applicable to the Cracow cathedral, we see the clerics take their position in the middle of the open space with their backs to the altar and the transept, while the aisles would be occupied by the congregation.⁵⁴ As the cantor intones the antiphon *Maria Magdalena*, three priests wearing *albae* carry the ointment and slowly proceed from the sacristy to the sepulchre.⁵⁵ The sacristy in Wawel cathedral was situated on the northern side, to the left of the altar as one turns to face it. A chapter room was situated opposite to the sacristy, in the southern part of the church.⁵⁶ Priests representing the three Marys do not come directly from the group that gathered in the middle of the church. Instead, they start from a place hidden behind the altar and make a seemingly unexpected appearance in front of the sepulchre.

We do not know the shape of the sepulchre in Cracow cathedral because we lack supporting evidence.⁵⁷ Cracow evidently did not have a permanent sepulchral structure for the Easter play production. From the *Cracow Visitatio* text, however, we may conclude that the sepulchre in the cathedral was an enclosure, and not an altar or a tomb-like structure. The rubrics say that the three Marys actually enter the sepulchre, incense it, and only then exit.⁵⁸

The claim that we cannot describe the real theatrical practice on the basis of these highly normative and ubiquitous sources, may be refuted on the grounds that

⁵⁴ André Grabar, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques dans l'art chrétien antique*, vol. 1, (Paris: Collège de France, 1946), 54 quoted in Krystyna Józefowiczówna, *Z badań nad architekturą przedromańską i romańską w Poznaniu* (Research on the Pre-Romanesque and Romanesque architecture in Poznań), *Polskie Badania Archeologiczne* 9 (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1963), 49.

⁵⁵ *Processio* 1, 98.

⁵⁶ T. Wojciechowski, *Kościół katedralny w Krakowie* (Cathedral church in Cracow) (Cracow: n.p., 1900), 194.

⁵⁷ As Karl Young states in his essay on Easter sepulchres in medieval European drama: "Although the Western imitations of the Holy Sepulchre [in Jerusalem, J.S.] must have served often as *mise en scène* for the dramatic ceremonies of Easter and Holy Week, the instances in which recorded or extant examples of these structures can be definitely associated with particular versions of the *Depositio*, *Elevatio*, and *Visitatio Sepulchri* are not numerous." Young, i.509. The *Visitatio* record that may be related to a stone object, probably a sepulchral-type structure, and that is the closest to Cracow is that of the Visitation play found in St. George's basilica in Hradčany Castle, Prague, Czech Republic. For the discussion of the stone object excavated on the site see: Klara Benešová, "Altare est et dicitur praesepe et sepulchrum Domini," in *Posvátný obraz a zobrazení posvátného* (Sacred image and the depiction of the sacred), ed. Alexandr Matoušek and Lenka Karfíková (Prague: Alfaprint, 1995), 90–110. I am grateful to Prof. Hana Hlaváčková, for drawing my attention to this insightful and well-researched study.

⁵⁸ *Cracow Visitatio* 1, 100.

the normative character of the *Visitationes* may also have prompted the canons to follow the instructions—even more so, if they had to stage a ceremony that was novel to them. If this were the case, they would have been careful to represent it in exactly the same way as it was prescribed in the rubrics. I would therefore suggest that the sepulchre in thirteenth-century Cracow cathedral was either a temporary structure of wood or a tent draped with curtains that could have been easily dismantled after the ceremony.⁵⁹ As to the positioning of the sepulchre several possibilities may be considered. The Cracow text, as it has been stated earlier, has features of the Saxon *Visitatio*. According to Young, “... in most of the dramatic ceremonies under German influence ... the usual positions were ... in the middle of the nave, at the west end, or at the altar of a saint somewhere in the nave or aisles. Sometimes the sepulchre was in a chapel or in the crypt.”⁶⁰ Given so many possibilities, we can still maintain that the sepulchre was at some distance from the presbytery and the choir, possibly in the cathedral nave, since the three Marys “proceed towards the sepulchre,” and after having seen it from the inside, they “go back through the choir.” Similarly, the two Apostles “hurry to the sepulchre,” and “having collected the shrouds from the sepulchre, they go back to the choir.”⁶¹ All these actions suggest some distance between the performers and the sepulchre. The choir space, moreover, seems to be an acting space in its own right, used to stress the rhetoric of certain gestures. For example, although the three Marys start from the sacristy and go directly to the sepulchre, on their way back they are supposed to pass through the choir while chanting the antiphon *Ad monumentum venimus*. The antiphon is a musical narration of what they have just seen, and it is being addressed to the group of the Apostles represented here by the choir. Thus, going back through the choir area rather than directly to the sacristy is an action that creates one more ‘stage’ for the play. The choir thus needs to be seen as a new theatrical space, with different connotations from those that the sacristy ‘stage’ brought. We do not know where the two Apostles started from, since the expression *duo ex fratribus properant* might mean two different things: either ‘two of the clerics assume the roles of the apostles,’ or ‘two break off from the group of clerics.’ If the first possibility is considered, then the Apostles may also start from the sacristy that would then appear as a sort of backstage. If the other interpretation is true, then Peter and John go to the

⁵⁹ For possible Western prototypes of the two types of the Easter sepulchre see: N. C. Brooks, *The Sepulchre of Christ in Art and Liturgy*, University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, vol. 7, no. 2 (Urbana: n.p., 1921), 63–4 (curtained structure), 65 (wooden sepulchre). The former arrangement is also indicated in the rubric of the *Visitatio* from the diocese of Bamberg. See Young, i.510.

⁶⁰ Young, i.510.

⁶¹ *Cracow Visitatio I*, 98, 100.

sepulchre from the middle of the nave. In any case, as in the episode of the three Marys, the way to the sepulchre seems to be crucial for the play. After a short inspection of the tomb the Marys continue their 'pilgrimage.' Then the two Apostles visit the sepulchre. Their movement might not be so rhythmical as that of the convent and of the Marys, since they are supposed to move "as if running." Although a running pace for this type of the ceremony has to be excluded for reasons of solemnity, the actors might still have moved more quickly than the usual liturgical pace prescribed. Especially since they were not engaged in chanting the antiphon that illustrated their action. They just mimed the antiphon *Currebant duo simul*. Finally, the shrouds were carried to the choir to be spread in full view of the congregation.⁶² As if to give license to the news announced by the Apostles, the bishop or a cantor intones *Te Deum* at the end of the ceremony.

The 1101 inventory of the chapter lists *pallia*, capes, chasubles, golden and silver chalices, crosses, dalmatics, *subtilia*, candlesticks, urns, thuribles, and *plenaria*.⁶³ The number of *pallium* or *pallia altaris* increases in the inventory of 1110 compiled after the ordination of bishop Maurus. This inventory lists the same number of chalices, capes, candlesticks, thuribles, while there are more crosses and lectionaries.⁶⁴ Interestingly enough, the 1110 inventory notes also the possession of a golden crown, crown-pendants, a golden tablet and two silver ones, little boxes containing relics, ostrich eggs and a banner embroidered with gold.⁶⁵ It is possible that the *pallia* mentioned before were kept in the chapter also around the year 1200, but the ecclesiastical fashion changed, and the fabric deteriorated, so we may at most reconstruct the line of the liturgical clothes from the turn of the century on the basis of foreign sources, both visual and literary. Still *pallia* cannot be translated solely as an 'altar-cloth,' as these types of cloths were also used to cover church walls on special occasions.⁶⁶ The inventory just mentioned notes also the possession of twenty-four capes that the canons were supposed to don for major feasts. The inventory also mentions dalmatics for the deacons and the *subtilia*, or short tunics for the subdeacons. These are the kinds of liturgical clothing that would be used for the extra-liturgical plays. Together with the indispensable thuribles, all these *utensilia* belong to the ready-to-use collection of properties for the liturgical theatre.

⁶² *Cracow Visitatio I*, 100.

⁶³ MPH vol. 1, 376 in Mrozowski, 44. The catalogue notes that none of the objects listed in both inventories have survived.

⁶⁴ Mrozowski, 44.

⁶⁵ Mrozowski, 44.

⁶⁶ Sczaniecki, 38.

While the two Cracow performances discussed so far can be placed in the early period of theatrical activity in medieval Poland (they still belong to the Romanesque art and to the old Cracow cathedral), the Poznań text appears in the second half of the fifteenth century, the period of the reign of King Casimir of the Jagiellonian dynasty. The *Poznań Visitatio* is part of the *Rubrica* of the Poznań cathedral that is a collection of laws and regulations concerning liturgical practice in the church. The liturgy in the cathedral dates back to the year 966, when the Polan duke, Mieszko I, was baptised. The Poznań bishopric emerged as early as 967, consequently, the first community of priests must have gathered around Poznań's first bishop, Jordan, in order to assist him in christianising of country.⁶⁷ Later documents attest to the existence of the Poznań chapter in the fifteenth century. Throughout the centuries the city has been an ecclesiastical centre which set liturgical practice patterns for the surrounding parishes. Thus, we may suppose that the *Visitatio* ceremony first appeared in the cathedral church and was adopted by lesser churches.

Until the sixteenth century the cathedral building in Poznań had only one tower and a large choir. In the middle of the nave was the *pantheum* of the kings of the Piast dynasty. A fourteenth-century source testifies to the presence of the sepulchre of Boleslas the Brave erected after Western fashion.⁶⁸ The royal tombs certainly survived until 1502, when a radical renovation of the church began, initiated by the humanist bishop, Jan Lubrański. We must take into account the presence of this structure when analysing a *Visitatio* from around 1470. While the royal tombs could not be converted into the Easter sepulchre (this could be done with altar tables and tombs of a saints), they constituted part of the natural theatrical setting for the Poznań Visitations in the sixteenth century. Perhaps the actors of the plays would circumvent them or simply pass them by, but the tombs would undoubtedly be included in the *Visitatio* setting.

⁶⁷ For a detailed history of the cathedral building in its historical context see: Józef Łukaszewicz, *Krótki opis historyczny dawnej diecezji Poznańskiej* (Short historical description of the former Poznań diocese), vol.1, (Poznań: Księgarnia Żupańskiego, 1858). Archeological excavations in the cathedral are discussed by Józefowiczówna.

⁶⁸ See Józefowiczówna, 51–63. For the fourteenth-century sepulchre the author quotes the account of Jan Długosz. She also discusses archaeological finds of earlier sepulchral structures that attest to the existence of the royal tombs in the central nave of the cathedral before the raid on the cathedral in 1034–1038. Moreover, Józefowiczówna places the supposed royal tombs erected in *medio ecclesiae* within broader Western European burial customs. See also Benešovská for the comparative study of royal tombs in France, Germany, England, and Bohemia.

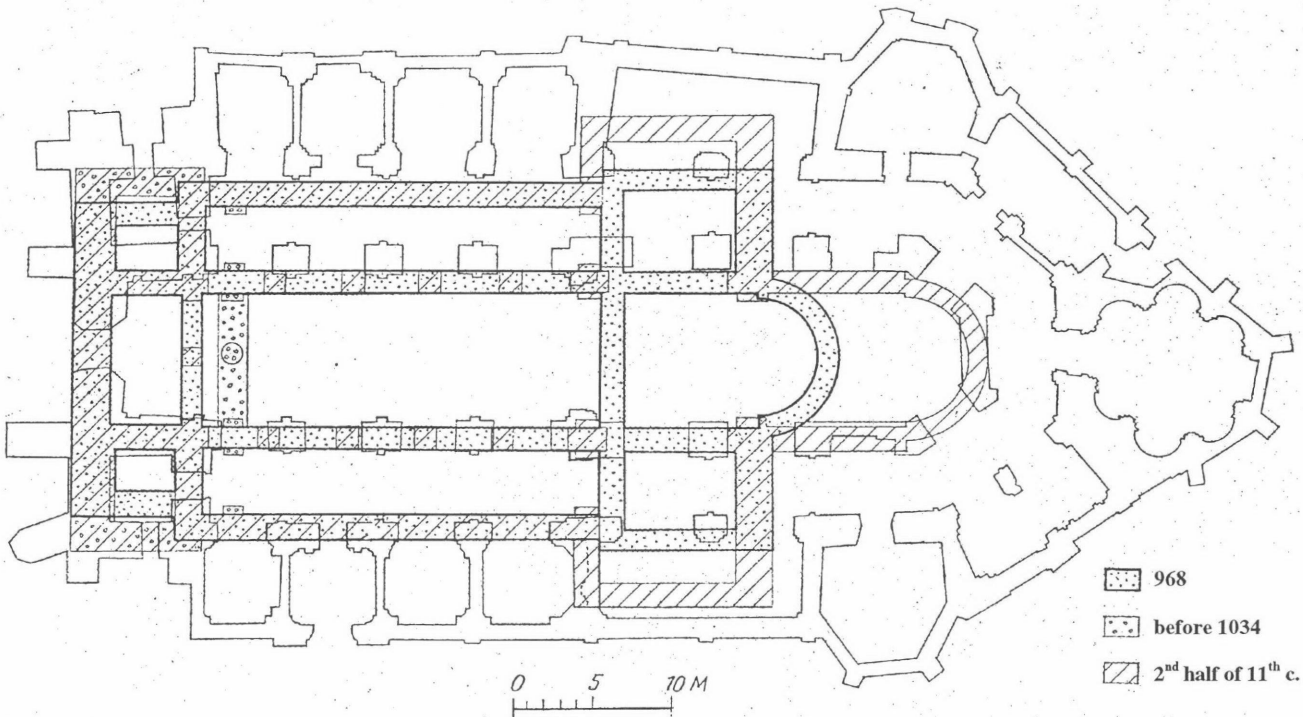


Fig. 2. Reconstruction of the first and second Poznań cathedral on the gothic plan.
Source: Józefowiczówna, 101.

We may try to figure out who were the actors of the ceremonies that were staged in the cathedral. Apart from the regular canon priests, there had existed since 1300 the so-called penitentiaries and vicars.⁶⁹ They all participated in the liturgical life in the cathedral. Another important group of participants was the choir or the *schola cantorum*. Since the fifteenth century, Poznań cathedral had a separate building called the *psalterium*, which was the residence and the rehearsal place for the cathedral singers—the psalterians.⁷⁰ Poznań chapter regulations from 1467 order that each member of the cathedral schola receives one measure of flour per week as payment for rehearsals and singing in the church.⁷¹

Considering the fact that Poznań was at the centre of the ecclesiastical life of medieval Poland, it is not surprising that the cathedral library preserved several dramatised ceremonies and liturgical plays. As has been calculated for the Cracow cathedral, the Visitation play called for at least seven main actors and a choir. The Cracow chapter in the first half of the thirteenth century consisted of at least twenty canon priests. While the number of the actors prescribed for the *Poznań Visitatio 1* is only five (Apostles John and Peter do not figure in this version), the number of the supporting actors seems to be much higher. The *schola cantorum* together with the priests from different congregations must have formed group of supporting performers for the spectacular Easter ceremonies.

Already the first rubric of the *Poznań Visitatio* shows that the ceremony was extremely elaborate. The scene opens with a procession with banners being carried in front.⁷² *Gloria Patri* is being repeated while the congregation proceeds forwards. It remains unclear whether all the people were walking in the procession, or whether this was the prerogative of the priests. It seems that in medieval liturgical practice processions engaged both the people and the celebrating clergy. We may relate this custom to Poznań, since a thirteenth-century entry in the city chronicle says that Poznań citizens were obliged to take part in cathedral processions. This demand was a distant echo of the privileges bestowed on the first Polish cathedral.⁷³ However, in the case of the *Poznań Visitatio 1* opening procession we may claim that it was reserved only for the clergy, since the time needed for the *Gloria Patri* antiphon was not sufficient for the people to take their places in the aisles. According to the old

⁶⁹ Łukaszewicz, 60.

⁷⁰ Józef Surzyński, *Muzyka figuralna w kościołach polskich od XV do XVIII w.* (Figurative music in Polish churches in the fifteenth-eighteenth centuries) (Poznań: Drukarnia "Dziennika Poznańskiego", 1889), 33.

⁷¹ *Scholaribus ecclesiae cathedralis assignetur mensura farinae pro qualibet septimane pro labore et cantu in ecclesia.* Surzyński, 33.

⁷² *Poznań Visitatio 1*, 112.

⁷³ The source is Baszko's Chronicle quoted in Sczaniecki, 20.



custom, men gathered on the Gospel side (south) of the church, and women on the Lesson side (north).⁷⁴ Thus, we suppose that the solemn procession for the *Visitatio* only engaged the clergy. After the initial antiphon the procession stopped, and the cantor began a new antiphon *Maria Magdalena*⁷⁵ the group was probably immobile by that time in order to form a background for the movement of the three priests. The rubrics are almost identical with those of the Cracow version. Again, as in Cracow, the number of the three Marys does not correspond to the antiphon that mentions only *Maria Magdalena et alia Maria*. After the usual dialogue with the Angels, the Marys lean over the sepulchre, take the shrouds, and carry them to the altar. Immediately after the antiphon *Cernitis, o socii*, the cantors intone the *Surrexit Dominus* verse. Thus, we can observe major differences between the Cracow and Poznań ceremonies. The *Poznań Visitatio 1* does not have the scene with the Apostles' Race, so the three Marys take over their role of displaying the shrouds. Moreover, they do not incense the sepulchre which seems to be in the form of a tomb, since they can lean over to collect the burial cloths. There is much less focus on the sepulchre: it is not incensed or even circumvented.

One more important variation in the *Poznań Visitatio* is the additional sequence *Victimae paschali laudes*. In Cracow, after the display of the shrouds there followed the joyful Easter antiphon *Surrexit dominus de sepulchro qui pro nobis pependit in ligno, alleluia*.⁷⁶ This scene in Cracow is completed by the *Te Deum laudamus*. Poznań resolved the final scene in a different way. After the display of the shrouds, there follows the *Surrexit Dominus* that reappears at the very end of the ceremony. In between the two repetitions there is inserted the *Victimae Paschali* and the *Te Deum*.⁷⁷ The entire acting group goes back to the choir while the sequence is chanted.⁷⁸

Unfortunately, no inventory from the Poznań cathedral treasury survives. Certainly numerous *ornamenta ecclesie* flowed into it as intellectual and artistic culture flourished in the Jagiellonian era (1385-1572). The fact that not many of its contents survived may be ascribed to the donations made to the state by the Church authorities in Poznań, Gniezno, and Wrocław. In 1456, for example, at the time of the Commonwealth's war with the Teutonic Order, at the consent of the Gniezno

⁷⁴ Szaniecki, 26. Interestingly enough, the custom is still alive in Cracow, but the order is reversed.

⁷⁵ *Poznań Visitatio*, 112.

⁷⁶ *Cracow Visitatio 1*, 100

⁷⁷ *Poznań Visitatio*, 114.

⁷⁸ I interpret the rubric *Ad chorum redeundo hic dictis incipiatur*, as a sequence that accompanies the action of all the priests withdrawing to the area of the choir. This movement might be seen as a continuation of the initial procession. However, the phrase quoted above could also be interpreted as "priests representing Marys go back to the altar to join the choir."

bishop and the bishops of the *ecclesiae trium diocesum, Gnesnensis, Wladislaviensis et Posnaniensis, suis carissimis vasis et clenodiis undatae sunt*.⁷⁹ Jan Długosz adds that when king Casimir asked the same from the members of the Cracow chapter: *expositis rei publicae necessitatibus et angustis, coepit non tam precibus, quam lacrimis rogare, ut tam maioris, quam omnibus ecclesiarum vasa et clenodia aurea et argentea commodarentur*,⁸⁰ his request was not granted.

Although the attempted reconstruction or rather description of the plays from two ecclesiastical centres cannot be complete due to a lack of material proofs, it is still clear that clerics employed some basic solutions in regard to the way church space was used (utilisation of the central nave, the aisles, the presbytery, and the sacristy), and in regard to the stage movement (procession, circumvention of the sepulchre, adoration of the Cross). All these details help to establish part of the ceremonies' context and theatrical devices that are clearly different from secular theatrical practices. The theatrical context, however, is not limited to physical space alone, it takes in another important component—the audience—to make the picture of the performance complete. Therefore, it is worthwhile to inquire into the intended audiences of the ceremonies discussed above and to see their own imaginative space in the church.

The Audience and the Theatrical Space

Any theatre is a metaphorical wilderness if it does not consider its audience. This is even more so with respect to the liturgical theatre, since its location, the church building, apart from being the house of God, is also the house of His people. During the time the liturgy is enacted, the two dimensions of the church building merge, and, consequently cannot be treated separately: people come to experience the eternal Presence by being present at the ceremonies. The house of God thus becomes their own physical and spiritual abode for the time they stay in the church. It is this building that becomes the object and setting for human creativity in its various forms, and, more specifically, theatrical activity. People not only occupied the physical space of the church, but, in artistic terms, they called its theatrical space into being by designing liturgical forms and engaging in extra-liturgical activity.

Whatever criticism can be raised of its linguistic conservatism, medieval liturgical theatre still appears as one of the few moments in theatre history where co-operation between the performers and the audience was very close and well attested

⁷⁹ Jan Długosz, HP, vol. V, 209 in Mrozowski, 48.

⁸⁰ Długosz, 232, in Mrozowski, 48.

in the script. The actors-celebrants were able to establish a special relationship with the audience during the ceremony. For example, in *Processio 2*, the rubrics presuppose the audience's participation in the action of adoration of the Cross, the actors turn towards the audience and let the people actively engage in this act of display and devotion. Other scenes that entail the presence of the congregation are the scenes when Christ's burial shrouds are displayed in the series of the Visitation plays. In all the plays that include this particular scene, the rubrics refer to the audience, for example, *Acceptis igitur in sepulchro lintheaminibus redeunt ad chorum et expansis coram omni populo canunt (Cracow Visitatio 1, Brzeg Visitatio)*, *Deinde sudario accepto reuertantur ad chorum et ostendendo sudarium cantent (Cracow Visitatio 2)*, *se dicti ... lintheamina accipiant et portent ante altare et versi facie ad populum dicant cantando (Poznań Visitatio 1)*. The repertoire of the stage movement for both groups of participants may be significantly enlarged by taking into account traditional prayer postures and worshipping gestures.

Let us make a further distinction within the liturgical theatre community and assign the performer group to the sphere of the play, and the rest of the congregation to the sphere of the reception of the play. Undoubtedly, a bishop or any other member of higher clergy that entered into the flow of the ceremony in crucial moments belongs to the sphere of play. This is, for example, the case in *Cracow Visitatio 1*, where the bishop, if he were present, has to intone *Te Deum Laudamus* at the end of the Visitation. The hymn itself starts the Easter Mass that follows the *Visitatio*, and it therefore marks the point of transition from the extra-liturgical piece to the solemn liturgy proper.

It seems that the discussion of stage movement in these plays can be best conducted in relation to the physical space of the church building, since all the plays delineate the theatrical space for both groups of participants by means of movement. For example, the processional movement at the opening of the *Visitatio* or *Caena Domini* marks the boundaries of the ceremony. The audience sees the priests coming out of the sacristy and taking their places at the Last Supper table. They thus associate these two areas with the sphere of the play that cannot be crossed. Similarly, the procession of the three Marys in the Visitation plays not only marks the performance area but also helps the audience to focus on the crucial site—the sepulchre. The basic stage movement patterns for the Visitation plays appear to be the same, despite textual differences. Thus, the initial movement of the performing community is marked by the emergence from the presbytery to the middle of the church or to the open area within the altar, so as to be seen by the congregation. The same action is then repeated by the priests representing the three Marys who head from the sacristy to the sepulchre. Thus, there occurs a double delineation of the

theatrical space: first, the group of priests aligns in the background, then the Marys start their visitation. The basic directions for the entire dramatic narrative are established. Moving forwards and going backwards constitutes the rhythm of the entire play. If we add to this going round the sepulchre and incensing gestures as well as the act of displaying Christ's empty burial shrouds, we will get a rich inventory of gestures rooted in liturgy but which acquired a broader use in the context of the liturgical theatre. All these gestures are implied in the liturgical text, and the rubrics distribute them among individual actors as they set up the basic conventions of acting.

Just as the theatrical space was extended for dramatic reasons, it might as well have been limited or it could even shrink to a single spot within the altar area, as happened in the *Caena Domini* ceremony when the action started to focus on the supper table. Thus, the space for acting and for watching the ceremonies was unstable. Every now and then it changed its parameters, which, in turn, gave early liturgical theatre its forceful dynamics. Moreover, the changing setting of these plays implies a special approach to theatrical illusion. Instead of the initial stable division of performers and audience, there occurs a constant shift between the two groups with the simultaneous displacement of the physical space they are supposed to move in. Thus, the illusion or rather spiritual identification with biblical events is related to new places and includes new objects each time they are introduced into the action.

The sphere of the play and the sphere of its reception not only change in space, they also merge to form one meeting or exchange place between the actors and the audience. Both groups approach these ceremonies in their own way. The actors have a deeper insight into the theological and spiritual meaning of the ceremonies due to their education. The knowledge of Latin was, of course, a major advantage in grasping the message of these plays. The actors would be responsible for the literary part of the ceremonies. Also, they would be responsible for the production process itself. The audience, on the other hand, would have identified more easily with the audio-visual aspect of the ceremonies, and would certainly contemplate the plays and follow the ritual action rather than actively participate in the preparations for staging the plays that started well before the Holy Week. Thus, while the two participating groups had clearly delineated roles for the time when the dramatic representation took place, there was a point in it when the two groups met and the active participation of the actors merged with the passive participation of the audience; devotional practice was enriched by communal prayer in the vernacular.

The community that the liturgical plays called forth presented itself primarily in the church building. However, the processions took place outside the church, as for example in most of the Palm Sunday ceremonies. Thus the clergy and the



EASTER *OFFICIUM* IN MEDIEVAL POLAND

congregation emphasised their roles in city life. Church ceremonies became part of urban life, as they were watched annually by both believers and non-believers, by the citizens, and by the merchants who happened to be staying in the cities. These ceremonies, although controlled by the church authorities, became part of the city tradition.⁸¹

Thus, although the production process belonged entirely to the clergy, the people were an indispensable element that made the liturgical performance complete. They responded to visual and audible signs by adding their own devotional gestures and assuming praying postures within the church building as well as outdoors, if the ceremony took place in the city. In the words of C. Clifford Flanigan, *Visitatio Sepulchri* "seeks neither to entertain nor to instruct in the usual sense of the word; instead, it attempts to involve actively the entire cultic community in the events of the first Easter and, therefore, to apply the saving benefits of the once-for-all event to the congregation."⁸² A requirement for the viewer of the extra-liturgical offices was that he or she must participate mentally and spiritually in the representations of the historical events that were at the roots of Christianity.

Conclusion

Liturgical drama is a complex sign-system and aspects of this system can be described separately in order to enhance our knowledge of early religious theatre and methods used to stage a performance and to communicate with the public. From the study of a number of liturgical ceremonies from Poland (some of which may already pertain to the name of a well-made play, as in the case of the *Visitatio Sepulchri* performance), there emerges a picture of the Church as an institution that was engaged in theatrical production. Although the tools and minor props used in the performances have not survived, the records of the ceremonies are generously preserved in liturgical books throughout the country.

From the discussion of the symbolic meaning of the scene from the Visitation plays that was designed to display the burial shrouds of Christ to the congregation, it appears that medieval religious theatre was concerned with the language of gesture as much as it was interested in the audible language, or, more precisely, in language

⁸¹ See the discussion of the Corpus Christi mystery plays from Coventry, York, and Wakefield, and their audiences in Mervyn James, "Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Time," *Past and Present* 98 (1983): 5–6.

⁸² Clifford C. Flanigan, "The Roman Rite and the Origins of the Liturgical Drama," *Comparative Drama* 2 (1968): 281.

JOLANTA SZPILEWSKA

combined with Gregorian chant. The mixed mode of representation that this theatre employed included both chanting and miming. Mimed parts of the Visitations were always combined with the chanted parts, since there is no rubric that presupposes a moment of silence. Thus, medieval liturgical narratives may be seen as the earliest musical drama in the modern era.

We no longer speak the same theatrical language as Galo of Beauvais in the thirteenth century or priests in fifteenth-century Poznań, but we can still recover parts of the theatrical vocabulary that was in use. On the basis of the textual analysis we may assume that the setting of the ceremonies would be either the city or the church building. Urban space was transformed into theatrical space only for the time of the processions from beyond the city walls to the church. In contrast to this dynamic utilisation of urban space, church buildings housed both processions and static representations. It appears that the church building housed more ceremonies, and called for a variety of stage movement solutions (walking towards the Easter sepulchre, circumventing certain objects, lining up in two groups, etc.) The focal point of all Latin Easter offices, the sepulchre, was also consciously employed in the performance, though the actual objects have not come down to the present day. The positioning of the Easter sepulchre in the cathedral churches of Cracow and Poznań could be identified only on the basis of a comparative study. I assume that the place of the sepulchres would be in the middle of the church, either in the central nave, or in one of the aisles, both close to the altar.

The congregation is rarely mentioned in the dramatic script, and it appears on the textual level only at crucial moments of the ceremonies: sometimes it witnesses the re-enactment of the Resurrection morning events. It also takes part in the active veneration of the Cross on Good Friday and walks in grand Palm Sunday Processions. Nevertheless, we can claim that the church building was a place of spiritual and artistic exchange between the actors and the spectators. There was a specific point in time and a specific place where the congregation would gather, and thus fill the available space with communal movement, chants, and prayers. Liturgical and extra-liturgical offices, and especially the recovered theatrical language that used to set them in motion, help to appreciate the scale of this endeavour.

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