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EVINA STEINOVÁ

**JEWS AND CHRIST INTERCHANGED: DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES IN THE *PASSIO IUDEORUM PRAGENSIIUM***

*'Passio Iudeorum Pragensium', a late fourteenth-century pogrom narrative from Bohemia, provides us with many unique insights into the medieval tradition of pogrom narratives. It is preserved in the form of a number of related but distinct textual units that allow us to examine the discursive nature of texts such as these. This discursiveness is illustrated in this article by the transformations that the narrative material underwent, temporally and spatially, as well as with respect to different language communities and audiences. Furthermore, I discuss some models of relationship between the 'Passio' material and the historical reality of a pogrom that led to the formation of this material, as well as to alternative accounts of the event preserved in some of the contemporary chronicles. Most important in this respect are three prosaic texts that seem to fall into the oldest layer of formation of 'Passio Iudeorum Pragensium'. All three are elaborate compositions which employ traditional modes of narration with distinct new purposes and functions and which voice different, even conflicting perspectives on the significance of pogrom violence and its causes. This is particularly obvious when the representation of bodies – of the massacred Jews as well as of the supposedly desecrated 'Corpus Christi' – is contrasted, particularly as the three narratives make a point of blurring the boundaries between the two entities.*

**Key words:** *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, Prague pogrom of 1389, pogrom narrative, Host Desecration narrative, textual field, representation of Jews in Medieval Latin texts

This article stems from my thesis work on *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium* (The Passion of the Jews of Prague), a late fourteenth-century textual entity which presents itself as an account of a pogrom that took place in Prague, the Imperial capital, during Easter of 1389.<sup>1</sup> In many respects, *Passio* is unique among the texts concerned with the anti-Jewish violence. First, it does not survive as a single text/set of variant texts, but rather in a shape more akin to its medieval state – as a variety of related, yet discreet literary

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<sup>1</sup> STEINOVÁ (2010).

compositions that were stimulated by the same historical event.<sup>2</sup> Thus, we possess five different surviving *Passio*-texts as well as testimonies about other narrative units, some fully oral or only partially written, that did not survive.<sup>3</sup> In addition, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium* cannot be placed into any of the medieval narrative modes that were associated with the pogroms, but rather combines in novel ways traits of several genres, including those that were not traditionally used in anti-Jewish discourse, such as the Passion parody.<sup>4</sup>

The dynamic textual history as well as generic transcendence of *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium* are particular manifestations of a more significant phenomenon that accompanies pogrom narratives, and other medieval texts namely their inherent openness, fluidity and context-dependency.<sup>5</sup> Such fluid texts may be seen as, Martha Bayless's term, "participation texts", i.e. texts that invite re-writing and transformation as a form of discourse by those who possess a sufficient degree of literacy and can produce a new unit in the extant discourse field.<sup>6</sup> The link between the historical reality of pogrom and the narratives remains, at the same time, indirect: it resembles the situation when a stone hits the surface of the water and disappears beneath it, but creates waves on the surface which are visible. While the pogrom is extinguished, the memories and experiences of the Christian community participating in the violence continue to exist and are embodied in texts, voicing these various experiences and recollections, but

<sup>2</sup> *Passio* is not the only textual corpus that provides an account of the pogrom, but it is the only one that does it in the form of a coherent literary composition employing the Host Desecration Narrative, whether such textual units stand on their own or are incorporated into more substantial works, such as chronicles. I would like to distinguish it from other accounts of the same historical event that do not employ this narrative format, as preserved in contemporary historiographic compositions or articulated by the Jewish literary milieu. It also needs to be added that V.V. Tomek chose to edit *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium* as a single text in 1877, confining the differences between the *Passio*-texts to the critical apparatus: TOMEK (1877).

<sup>3</sup> This is the case of most of *Passio*-material used by younger chronicles where a direct link to any of the surviving versions cannot be postulated, especially given the philological and content-related differences, see the oral testimony recorded by Tilemann Elhen in WYSS 1883, 79, and the entry into the chronicle of Theodore Engelhus in MADER (1671: 283–84). Furthermore, *Passio* corpus encompasses at least two different short versified compositions that were very likely used in a larger performance that escapes the textual evidence.

<sup>4</sup> See NEWMANN (2012). Also BAYLESS (1996: 13).

<sup>5</sup> See Rubin on the fluidity and openness of Host Desecration Narrative, RUBIN (1999: 132–189).

<sup>6</sup> BAYLESS (1996: 13–14).

also providing justification for the problematic violence, a vehicle for other concerns and sentiments and a platform to attack rival interpretations.

It is this discursive aspect of *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium* that I wish to treat in my paper. I will first say more about the nature of the textual material that provides a picture of its discursiveness and then, focusing on the three surviving prose *Passio*-texts,<sup>7</sup> I will analyze their distinct narrative strategies, paying particular attention to two features: the representation of the Jews; and the treatment of the Host desecration that supposedly triggered the violence in 1389.

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*Passio Iudeorum Pragensium* may be envisaged as a textual field, defined not only by its constituent elements (the various *Passio*-texts), or its center (the pogrom experience), but also by its vectors, i.e. the transformations that shaped this field, throughout time and space as well as environments of reception and language communities. It is noteworthy that new units in the field continued to be produced for more than a hundred and fifty years, a span that indicates the impact the events of 1389 had on the human mind. It is possible to observe how the narrative was significantly transformed throughout time. Thus, Dietrich Engelhus writing after 1421 included a record based on one of the prose *Passio*-texts in his chronicle,<sup>8</sup> departing only slightly from his prototype. In contrast, the *Passio*-material included in a Czech Chronicle of Václav Hájek z Libočan in 1541 is interpolated to a great extent by unrelated literary elements and recent historical realities.<sup>9</sup> It also needs to be mentioned that within a mere decade after the pogrom, the *Passio*-matter was recorded as far away from Prague as Hessen in Germany by local chronicler Tilemann Elhen.<sup>10</sup> One of the manuscripts containing *Passio*-text found its way to Krakow in Poland,<sup>11</sup> probably as a result of the medieval connections of the university in Krakow with the university

<sup>7</sup> I am not considering here two additional surviving poetic *Passio*-texts, which are much shorter and schematic than the prosaic narratives. They are treated in STEINOVÁ (2010: 11) and SOUKUP (2011).

<sup>8</sup> MADER (1671: 283–84).

<sup>9</sup> HÁJEK (1819: 355–56). Hájek's 'meme' spawned later into a Latin *kalendarium* of Prokop Lupáč z Hlaváčova in 1584 and into a Czech *kalendarium* of Daniel Adam z Veleslavína in 1578–1590. TEIGE (1920: 16). Prokop Lupáč according to Olomouc, Vědecká knihovna 34.769. Transcript was provided by my colleague Daniel Soukup.

<sup>10</sup> Elhen completed his chronicle before the end of the fourteenth century; GENSCICKE (1959: 345).

<sup>11</sup> Krakow, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, 2538 DD XIX 4. Description in WISŁOCKI (1877–

in Prague. Apart from Czech and German, the composition echoes also in the Hebrew language environment as is indicated by a short entry in an anonymous Hebrew chronicle of 1615 mentioning Janek as the perpetrator of the 1389 pogrom violence.<sup>12</sup> While there is a good indication that some of the prose *Passio*-versions were composed in the university environment,<sup>13</sup> other *Passio*-versions have the form of rhythmical poetry or dramatic texts, material that could have been publicly performed.<sup>14</sup> In two cases, such performative versions are simplifications or translations of extant, more sophisticated prototypes, which may have to do with the emergence of new, perhaps popular audiences.<sup>15</sup> In all cases, the transformability indicates that the agents of the composition and re-writing were well aware of the openness of this textual form and exploited it freely.

It is also crucial to realize that while *Passio* describes the violence of 1389, it cannot be considered a historical account. This is particularly evident when *Passio* is compared with other, nearly contemporary descriptions of the same pogrom in the historical writings of Ludolf of Sagen and Aenea Sylvio Piccolomini.<sup>16</sup> Most importantly, these two chroniclers do not make a mention of the Host desecration, so central for the *Passio*-narrative. Instead, they speak of the long-term causes leading to the escalation of the violence, which are overlooked by *Passio*.<sup>17</sup> Though there

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81: 604–5). The Bohemian origin of this manuscript is indicated by a Czech versicle appended to the composition.

- 12 DAVID – WEINBERGER – ORDAN (1993: 21). The names Janek (appearing in the anonymous chronicle), and Ješek/Ješko (which occurs solely in the *Passio*-corpus), are synonymous and seem to indicate that *Passio*-material was known, even if indirectly, to Jews living in Prague; STEINOVÁ (2010: 45–46). This account stands somewhat on the margin of the *Passio*-corpus, since it does not make a reference to Host Desecration, yet clearly reflects *Passio*-narrative. Other Hebrew narratives concerned with the pogrom, unlike the entry in the anonymous Hebrew chronicle, make no indications about the existence of the *Passio*-texts.
- 13 Given their preservation in university manuscripts, such as Praha, Národní knihovna, XI D 7 and Krakow, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, 2538 DD XIX 4. For the description of the former, see TRUHLÁŘ (1906: 145–46); for the latter see WISŁOCKI (1877–81: 604–5). This is evident also given the sophisticated vocabulary, imagery and argumentation of the *Passio*-versions preserved in these manuscripts.
- 14 See STEINOVÁ (2010: 11), and SOUKUP (2011). Performativity was an important aspect of anti-Jewish material, which was often used as a basis for a public spectacle; see RUBIN (1999: 161–174). Also NIRENBERG (1996: 214–218).
- 15 One of them, discussed by Soukup, is extant in Czech, which further supports the impression of accessibility to popular audience; SOUKUP (2011).
- 16 EMLER (1873: 125), LOSERTH (1880: 419–20).
- 17 According to Piccolomini: *Calamitosum genus hominum Judaei inter Christianos*

are additional reasons, this obvious discrepancy has mainly to do with the choice of narrative strategies, as the matter discussed in *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium* is defined not by historical reality (and its analysis) but rather by the formant literary tradition (and its deployment). *Passio* developed within the tradition of the Host Desecration Narrative and uses its particular narrative methods – including selection of stereotypical characters, sujets and literary forms.<sup>18</sup> Rather than the contemporary accounts of violence, thus, it resembles the story of the famous Host desecration of Paris which occurred some hundred years earlier and which provided the framework for majority of later Pogrom narratives.<sup>19</sup> In this respect, the *Passio*-material is heavily dependent on earlier literary models, such as the Host Desecration Narrative or the Easter Passion and thus detached from the historical reality or experience of this reality by the agents of the textual composition.<sup>20</sup>

As I show in my master thesis, the centermost area of the textual field of *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium* is populated by three texts, which also represent the most fully preserved material in the field.<sup>21</sup> I will refer to them using their respective incipits: *Historia de cede Iudeorum Pragensi* (The report about the slaughter of the Jews in Prague); *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium secundum Ieskonem rusticum quadratum* (The Passion of the Jews of Prague according to Johnnie the Hill-Billy); and *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium secundum blasphemiam* (The Passion of the Jews of Prague according to Sacrilege). These three *Passio*-texts share a number of traits that indicate their close affinity: all are written in polished Latin; they were composed in the area of Prague shortly after the pogrom; all contain what may be considered eye-witness material. There is no other likely textual/atextual intermediary that supplied the trio of narratives with accurate

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*agentes, qui ubi paululum abundare creduntur, mox tamquam Jesu Christi, Dei nostri, maiestatem contempserint aut religioni illuserint, non fortunas tantum, sed vitam quoque amittunt.* EMLER (1873: 125). Also Ludolf of Sagen: *Ideo incressati, impinguati et dilatati sub eo* [i.e. Wenceslau IV., the emperor at the time] *recalcitrare ceperunt fidei, blasphemare sanctum Israel et modis variis prosilire in contumeliam salvatoris nostri. Cuius obprobrium, quia christiana gens dissimulare et ferre non potuit in vindictam blasphemie illius, qui probra nostra tulit, quadam die in anno videlicet incarnationis dominice 1389 in sollemnitate paschali zelo mota iudeos ipsos et domos eorum igne cremavit.* LOSERTH (1880: 419–420). In both cases, the historians seem to refer to long-term economic and social prosperity of the Jews under the protection of the emperor, and to a series of triggering events rather than a particular single event.

18 See RUBIN (1999: 42–45).

19 BOUQUET (1904: 32–33).

20 RUBIN (1999: 2–3). Also NIRENBERG (1996: 220).

21 See STEINOVÁ (2010: 53–64).

details, e.g. of a diplomatic sort,<sup>22</sup> and we may thus presuppose that they were all written by those who witnessed and perhaps participated in the pogrom violence. Thus, the trio may be considered the immediate response to the events of 1389 by the Christian Latin writing circles, expressing their different interpretations of the event.

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In the relative chronology of the textual field, the first of the surviving prose narratives to have been written was most likely *Historia*.<sup>23</sup> While it is the shortest of the three core texts, it is also the richest in unique factual information.<sup>24</sup> Further, this version introduces some of the Passion imagery, but in a less coherent manner than is the case with the other two prose texts, which are more programmatic in their usage of the Passion.<sup>25</sup>

*Historia* is preserved in a single manuscript now in Krakow and may be classified in line with the tradition of *Passio*-parody as a political pamphlet.<sup>26</sup> The narrative opens with a detailed description of a Host desecration:

*Appropinquabat dies festus cristianorum insignior, qui dicitur Pascha [Luc. 22,1]. Et ecce, quarta decima <hora> die precedente sacerdos quidam sacratissimum corpus Dominicum deferendo, cum per plateam Iudeorum ad quendam infirmum declinaret, detestabilis gens Iudaica blasphemis premissis quam pluribus, arreptis lapidibus vas de manibus iactu lapidum excussit sacerdotis atque confregit, clamans obprobriosa voce et dicens: „Hic, qui defertur, non est Filius Dei, sed idolum.“ Sacerdos autem, hostias sacratissimas per terram dispersas colligens, Iudeis maledictis dixit hec verba: „Quid molesti estis Domino Salvatori, qui multa bona opera operatus est in vos [Matth. 26, 10]. Quinque libros Moysi habetis vobiscum, eum autem propter scelus immane, quod nunc perpetrastis, nunquam habebitis. Amen, dico vobis: Ubi cumque predicatum fuerit in mundo maleficium, quod hodie exercuistis in Iesum, dicetur, quod hoc fecistis in ignominiam eius“ [Matth. 26, 13].<sup>27</sup>*

<sup>22</sup> Cf. with the only extant diplomatic source connected to the events of 1389; BONDY (1906: 80).

<sup>23</sup> In terms of interaction of the three narratives, since it seems that the other *Passio*-text might have been reactions to it.

<sup>24</sup> But have parallels elsewhere, such as the name of the royal *subcamerarius* for Jewish matters, Jindřich Škopek z Dubé, or an information about the fine imposed on the inhabitants of Prague; STEINOVÁ (2010: 58).

<sup>25</sup> Namely in preferring Matthew to other Gospels in providing the framework for the narrative, which is not the case in *Historia*.

<sup>26</sup> This is the standard function of *Passio*-parody according to Bayless and *Historia* fits in well BAYLESS (1996: 8–9).

<sup>27</sup> STEINOVÁ (2010: 28).

The description of the situation is quite detailed. We can follow the movement of the protagonists, the throwing of the stone, the breaking of the pyx, hosts falling onto the ground and the priest gathering them. Yet, despite the vivid – and stereotypical – picture, the antagonism between the Jews and the Christians is not exploited and the Host Desecration Narrative is cut short. Immediately, we sense a different antagonism being voiced – that between the king and his royal favorites, and the populace of the Imperial capital:

*Plebs autem audiens opus tam nefarium, vociferabat dicens: „Merito delenda est Iudai-  
ca perversitas, per quam blasphemie tanta excrevit immensitas.“ Quidam autem ex illis,  
Iohannes nomine, alta voce clamabat dicens: „Nunc in die festo non reliquamus semen  
eorum in terra [Matth. 26, 5]. Morte turpissima condempnemus eos, ne forte superveni-  
ens rex cum complicibus suis eripiat eos de manibus nostris.“ – quia tunc rex residebat  
in Cubito. Quod audientes, omnes gavisi sunt et ad exterminandum plebem Iudaicam se  
per iuramentum obligaverunt.<sup>28</sup>*

Pinned on one side, we have *plebs*, called in other passages *communitas Pragensium*, and on the other side, *rex cum complicibus suis*. The king is depicted as a protector of the Jews, but as failing in this enterprise, because he represents the wrong side in the metaphysical conflict, being thus the unjust and weak ruler who lacks divine support for his actions. In another passage he is presented as *turbatus*, and as *non audens quidquam attempere contra illos* (i.e. the inhabitants of Prague). In contrast, the people, representing the right side in the conflict, are victorious, justified and strong (but also *gavisi*).<sup>29</sup>

This polarization echoes the political situation in Bohemia at the end of the fourteenth century: disappointment of all layers of society with royal favoritism and absenteeism, the king's protectionism of the Jews and his reliance on the Jewish finance in times of economic depression.<sup>30</sup> In his contemporary historiography, Ludolf of Sagen writes:

*Exosus igitur erat clero et populo, nobilibus, civibus et rusticis, solis erat acceptus Iu-  
deis.<sup>31</sup>*

It is not without significance that in *Historia*, the Jews become object-Jews. With the exception of the Host Desecration Narrative, they do not speak or act. When the violence is described, their extermination is

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Cf. DAVIS (1973: 61).

<sup>30</sup> NEWMANN (2012).

<sup>31</sup> LOSERTH (1880: 419).

mentioned in a matter-of-fact way, somewhere between the breaking of the gates and the pillaging of the houses:

*Die itaque Paschatis, hora quasi vesperorum, surgens omnis multitudo populi, irruerunt in plateam et in domos plebis perfide et, excussis ianuis ferreis et ligneis, manus iniecerunt in illam a maioribus usque ad minores interficientes omnes ... Et incipientes a Iona, omnes pariter occiserunt, exceptis parvulis, quos baptismi gratie reservaverunt. Sublataque sunt cuncta bona illorum preter ea, que abscondita erant in terra. Et accensus est ignis magnus valde, super quem posita fuerunt corpora eorum, ut in cinerem converterentur.<sup>32</sup>*

The Jewish bodies are represented as an object of violence, but not as human beings; this manner of depiction emphasizes their status as *servi camerae*, the personal property of the king. The act of violence against the reachable Jews becomes an act of violence against the distant, unreachable king.<sup>33</sup>

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*Secundum Ieškonem* is the longest and the most sophisticated of the three texts and seems to have been inspired by or to be responding to *Historia*. It extends the array of scriptural quotations employed in *Historia*, making them more coherent and enriching them with references to liturgy and reflexive literary passages that show that the composer was well-versed in the standards of Latin composition. At least one of the three manuscripts containing this text may be situated within the university of Prague<sup>34</sup>, inviting speculation that the agent of this composition was a university cleric. *Secundum Ieškonem* is a moral treatise that chastises the Christians for their shortcomings and identifies sin, specifically *avaritia*, as the root of the violence of 1389. The focus on moral qualities of individuals and Christian sinfulness falls in line with the reformatory movement contemporary in Prague. Ecclesiastical as well as lay reformers emphasized that Christian society was in decay due to its sinfulness and proclaimed personal devotion, particularly the frequent communion and Eucharistic piety, as the chief cure of the age.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> STEINOVÁ (2010: 29).

<sup>33</sup> WELTSCH (1968: 61), NIRENBERG, (1996: 48 and 222).

<sup>34</sup> This is the already mentioned Prague, Národní knihovna, XI D 7, which contains teaching material associated with the university in Prague, datable to the second half of the fifteenth century. See TRUHLÁŘ (1906: 145–146).

<sup>35</sup> WELTSCH (1968: 116–118).

Just as in *Historia*, the Host Desecration Narrative serves as an opener of *Secundum Ieškonem*, but is quickly dismissed and remains without resolution. The Host Desecration Narrative represents the Jews and the Christians in the stereotypical antagonism, but the rest of the narrative inverts this relationship by constructing a complex set of allusions to the Passion of Christ. The Christ-likeness and the Jew-likeness are reduced to roles that can be assumed by the performers in this “Passion play” via reproduction of the language and the themes of the Gospels:

*Dixerunt autem cristiani: „Scriptum est enim: Percuciamus eos et dispergentur omnia bona eorum [Matth. 26, 31]. Et antequam gallus primam vocem dederit, omnes in igne et occisione gladii miserabiliter consumuntur“ [Matth. 26, 34]. Dixit autem Ieško quadratus: „Rei sunt mortis [Matth. 26, 66]. Et si in exterminio eorum oporteret me mori ob vindictam Iesu, non denegabo“ [Matth. 26, 35]. Ionas autem princeps Iudeorum ait: „Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem [Matth. 26, 38], mortem autem perpetuam“ [Phlp. 2, 8]. ... Et plectentes struem, corone de lignis ardentibus imposuerunt super capita et corpora Iudeorum. Et illudentes eis composuerunt eos in ignem ardentem. Et postquam illuserunt eis, exuerunt eos vestimentis eorum et induerunt eos igne [Matth. 27, 29–31]. Et dederunt eis bibere flammam cum fumo mixtam [Matth. 27, 34].<sup>36</sup>*

The Jews speak as Jesus, behave as Jesus, appear in the same situations and are subjected to the same treatment. The Christians, too, assume a role in this passage and are represented as the Romans. Elsewhere in *Secundum Ieškonem*, they are described also as the biblical Jews, functioning, in fact, as the hermeneutical Jews in the Augustinian sense.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, despite the inversion, the Jews are not represented as justified or as the damaged party. They are suffering victims only in the capacity of the impersonators/images of Christ. At the same time, they continue to represent a latent threat to the Christian universe. Even in the moment of peril, while besieged in the house of their leader, the Jews – significantly hidden from the gaze of the Christians – plot to destabilize the Christian world:

*Videntes autem huiusmodi rabiem scribe, sacerdotes et Pharisei, congregati sunt in atrium principis Iudeorum, qui dicebatur Ionas, non proficientes autem in dolosis et falsis consiliis, quomodo Iesum in suis membris non modo tenerent, sed statim interficerent et occiderent. Dicebant autem: „Faciamus hoc die festo, ut tumultus maior fiat in populo.“ [Mt 26, 3–5]<sup>38</sup>*

<sup>36</sup> STEINOVÁ (2010: 20).

<sup>37</sup> FREDERIKSEN (2008: 275–276).

<sup>38</sup> STEINOVÁ (2010: 19).

This description is in no way on par with other episodes for which we have Christian on-lookers. It is rather a powerful image that arose in the Christian mind which could not free itself from the notion of the Jews as the malevolent force in Christendom.

At this point, it is fitting to compare the disparity between the Host Desecration Narrative and the rest of the text in *Historia* and in *Secundum Ieškonem*. In the former, the tension arises between the Jews speaking, acting, and committing violence, and the objectified and silenced Jews who are the passive objects of the violence. More strongly than *Historia*, *Secundum Ieškonem* is torn apart by two opposing forces: one that deconstructs the Host Desecration Narrative and challenges the notion of the Host desecration as a justifiable cause of anti-Jewish violence; the other that continues to see the Jews as a hostile, alien element in the Christian society, which must be purged:

*Vespere autem sabbati, que lucescit in prima sabbati [Matth. 28, 1], ingressus sacerdos cum corpore Iesu in Iudeam, Iudei sibi obviam exierunt et portantes in manibus suis lapides clamabant dicentes: „Lapidetur iste, quia Filium Dei se fecit“ [Ioh. 19, 7]. Deinde pueri Hebreorum tollentes saxa platearum obviaverunt sacerdoti clamantes et dicentes: „Maledictus, quem portas in tuis manibus“ [antiphon for the Palm Sunday]. Videns autem hoc sacerdos dixit cristianis: „Ut quid non molesti estis huic genti? Opus enim pessimum operata est in me. Hanc enim habetis nunc vobiscum, me autem raro habebitis. Ut quid perditio hec? Mittentes autem hos lapides in corpus Iesu ad offendendum ipsum et me faciunt. Amen, amen dico vobis, ubicumque fuerit predicatum hoc factum in toto mundo, dicetur, quod in contemptum nostre orthodoxe fidei hoc fecerunt“ [Matth. 26, 8–13].<sup>39</sup>*

Unlike in *Historia* we SEE nothing of the Host; it disappears in a kind of textual hole. Instead, we HEAR the priest claiming that the desecration occurred. A similar claim is neither made nor necessary in *Historia* because of its visual content. The distinction is striking. Could this be a way of challenging the Host desecration accusation by representing it as a construct of the priest in the narrative, rather than as an objective fact?<sup>40</sup>

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The third text, *Secundum blasphemiam*, is a derivate of *Secundum Ieškonem* preserved in a single manuscript alongside its prototype.<sup>41</sup> It is roughly half the size of *Secundum Ieškonem*, crops the more complex

<sup>39</sup> STEINOVÁ (2010: 18).

<sup>40</sup> See NEWMANN (2012). Cf. also RUBIN (1999: 105), NIRENBERG (1996: 122).

<sup>41</sup> Prague, Národní knihovna, XI D 7. The philological differences between the two texts

passages of the original, such as the framework of biblical parallelism, but also inserts narrative passages that make the text more dynamic. Generically, we may speak of an exemplum or perhaps of an exemplum-like performative text, since *Secundum blasphemiam* displays clearly performative tendencies, e.g. extensive dialogues.<sup>42</sup> This may indicate that we should speak of a downgrading of the text for a less refined audience that was not so well-versed in the subtle interplay of the Scripture and the text.<sup>43</sup> Not surprisingly, the result of this downgrading is disruption of the inversion constructed in *Secundum Ieškonem*. The tension between the two forces present in the other two narratives is lessened here by bringing the narrative closer to the stereotypical models of representation. The victim-Jews are not fully obliterated just as the hole in the Host Desecration Narrative is not patched. The description of Host desecration is quite similar to, but not identical with, the description in *Secundum Ieškonem*:

*Vespere autem sabbati, que lucescit in prima sabbati [Matth. 28, 1], in illo tempore ingressus sacerdos cum corpore Cristi in Iudeam, exierunt ergo Iudei obviam, portantes lapides in manibus suis et clamabant dicentes: „Lapidetur iste, quia Filium Dei se fecit“ [Ioh. 19, 7]. Deinde pueri Ebreorum tollentes saxa platearum obviam[verun]t Domino dicentes et iactantes: „Maledictus, quem portas in manibus tuis“ [antiphon for the Palm Sunday]. Audiens autem hoc sacerdos, ait cristianis: „Numquid molesti estis huic genti? Opus enim pessimum operata est in me. Hanc semper habetis vobiscum, me autem non semper habebitis. Ut quid perditio hec? Iactantes lapides in corpus Iesu, vindicandum me fiat. Amen, dico vobis, ubicumque fiat publicatum hoc factum in toto mundo, dicetur, quod hec gens illud in derisum nostre fidei fecit“ [Matth. 26, 8–13].<sup>44</sup>*

The Jews are transformed into not-so-victimized-and-a-bit-more-malevolent Jews. The text is moral only to the extent of an exemplum, i.e. it illustrates certain model group behavior. It removes the harshest criticism of the Christian side as well as the strongest imagery of Jews as suffering Christ. In this way, it soothes the Christian conscience, so to say, and offers a more digestible alternative to a harsh criticism of *Secundum Ieškonem*.

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are significant enough to indicate that the prototype of *Secundum blasphemiam* was an exemplar of *Secundum Ieškonem* distinct from any preserved version.

42 See STEINOVÁ (2010: 56–57).

43 RUBIN (1999: 141–142).

44 STEINOVÁ (2010: 25).

I believe that I have sufficiently illustrated the fluidity and openness of *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium* and their significance for reading and understanding this type of narrative. I will conclude with two remarks.

First, in the three texts examined, the Jew-images are merely vessels that serve to express different standpoints: discontent with the king, moral examination of Christian self, and acceptability of the anti-Jewish violence. These images contain elements that are common and stereotypical as well as elements that are convertible in accordance with the needs of the agents of the composition. The result is a limited number of rather typical roles – Jews as object, victims, malevolent force, biblical type – which allow for expression of an infinite number of historical experiences and sentiments.

Secondly, all three texts employ the Host Desecration Narrative, but none of them IS a Host Desecration Narrative. We don't learn about the fate of the Host after the desecration, nor are we informed about any ensuing miracle. The disappearance of the Host once it is attacked does not allow for a resolution of the situation. Although the supposed perpetrators are punished, no foundation of a commemorative chapel or a cult follows, as would be the standard procedure in the case of a Host desecration.<sup>45</sup> This is because, as with the Jews, the Host Desecration Narrative is just a vessel, and in this case, a problematic vessel that cannot contain the messages communicated by the three texts in their entirety. We can see how the narrative as a whole resists being put into the container of the Host Desecration Narrative and disrupts the literary model, causing intrinsic tension in the narrative structure.

This allows us, finally, to return to the accounts of Ludolf of Sagen and Aenea Sylvio Piccolomini, whose presentation of the events speak against the Host desecration as the (legitimizing) cause of the violence. Even when recounting the story of the Host desecration in the manner of *Passio*, Tilemann Elhen adds: *And this is what the Christians say*.<sup>46</sup> Rabbi Avigdor Kara, who is believed to have survived the pogrom<sup>47</sup> and composed a dirge about the event, speaks about a *libel of many*,<sup>48</sup> which could be the Host desecration accusation, but might just as well be *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*.

Ultimately, it is not possible or relevant to decide whether the Host desecration occurred in 1389 or not. What matters is that the three *Passio*-texts, as we have seen, employ such a scenario when treating the pogrom,

<sup>45</sup> RUBIN (1999: 45).

<sup>46</sup> *Daz sagan di cristen*. Translation in RUBIN (2002: 203).

<sup>47</sup> MUNELLES (1952: 411), YUVAL (2006: 132).

<sup>48</sup> Translation in RUBIN (1999: 196–198).

while at the same time containing seeds of doubt about it. A fruitful question that may be asked is why the three texts do not do away with the Host Desecration Narrative, despite the internal tension that the inclusion of this model creates? Is it because it is not possible to speak about a pogrom in the Christian Middle Ages without using a container such as the Host Desecration Narrative? Or are there other, more subtle reasons that are beyond the point of reconstruction?

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## RESUMÉ

*Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, soubor textů o pogromu, který se odehrál v Praze v roce 1389, unikátním způsobem podává svědectví o středověké slovesnosti týkající se pogromů. Na rozdíl od mnoha jiných textových souborů o pogromech se *Passio* zachovalo v podobě velkého počtu příbuzných, ne však totožných textů, nebo textů, které by bylo možno považovat za pouhé varianty jediné verze. Díky tomu můžeme sledovat vývoj tohoto textového pole a jeho diskursivní povahu. Tento článek uvádí několik příkladů transformací uvnitř textového pole *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, kterým dokládá jeho diskursivní znaky. Pojednává také o vztazích mezi látkou obsaženou v *Passio* a historickou realitou pogromu v roce 1389 a jinými, alternativními popisy téže události, jak jsou podány v soudobých kronikách. Klíčovou úlohu v korpusu sehrávají tři prozaické verze *Passio*, které představují pravděpodobně nejstarší vrstvu pole. Ve všech případech se jedná o propracované textové verze, které využívají tradiční formy narace pro nové účely a v nových funkcích. Všechny tři podávají odlišný, polemický pohled na násilí, ke kterému došlo, a na jeho příčiny. Zásadní je v tomto ohledu způsob, jakým tři texty prezentují těla – jak těla mučených židů, tak údajně znesvěcené *Corpus Christi* –, obzvláště protože všechny tři pracují se záměnou těchto těl.