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**LANGUAGE AND THE DECLINE OF MAGIC:
EPISTEMOLOGICAL SHIFTS IN ENGLISH
LITERATURE FROM
MEDIEVAL TO MODERNIST**

by

RICHARD W. SANTANA

**A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York**

2003

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

LANGUAGE AND THE DECLINE OF MAGIC: EPISTEMOLOGICAL SHIFTS IN
ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM MEDIEVAL TO MODERNIST

by

Richard W. Santana

Advisor: Professor Richard C. McCoy

According to V.A. Kolve, “In the Middle Ages, sacraments existed which could bring man to heaven—that was confidently believed...” (3). Since the sacraments were dependent on language, their efficacy in bringing a person to heaven resided in the power and function of language within medieval epistemology. Language in the Middle Ages, as Michel Foucault has noted, functions in concert with the physical world, within which sacramental language had the power to effect material change. The medieval Mass represents the epitome of what I call a performative epistemology. After the Reformation, this performative function of language starts to shift to a commemorative one.

This dissertation traces this shift in the function of language by interrogating representative texts along its trajectory and using J. L. Austin’s theory of speech acts as an interpretive scheme. This performative epistemology is fully operant in the Corpus Christi Cycles, but only partly so in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. By the twentieth century, the direction of this shift once again changes with the Modernist movement, represented in this study by James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

I begin with an analysis of the Corpus Christi Cycles as examples of a performative epistemology and trace their development as ritualistic language performed in a vernacular context to draw connections between Eucharistic sacrifice and dramatic representation. The plays' language shares in the strength and power of the sacrament to effect real change in the material world, and for the audience demonstrates the sacramental system through which they may reach heaven. I then examine *Hamlet*, in which Shakespeare conflates traces of the pre-reformist epistemology and the emergent commemorative epistemology as established through the reformists' abrogation of the Catholic Mass. *Hamlet* represents Shakespeare's most sustained interrogation of the epistemological condition of his society. In employing elements of the old sacramental system while inscribing a reformist attitude into the play, he depicts a society amid radical epistemic change. I then turn to Joyce's use of the elements of the Mass to structure *Ulysses*. Joyce co-opts the residual performative power present within the commemorative function of sacramental language and transforms it toward a completely literary end.

Acknowledgements

Preparatory to anything else, I would like to give thanks to my family, who have lived through this period with me in perpetual support, through misery and elation, through heartache and neglect. I thank my wife, Danese, without whom nothing is possible, she has kept me alive through harrowing revisions and severe criticism. She has given me courage, editorial assistance, distraction (when necessary), nourishment always, and mostly love. I thank my mother, Celeste, and her life partner, Marilyn, whose philosophy has helped me endure the hard times. I thank my brothers, Franklin, Christopher and Victor, who chided and goaded, and helped me to realize there were more important things in the world and my grandmother, Lala, whose love of literature I have always shared.

I would like to thank the faculty in the English program at the CUNY Graduate Center, particularly, Rich McCoy, whose matter-of-fact criticism drove me almost to despondency, but ultimately to finish. Without him, this would be a loose baggy monster of disparate ideas. He helped give me structure and discipline and always, always kept me on task, even when I resisted the yoke. I thank Joan Richardson whose kindness and friendship have guided me throughout my time in the program, Mary Ann Caws, whose encouraging words helped me endure as the yoke tightened, and Scott Westrem, whose editorial skill is truly beyond human. To my dissertation group, Greg Erickson, Melissa Bloom, Tanya Radford and Kim Engber, who waded through much of this when it was mostly an incomprehensible garble, and gave me feedback and notes that helped me to think it might some day be something, thank you.

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Chapter I

Language and the Decline of Magic

Introduction

Once, language had the power to change the forms of the physical world; now, its power is limited to describing it. The language of the Mass—the central rite of Christianity in the late Middle Ages—changed the physical characteristics of an object (the Host) into the real presence of God on earth. This change was viewed not just as a symbolic or spiritual one, but as substantively physical. Language then was tied to the natural world, which in turn was tied to the metaphysical world through a language that functioned to effect physical change in nature of which it was a part. This power of language to effect change was resident in the belief system of English culture. In order to account for this function of language, the epistemological system had to include such a power.

During the Reformation, the Mass is displaced from its central position in English culture, and the function of language to effect physical transformation begins to decline. In its place, a function of language that permits only remembrance begins to develop. While this radical shift was occurring, however, these two functions of language had to co-exist. By the modernist period, the power of language to effect physical change in the real world had long dissolved, and the bond between language and the natural world had come undone. The ways language affects the physical world are severely limited, and the



power of language resident in the traditional Catholic Mass had already become more symbolic than real.

Hypothesis

This dissertation focuses on epistemological shifts in English literature and culture caused by the abolition of the traditional Catholic Mass during the Reformation, and traces these shifts using J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts as an interpretive scheme. The shifts I examine take place within a belief system and are related to language, epistemology and ontology. The principal shift is from a view of language as based in reality and having real efficacy in the physical world to a view of language as mainly commemorative or symbolic and having efficacy only in the human mind.

By looking at the function and development of sacramental language in English literature and the Reformation controversy over transubstantiation, I seek to draw connections between Eucharistic sacrifice in the traditional Mass and the concept of performativity as described by Austin in *How To Do Things with Words*. I will suggest that the Mass defines the extreme limit of the power of language and outlines a system of sacramentality that was paradigmatic in English culture during the Middle Ages, and that the abolition of the Mass results in an epistemological shift that limits the function of language to commemoration. Put simply, language as it was understood in the Middle Ages functions in concert with the physical world and allows knowledge to be made, acquired and disseminated in a manner and at a level that is different from the way it

begins to function after the Reformation. This shift is not entirely due to the Mass in and of itself, but to the medieval system of sacramentality of which the Mass was the central rite.

Much of what follows is bound by an overarching idea, which is that language and its function in society affects perceptions of reality. Because epistemology is the central term in this idea, it is necessary to have a clear definition of what I mean by it before going any further. Epistemology can be defined within two general categories; in the strict philosophical sense it is the study and evaluation of systems of knowledge, how and what can be “known” in the narrow sense. In this sense, epistemology is the forms of knowledge as studied by epistemologists. The second category has more to do with the social structure of knowledge as it exists within a given culture, those features of reality that are known and knowable within a particular social paradigm. As Alvin I. Goldman states in defining the interests of the epistemologist,

Epistemology deals with knowledge, which is the property of individual minds. So *of course* epistemology must be interested in the knowing mind. Similarly, most knowledge is a cultural product, channeled through language and social communication. (1)¹

I will focus on this definition of epistemology, with the individual “knowing minds” taken together as a social unit that evaluates and sanctions belief. The knowable facts of the world are in some sense dependent upon social forces. For Richard Rorty, following

¹ In *Epistemology and Cognition*, Goldman sets out to incorporate Psychology and other social sciences into theories of epistemology and create an interdisciplinary approach to theories of knowledge.

Wittgenstein, “knowledge is the social justification of belief” and the rules of that justification are explained by “what society lets us say” (170, 174). I would add to this that the function of language in any society determines the scope of what is justifiable belief within that society.

For the sake of argument, I propose two models of knowable reality. First, the facts of the world exist *a priori* and can be “discovered” and justified within any social system. This model seems intuitively correct; the world, after all, exists out there, away from our social constructions of it. However, the knowable facts about the world do not exist outside of their social justifiability. A fact may ultimately be true, but if the available methods of justification cannot prove it, it remains “unknowable.” This can be accounted for in a second model, where the facts of the world also exist *a priori*, but their “knowability” is constrained by language and social construction—that is, not all that is “out there” in the real world is accessible by all societies.

Wittgenstein proposes that “the world and language share a common logical form such that from an investigation of the structure of propositions it is possible to see how things must be in reality” (Hunnings 1)². According to this conception, language reveals in its very structure a mirror of reality. This is a feature of the scientific paradigm, which, while it adjusts itself to incorporate new knowledge, deems other kinds of knowledge unreachable because the structure of its language is incapable of describing it. This is

² Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* considers, in a long series of propositions, that the world is composed of facts, not things, and that these facts in combination represent the states of affairs of the world. The structure of language is ultimately connected to these states of affairs, which taken in their totality are the world.

true, for example, of a belief in ghosts. Within the scientific method, such a belief is unjustifiable, since science insists on the observability and repeatability of any phenomenon, and this phenomenon cannot be profitably spoken of by this method. If ghosts truly exist, science renders that fact inexpressible and unknowable. Within medieval epistemology this belief is justifiable because social construction and language, which were used to describe metaphysical laws for nature, draw the boundaries of the method of justification. Within this model what is knowable about the facts of the world shifts over time, dependent on social relations and language functions. I will use this second model because it can accommodate the two different modes of knowledge and the transition between these modes I will argue for in this study.

I analyze this transition as it occurs during three traditional “periods,” of English history: the Middle Ages, the Early Modern and the Modernist, using representative texts in each. For the medieval period I will primarily study the Corpus Christi cycle plays, to establish an epistemological pattern, focusing on the ways in which knowledge is made and categorized through language. For the Early Modern period, I use Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as an example of the commingling of epistemologies. *Hamlet* is written in a time of transition, and thus exists within a social knowledge system that is in conflict, during which, reformist ideas about commemoration are mixed with traditionalist ideas of physical change through language. *Hamlet* describes a world where language at times functions to effect change in the physical world and at others only to memorialize it. James Joyce’s *Ulysses* will represent the modern period, where the change that begins in

the Reformation has long been fully assimilated, and language functions only to describe the physical world and is separate from it. In *Ulysses*, however, Joyce uses the residual power of the language of the Mass to effect a different kind of transubstantiation. Joyce's feat is not to recuperate the central rite of a belief system he had rejected (Catholicism), but to nostalgically go back to a time when language had great transformative power. He does this within an epistemology that is now commemorative and affected by the scientific paradigm. The change in substance, from his experienced reality to the pages of the book, takes place as an abstraction outside of the physical world. Language can no longer change the physical characteristics of a real object, but Joyce uses the linguistic formula, which once had this power, to recast the artist as the "priest of the imagination," and to change the substance of his experience into a life-giving force. It is an attempt to recuperate some of the power of language, not in the physical world but in human memory, within the confines of commemorative epistemology.

The ways of acquiring and disseminating knowledge are at once multiplicitous and unified for any given paradigm. A paradigm functions as a unifying element within any given community and offers ways of organizing or categorizing knowledge that give us both boundaries and rules for that knowledge and a means out of those boundaries. To maintain that a paradigm exists does not necessarily mean that everyone living within the influence of that paradigm strictly adheres to all its precepts or that individuals within it are even aware that it exists. Even in hindsight it is impossible to describe the ways in which all individuals within any given cultural, political, metaphysical, scientific, or

philosophical paradigm operate, or the ways in which these paradigms are operant for those individuals. Thus, while I use very broad categorizations to talk about these shifts that are clearly paradigmatic, individual examples will show only tendencies toward general ideas.

It is important to note that regardless of the paradigm or its operationality, knowledge is always made through systems of language. How the function of language is defined and delimited in any given paradigm, therefore, determines the epistemological arc for that paradigm and establishes what is “knowable” within that paradigm. The central role of the Mass within the medieval system of sacramentality insures that the function of language present within it determines just such an epistemological arc—that is, in order for the belief that a physical change occurs at the moment of consecration to be justifiable, and therefore to represent true knowledge, the epistemological system must account for this possibility.

Austin’s Language Philosophy

Since Austin’s seminal Harvard lectures in 1955, his speech act theory has been widely discussed by a number of philosophers from Jacques Derrida and John Searle³ to Judith Butler. Many literary critics have also adopted it as an interpretive practice.⁴

³ Derrida and Searle’s famous debate, first appearing in the page of *Glyph 5* and later incorporated into Derrida’s *Limited Inc*, has been the subject of much further debate. Discussion of the two principle terms of contention, *parasitic* and *iterability*, represent the most sustained engagement between Anglo-American analytical philosophy and Continental philosophy in relation to Austin’s theory. See particularly Culler, *On Deconstruction* (110-134).

⁴ David Gorman has taken these critics to task in “The Use and Abuse of Speech Act Theory in Criticism.” He states, “almost all of the responses by literary critics to Austin’s *How To Do Things with Words* have

Because it serves as a general interpretive scheme for this study, I will introduce the general precepts of this theory and indicate exactly how it functions as an interpretative tool.

Austin begins his lectures on the theory of performative speech acts by separating out, in ordinary speech, what he calls performatives from what he calls constatives. He says, "It was for too long the assumption of philosophers that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to state some fact, which it must do either truly or falsely" (1). Austin calls this kind of statement a constative and proposes a separate category for statements (or utterances⁵) that *do* something other than "describe some state of affairs, or some fact." These he calls performatives, since they are seen to perform some action in the real world, outside of the usual linguistic sense. Austin's distinction between performative and constative, Jonathan Culler suggests, "captures an important difference between types of utterances and has the great virtue of alerting us to the extent to which language performs action rather than merely reports on them" ("Fortunes" 505). In describing a function of language that in a sense creates its own reality, Austin attempts to move this function from the margins of language philosophy to its center.

Austin's primary example of a performative is the wedding vows taken during a marriage ceremony. For Austin, to say, "I do," within the proper social circumstances

been selective and arbitrary, and the applications of terms or themes from Austin to issues in the theory of literature have been unreflective and unhelpful" (93).

⁵ Because the word "statement" can be confusing given the context and what Austin sees as philosophic privileging of the "constatives," later in the text he switches to the more accurate term "utterance." In the rest of this study I will use "utterance" when focusing on performative aspects of "statements," although

(i.e., the conventions of the wedding ceremony) is not to describe the ceremony of marriage, but actually to engage in it. To say some words under these appropriate circumstances is to marry and “indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something” (7). By contrast, constatives are utterances that only describe some state of affairs or make a statement of fact either truthfully or falsely. I argue that after the Reformation utterances adhere much more closely to this propositional arrangement—that is, language generally functions to describe the world truthfully or falsely, rather than changing it. The epistemological arrangement that underlies this function of language requires, or can be described by the term commemoration—dependent on a similitude between memory and reality, rather than, as Foucault suggests, the similitude between the signifier and its referent. Language then functioned as an abstraction from the real world within the human mind and the performative function of language projected in Austin’s initial separation becomes limited to a contractual or legal contexts.

Before the Reformation language has a real effect on the physical world, the capacity of language to create and affect reality, as demonstrated by the centrality of the Mass and the power of its principal speech act, which I argue is performative. Richard van Oort suggests that,

In querying the nature of the utterance’s relation to the world, Austin’s conception of the performative has deeper epistemological and ontological implications. That is, it touches on the problem of linguistic reference. Are we representing a reality

they are roughly equivalent.

external to our utterance, or are we creating by the *very act of the utterance* the reality which we seek to define? (2)⁶

This is essentially the distinction between performatives and constatives and clearly points out the ontological and epistemological concerns involved in the shift I propose to trace. The function of language in the Mass concurs with van Oort's second possibility—that is, it creates the reality it seeks to define. This is an ontological reality that cannot function within an epistemology that justifies knowledge based on comparisons between an external *apriori* reality and the language used to describe it.

In order to account epistemologically for what occurs at the moment of consecration, knowledge must be deemed valid even when the state of affairs it describes exists only *a posteriori* to its articulation and is actually caused by it. Within a philosophical analysis that is bound by propositional logic, a condition of reality must pre-exist any statement describing that condition in order to be considered valid knowledge. For epistemologists, valid “knowledge” is defined as justifiable true belief. If I believe it will rain tomorrow because I have an arthritic leg which pains me when it is going to rain, this does not qualify as “justifiable” belief, since there is no causal connection between my leg and the condition of rain. There may be many reasons my leg hurts that have nothing to do with the rain, and it may rain without my leg hurting. In the case of consecration there is a causal link between the statement of a condition and that

⁶ van Oort is a great contributor in the field of Generative Anthropology, based on the theories of Eric Gans and René Girard, which hypothesize a moment in human evolution where, “the human itself has a definable and describable genesis, capable of being thought within the disciplinary matrix of the humanities. That is, for Gans, the origin and definition of what it actually is to be human centers on the moment language itself comes into being.” Fleming and O’Carroll, “Notes on Generative Anthropology: Towards an Ethics of the

condition being created. It is a closed system; for the believers, every time a priest says Mass the substance of the Host is infallibly transformed into the body of Christ. Therefore, within this system, those who believe the Host will be so transformed share a “justified belief.”

Sandy Petrey notes that in conflating the constative and performative categories of language, Austin insists on the conventional context of such speech acts. He goes on to say,

“stating is only one among very numerous speech acts of the illocutionary class” (Austin 147). In order to tell the truth, constative utterances must conform to the sorts of collectively enforced protocols that authorize such overtly formalized speech act [sic] as pronouncements. (“Realist Difference” 153)

Such a conventional system of ascribing truth-value to propositions is anathema to analytical philosophy because it goes against the principle of determining objective truth, precisely outside the influence of “collectively enforced protocols.”⁷ However, when a performative is used it cannot be judged to be true or false, since its function is not to describe but to cause some action to take place, which it does within a predetermined context of conventionally agreed upon conditions. In analytical philosophy, truth-value for a propositional statement is determined by a comparison between the statement and the reality it attempts to describe.

Hypothesis” (2).

⁷ Analytical philosophers have a great deal of concern for “conventional” systems of justifying belief, and with good reason. If we accept that a belief is justified within a conventional system, then it is possible for any group to devise such a conventional system and justify any belief. For a discussion of this concern in the context of speech act theory and its use by literary critics see David Gorman (101).

Reality has an objective truth that remains unaffected by any conventional belief to the contrary. According to van Oort, the classic model of constative assertion is manifest in the proposition which can be verified, that is, which can be proven true or false. This is the model indispensable for empirical science, for without being able to separate worldly reality from linguistic utterance, empirical science would not be able to create objective models, the validity of which is measured by the separate existence of a world conceived as ontologically prior to, and independent of, the models used to represent that world. The second type of utterance, however, does not conceive itself as merely a supplement—accurate or inaccurate, true or false—to a world against which this accuracy is measured. Rather, it presents itself as producing the very reality it names. (2)

The obvious philosophical trap that is set by the application of a conventional system of social construction is the danger of claiming that when enough individuals collectively believe something to be the case, it becomes an objective reality. I would like to steer clear of this danger. To do so, I propose that while objective reality is not affected by what we may collectively believe about it, there is a kind of subjective reality that is affected by social collectivity. The collective belief in God is just such a subjective reality. It is clearly impossible for science or analytical philosophy to measure the objective truth of such a belief and thereby render it justified; however, those who

earnestly believe in God's existence form a collective for whom this becomes a "subjective truth."

The same can be said of social truths. For example, the notion that gender is a cultural construct deriving not from biology but from social relations is now widely accepted. The lack of objective validity of the concept of gender, however, does not render it meaningless. While the objective untruth of this concept is easily provable, by and large most members of society accept both the concept and their own gender assignments and roles. While these roles may change over time and across cultures, the collectively agreed upon definitions of these roles function as social truths in those cultures and times.

Judith Butler uses the theory of speech acts to reconceptualize the notion of gender as a performative rather than a normative process, in which individuals "perform" social transactions that define their gender construction.⁸ These transactions, however, are performed in relation to and against the socially defined norms that represent the subjective truth of the concept of gender. In this context, she says, "there is no 'one' who takes on a gender norm. On the contrary, this citation of a gender norm is necessary in order to qualify as 'one,' to become a viable 'one,' where subject-formation is dependent on the prior operation of legitimating gender norms" (*Bodies* 23). These legitimating gender norms subtend the social "truth" of the concept of gender. If we apply this notion of subjective truth to what occurs in the consecration, it does not matter whether the proposition "the Host is truly the body of Christ" is objectively true. What does matter is

that the society collectively agrees that this belief is justified, and if it does, this belief becomes “knowledge” within the narrow epistemological sense, even if it may be objectively false.

Given that the objective reality of the facts of the world must exist *a priori* to any proposition about them, that objective reality does not change, but the allowable perceptions of that reality *do* change, dependent on social collectivity. While admittedly subjective, these perceptions represent social truths and viable methods of evaluating knowledge, and thus define, describe or determine the epistemology of any culture. The function of language within any social system is in part to communicate and evaluate the collective perceptions of the world, which in a sense become normative for that social system.

According to Austin, the validity of a performative cannot be calculated as a product of truth-value, but rather can be “felicitous” or “infelicitous.” If it is felicitous, then the intended action of the utterance takes effect. There are a number of ways in which performatives can fail to bring about the intended action. While Austin subcategorizes the many ways through which they may fail, he gives two general categories of failures, misfires and abuses. A misfire occurs when the conditions necessary to effect the action of the performative are absent, and “the act purported to be done [is considered] null and void” (Austin 25). While a misfire results in no action being performed through the utterance of certain words, an abuse does not lead to “no action” but to an action that is different from that intended in the performative speech act.

⁸ See particularly *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*.

Since true performatives occur only within a conventional system (a predetermined context), it is not the intention of the speaker, but the linguistic and social context of the utterance that determines its felicitous or infelicitous outcome.

The conventions prescribed for the traditional Roman Catholic Mass do not permit any infelicities. According to the orthodox theology of the church the consecration of the Host through the words of the priest occurs regardless of his competence or moral state. If, for example, a defrocked priest should say Mass, for those believers present it is as efficacious as if a fully sanctioned priest performed the rite, since the most important condition of the rite is not the aptitude of the celebrant but the faith of the congregants. The central speech act of the Mass has performative power because its intent is to transform the species of the Host into the “real presence” of Christ. It is, however, not open to the usual infelicities of a performative speech act or the truth or falsity of a propositional statement, since its conventional context precludes this possibility, and it does not rely on a similitude between the memory of an event and the reality of a current condition.

While the words of consecration take the form of a propositional statement—“this is my body”—they are not profitably analyzable by grammatical structure, since this analysis does not yield any understanding of the power of the speech act. The separation between constative and performative utterance as related to epistemology, in the case of the speech acts of the Mass, has ontological significance. According to van Oort, the speech act of the Mass functions very much as a performative, which does indeed

“produce the very reality it names.” The “body” on the Corporas is both sign and referent and is not to be taken as a metaphor—so that language here functions as shaping rather than describing reality. It is also important to note the affinity between constatives (in the form of propositional statements) and empirical science in van Oort’s explication. For the scientific method to work, it is necessary for language to describe and memorialize reality rather than create it. In this context, the scientific paradigm relies on the *a priori* existence of reality; since through its speech acts the Mass creates a reality *a posteriori* to its expression, science cannot account for it. Epistemologically it can be justified through the sacramental system, which privileges the performative power of the Mass speech acts as over and against natural laws, while science operates within an commemorative epistemology that evaluates knowledge through a comparison of memory and objective reality, which cannot validate belief in the “real presence.”

In Austin’s first four lectures, he draws the distinction between constatives and performatives sharply, but as he continues, the boundaries between them become more and more blurred, which leads to what he dubs a “general theory of speech acts.”⁹ Ultimately, Austin suggests that true performatives represent a special case, which can be unified into a general theory of speech acts. His insistence on this sharp distinction between the two at starting and the blurring of this same distinction in the later lectures are rhetorically deployed. In referring to this conflation, Jonathan Culler states,

⁹ Proponents of the theory seem to take Austin at his word when he insists first on the separation of performatives from constatives and later when this separation becomes problematized. However, Austin’s project must have been clearly defined (at least for him) from the start.

Constative utterances also perform actions—actions of stating, affirming, describing, and so on. They are a kind of performative. In brief, Austin starts from a situation where performatives are seen as special case of constatives—pseudo-statements—and arrives at a perspective from which constatives are a particular type of performative. (505)

Austin will conflate the sharply distinguished categories with which he begins and will say that even in making a constative statement we *do* something, even if that something is simply to assert that a certain state of affairs exists. In this conflation, all utterances become performative to some extent. There is, however, a marked difference in the level at which they perform actions.

In uttering a constative statement, a speaker does do something, but this something is limited to communicating an idea. For example, if someone says, “the cat is on the mat,” it is equivalent to saying, “I declare that the cat is on the mat.” The category of constatives is made performative by a certain set of declarative verbs such as (aver, state, assert, say, etc.), which may be understood even if not spoken. The intention of the speech act in such declarative statements is generally to inform. As can be seen through the example above, once the assumed verb is added to the statement, like performatives, the statement cannot be judged to be true or false, since it is always true that one is declaring, even if the fact one is declaring is untrue. According to Culler,

The result of Austin’s heuristic trajectory is radically to change the status of the constative statement; it began as the model for all language use, then became one

of two general uses of language, and finally, with the identification of aporias that prevent the firm separation from performative, subsists not as an independent class of utterance but as one aspect of language. (506)

Culler also suggests that, in using speech act theory, literary criticism has ignored both the separation of these two classes of utterance and their later conflation in favor of a view of performativity as providing “an account of the active, creative functioning of language” (506). Despite the irony that Austin excludes artistic expression from consideration, as “parasitic” on “normal” language use, “critics have found the idea of performative language valuable for characterizing literary discourse” (506). In this manner, the application of speech act theory focuses on all literary use of language as performative in that it creates a certain kind of fictive reality. Within the context of a play, a novel or a poem, speech acts bring into existence the fictive world they describe. In applying Austin’s theory here, I will focus on its philosophical rather than literary utility. Rather than emphasizing how literary works, in some sense, create their artistic reality by the function of their propositional statements, I want to focus on how performative speech acts function within the fictive world of literary texts as a reflection of their social world and how that function determines or describes the theories of knowledge that underlie their societies’ paradigms.

Once Austin makes the rhetorical move of conflating the terms of his earlier distinction between performatives and constatives, he then creates a set of three different functions for all speech acts (whether constative or performative). In order to maintain a

distinction between his two initial categories, he separates all utterances into three components: locution, illocution, and perlocution. To be absolutely clear, it must be emphasized that these are *not* separate categories of speech acts but functions of all speech acts—which through Austin’s conflation have become a singular category. In separating these functions, he says,

We first distinguished a group of things we do in saying something, which together we summed up by saying we perform a *locutionary act*, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a sense and reference. (109)

In performing a locutionary act with an ascribable meaning, then, we are performing three separate actions.

We are uttering a string of intelligible sounds, which is only interpretable within a conventional language system, and which has a definite referent. In performing this “locutionary” act we endow an utterance with an illocutionary force, which is defined as the intent of our locution. If our utterance has no intended purpose, then it is nonsense. It must have an illocutionary force, although it may be, for example, to state, or inform, or advise (for constatives) and, in the case of performatives, it is always to perform an action outside of the usual linguistic sense of communicating an idea. According to Austin, a performative speech act is the “performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to the performance of an act *of* saying something” [emphasis added] (Austin 99-100). The best explanation of the distinction between the locutionary and illocutionary aspects of an utterance I have found is in Culler’s *On Deconstruction*. His example is the utterance,

“could you move that box?” and he suggests that it “may be a request, or a question about one’s interlocutor’s strength, or even, as rhetorical question, the resigned indication of an impossibility” (110-11). Each of these, under different circumstances, may represent a different illocutionary force for the same locutionary act.

The meaning of this utterance cannot be said to reside in its grammatical structure, since a single utterance may connote all of these meanings. Uttering this series of words constitutes performing the same locutionary act, but that does not get at its meaning within any given specified context. Culler notes that for Austin, “what makes an utterance a command or a promise or a request is not the speaker’s state of mind at the moment of utterance but conventional rules involving features of the context” (111). There is of course always the possibility that an ambiguous context results in a misreading of the intended illocutionary act or that the context and the intentions of the speaker are at odds, and this will result in an “infelicity” (i.e. an abuse or misfire).

In saying “could you move that box?” one may have in mind not a request, but a command, and having the authority to make such a command, the illocutionary act is complete. However, the listener may take the intended command (perhaps even willfully, by an insubordinate worker) as a request—so that while the illocutionary act has been accomplished, the result is not that the box is moved. The ultimate effect of the illocutionary force has to do with perlocution. The perlocutionary force of an utterance is in its results. The crucial difference between these two forces is evident in the effect that the words of consecration, at the heart of the Mass, have on a congregation. Take, for

example, the liturgy of the mass and the words of consecration that are spoken at the center of its mystery. The priest's utterance "this is my body" and his simultaneous action (raising the sacred elements) has a perlocutionary effect that depends upon its illocutionary force. The priest's words of consecration constitute an illocutionary act whose intention is to transform the substance of the bread and the wine he is elevating (it is important to recall that most of the assembled people in fact see only the elevation and not necessarily the sacred elements). The perlocutionary force of this speech act on the congregant/listening observer who believes in transubstantiation causes them to witness the fundamental change in substance of the Host. This is, in fact, the perlocutionary force of the priest's utterance on orthodox Roman Catholic Christians. For most Protestants, a fundamental substantial transformation of this nature is impossible, not to say sacrilegious. This shift in perspective—this change in the in the illocutionary and perlocutionary force of the single phrase "this is my body" may be detected more than a century before the Reformation in the arguments of the Wyclifites (even more obvious in the more radical Lollards) in England in the late 1200s. From the traditionalist perspective, purpose of the words of consecration is to produce a physical change upon the elements of the Host. This corresponds with Austin's definition of a performative speech act, whose intention is to

produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with the

design, intention, or purpose of producing them; and we may then say, thinking of this, that the speaker has performed an act of ... 'perlocution.' (101)

In a constative, the perlocutionary force is that the audience or listener is informed (truly or falsely) about some state of affairs. Protestants see the perlocutionary force of the Mass speech acts much more as a constative speech act. In this case, the utterance "this is my body" is interpreted as a propositional statement and understood as indicating the symbolic relationship between Christ and the bread and wine. In a performative, however, if the speech act is felicitous, the illocution (or intended purpose) of the utterance takes place. This last circumstance relates directly to the performative nature of the Mass, because, from the Catholic point of view, it is in its perlocution that this act represents such a special linguistic event. It is special precisely because in its perlocution the central speech act of the Mass, for Catholic believers, physically changes the material substance of physical objects.

Austin's intention in creating this theory of speech act is to shift the focus of linguistic study from an analysis of grammatical and phonetic structures to an analysis "not [of] the sentence but [of] the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation" (139). For Austin, the question becomes not how a sentence is structured grammatically but under what circumstances it is uttered. Whereas linguistic arguments were dominated by questions such as what is predicatable of a noun concept and analyses of truth-function in propositional statements, Austin changes the focus to how an utterance, given a particular

set of circumstances and conventions (i.e., context), effects a change in the state of the receiver.

This shift in linguistic analysis is critical to my project because there is no grammatical explanation for the special function and power resident in the words of consecration. Given that language functions at a different level in the Mass, Austin's shift of emphasis becomes necessary to an analysis of the linguistic power of the Mass as an utterance whose power resists grammatical categorization. In a grammatical analysis, the words of consecration would simply be read as statements in the imperative mood. If analyzed through Austin's lens, however, the sacred words begin to show some of their transformative power.

There is a difference between analyzing this speech act within Austin's theory and analyzing it grammatically. If we read the words of consecration (take, eat, for this my body) grammatically, we are left with a command to the congregants and perhaps a symbolic reason for the command. The two words that constitute the first phrase are in the imperative mood, and thus command the congregants to take part in the "feast." The second phrase in the indicative provides a statement that may be taken as a true or false proposition (i.e. the bread is or is not truly the body of Christ). Since in examining the statement grammatically there is no emphasis placed on what the words are *doing*, this analysis does not clearly show the service in which language is employed. Only when we take into account the illocutionary force (or its intended purpose) of the speech act do we begin to see its transformative power; that is, the power of this speech is revealed through

the intention of the utterance¹⁰ to effect a change in the substance and the consequence of that utterance in bringing about this change. In an assessment of this utterance as a speech act, the words no longer represent a simple grammatical structure analyzable only as functions of subject and predicate but involve the context, the authority of the speaker and the belief of the listener.

The illocutionary force of the speech act is not present in the grammatical analysis, and is not resident in the imperative or the indicative statement of the second clause. For Austin, according to Culler, “the performative breaks the link between meaning and the intention of the speaker, for what act I perform with my words is not determined by my intention but by social and linguistic conventions” (507). Similarly, the act of consecration is not determined by the celebrant’s intention, but by the conventions and context of the rite. Its meaning resides not in the grammatical formula it utilizes, but in the belief of the congregants who see and hear the speech act as creating a new reality. The intent of the speech act in the Roman Catholic Mass is to transform the bread and wine into the body of Christ for the believers. The perlocutionary force of the utterance is located in the congregants’ belief in the real presence of Christ after the words have been spoken. Because the speech act takes place within its peculiar context, the sequel (or effect of the utterance) is that for the communicants there is no doubt that the substance they are eating or seeing is the true and real body of Christ.

¹⁰ Note that it is the intention of the “utterance,” not of the speaker per se that is important here. The speaker may intend to abuse the power of a performative speech act; however, the illocutionary force of a performative is determined by convention and context, not by the tacit intentions of the speaker.

What the reformers accomplished was to change the context and the conventional system that allowed the words of the Mass to accomplish their former social truth. Within the new conventional system, the previous method of determining the validity of belief was reversed. That context was once again changed by the emergence of modern science. Today millions of Catholics go to church and witness essentially the same linguistic formula that existed in the Middle Ages, and they may truly believe, as Catholic doctrine insists, that the body of Christ is truly present in the Host. This belief, however, must be tempered by the fact that most people in the world and most Christians do not believe this to be a valid interpretation of reality. Today, the evaluation of knowledge is bound by scientific principles, principles that render such a belief invalid, since the laws of nature are generally viewed within this paradigm as immutable. To hold such belief earnestly, in a concrete and literal sense, would be to open oneself to public ridicule. What was once the only allowable response to the miracle of transubstantiation has become discarded because it lacks the authority provided by the shared epistemology that gave it its power.

The Mass as Speech Act

In Austin's speech act theory, I will be using both his first distinction between performative and constative speech acts and his further division of performative speech acts into their locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary functions, which becomes important because of the conflation of the two categories. Although constatives seem to

perform actions (they inform about, describe, or present a fact or state of affairs, and these might all in a sense be taken to be performative actions), the performative nature of the Mass is a very special case; it is special not only in its connection to the real world (i.e. the physical world outside of oral communications), but it is also special because it delineates the function of sacramental language, which in England obtained from the medieval to the Early Modern period.

This special relationship of language to the physical world is my object of inquiry. In pre-Reformation England there is a privileging of performatives over and against constatives. After the Reformation, this privileging begins to be reversed. The category of constative utterances easily submits to what I will term a commemorative epistemology, since it is the reporting or stating of some fact or state of affairs in which the primary function of language is to describe or recall elements of the real world, rather than being a part of it or affecting it directly. When the reformers abolish the traditional Catholic Mass in England, they not only end the power of this most sacred rite of the traditional Church, but begin a shift in the manner in which knowledge could be made, evaluated, interpreted and disseminated, a shift from performative to commemorative epistemology.

Austin's theory will help define and place Eucharistic language as a speech act, since the special function of language resident in the Mass fails to be accounted for grammatically. There are religious speech acts other than the consecration of the Host, which during the medieval period, while not performing at the same level as the Mass,

fall into its general category. For example, the Council of Trent, “in the definitive draft of its decree, called the words of the priest, ‘I absolve you’ (which were at the same time a judicial act, according to the canons of the council), ‘the form of the sacrament of penance’” (Pelikan 4:296). The structure of these words of absolution is the standard form of a performative in Austin’s initial distinction; that is, present indicative in the first person with a “performative verb.” The words used in the consecration do not follow this grammatical form, but represent, as I have said, a special kind of performative.

Furthermore, unlike Austin’s performative speech acts, according to Catholic faith, they are not open to “infelicity”; transubstantiation takes place regardless of the celebrant’s aptitude or attitude, and, unlike incantations or intercessory prayer (where the speaker or supplicant is asking for help), the priest does not make a request to God. We have in this speech act something that does not conform to the criteria of any expository or declarative statement. Before the Reformation it is susceptible to neither truth-value nor infelicity, nor is it a request, nor can it be said to be truly mimetic or citational. The validity of this “justified belief” must be accommodated within the epistemological system—the conventional social context. After the abolition of the Catholic Mass in England, the performative nature of its central speech act, which had exemplified the highest power of language, no longer exists. Language and consequently epistemology begin to function primarily as commemorative. This process does not, however, occur overnight; before this commemorative epistemology becomes operational there is a time when the two systems are conflated.

Mass as Paradigm

At the core of medieval Christian liturgical practice and summarizing Christian dogma, the Mass exerts epistemological force on European society at large. It is difficult from a twenty-first century vantage point to conceptualize how important and how central the rite of the Mass was to the lives of medieval Christians. The central event of the Mass was the sacring of the Host, the precise moment at which the substance of bread and wine became the body of Christ. This most sacred of good works was carried through the ministrations of the priest and finally through his words. At the moment the priest said the words “*hoc est enim corpus meum*,” the essential substance of the Host ceased being bread and was replaced by the “real presence” of God.

This central rite is performed through language and gesture. St. Ambrose makes an early claim for the transformative significance of this rite when he urges his readers to, “consider if any thing *corporeal* can be more sublime than when the substance of bread and wine is *efficaciously* changed into the flesh and blood of Christ, in such a way that after the consecration, the true flesh and blood of Christ is truly believed [to be present]” [emphasis added] (Pelikan 3:79). This description of the “miracle” of the Mass clearly indicates the power and importance of this ritual as well as the importance of the words of consecration.

In addition, it also shows the perceived corporeality of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This corporeality and the power of language to bring it about are central to my hypothesis. If Christ is seen as corporeally present in the Host at the moment of

consecration, then language is operating at something like the molecular level, since the change effected by the words of consecration is elemental. This power of language to effect change in an object has implications on questions of ontology, and, more dynamically, influences the permissible views of the order of the universe within the conventions of the culture. If Christ is seen as only spiritually present in the bread and wine after consecration, as described by Calvin and other reformers, the performative power of language to effect physical change in the natural world is critically limited.

In generalizing the positions of believers and theologians of the Middle Ages, however, we must never assume a complete homogeneity of belief, or attribute to theological teaching a lack of sophistication. Ambrose's rhapsodic description of what occurs at the moment of consecration was indeed a popular philosophical view and ultimately became the doctrinal explication of the rite, but the subtlety with which these questions were handled by the theologians of the period should attest to the general rigor of their thought. Early medieval theologians and philosophers were not ignorant of the complexity of the Eucharistic sacrament, nor were they in general or complete agreement. At the same time, however, some level of doctrinal unity was ensured by the orthodoxy of the church and its sacramental language.

Miri Rubin describes religious language in the Middle Ages as "a language of social relations and of a cosmic order; it described and explained the interweaving of natural and supernatural with human action, in a paradigm which from about 1100 was one of sacramentality, with the Eucharist at its heart" (1). In this period, from about 1100

until the late 15th century in England, the Mass becomes not only the central rite of Christianity but the most powerful use of language. Rubin's description of "a paradigm of sacramentality," is generally equivalent to what I call a performative epistemology. The Mass, which functions as a unifying principle for the culture and primary example of sacramental language, delimits this sacramental paradigm. In late medieval theology, the Mass was a symbol of the unification of church and culture.

According to Pelikan, "the Augustinian theologians of the early Middle Ages based their doctrine of the sacraments principally on the baptism while later medieval doctrine, beginning in the ninth century, went beyond Augustine in assigning to the Eucharist the paradigmatic function in sacramental teaching" (3:30). I will argue that this paradigm of sacramentality became the basis of broader epistemological assumptions in the period. Because of the centrality of the Mass during the later Middle Ages, this epistemological system must account for the ability of language to perform an action in the physical world. Knowledge was acquired, made and classified within the bounds of the faith. As St. Augustine argues in *The Teacher*, the developing early doctrine of the church, belief preceded and is privileged over knowledge, to which it might be compared. He maintains, "I must believe rather than know. And writers whom we believe were not ignorant of the difference. For the prophet says: 'unless ye believe ye shall not know' (Isa. 7:9). This he would not have said if he had thought there was no difference. What I know I also believe, but I do not know all that I believe" (Hyman and Walsh 25). Augustine's preference of belief over understanding aside, medieval Christians needed

some understanding of the sacraments in order to believe, and knowledge was linked to faith which was circumscribed by a paradigmatic sacramental system.

Augustine uses the language of Isaiah to demonstrate his conception of the dichotomy between knowledge and belief. According to Austin's theory, the illocutionary force of Isaiah's speech act is to warn, alert, put on notice, etc., but Augustine's use of that same speech act has a rather more performative function. Its perlocutionary force for Augustine is not only rhetorical, in the sense that it employs the notion of *autoritas* to make an argument, but also could be called an Austinian "exercitive,"¹¹ since Augustine himself becomes an authority for Christian doctrine. Authority in the sense of *autoritas* is always accorded after the fact. Augustine has the power and authority to perform this speech act efficaciously (or felicitously) because later Christian theologians give him this power. Through this doctrine, Christians did not need to "know" what was happening in the consecration of the Host; they needed to "believe" that the real presence of Christ was immanent in the bread and wine. In order to accomplish this belief, despite the Augustinian privileging, some knowledge is clearly necessary. To accomplish this knowledge, the late medieval church in England used the Corpus Christi cycles plays. Augustine's privileging is turned upside down by the end of the 17th century, when belief must be substantiated by knowledge according to the scientific method within a commemorative epistemology that is bound by propositional logic. Knowledge then becomes privileged over belief, and language functions to

¹¹ Austin separates performative speech acts into five categories: verdictives, commissives, behabitives, expositives, and exercitives. Exercitives he defines as "the exercising of powers, rights, or influence."

describe, justify and memorialize that knowledge rather than create it.

The Central Rite of Medieval Christianity

At the center of the sacramental language Rubin describes is the transubstantiation, which is defined by John Duns Scotus and many other medieval theologians as “the complete change of one substance into another substance” (Pelikan 4:56). Under this doctrine, which became the official church doctrine in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215,¹² what occurred at the moment in which the priest would say the words “*hoc est enim corpus meum*,” and the essential substance of the Host ceased being bread and became imbued with the real presence of God, was a complete transformation. This real presence in the Eucharist, as performed through the ministrations and words of the priest, represents a unique function and category of language. Here, language is functioning at a very different level than it does at any other time, including other performative uses of language. As even Wycliffe insisted, “the words of consecration, though figurative, were unique, not merely one blessing among others” (Pelikan 4:58). I would argue that this moment represents a special kind of performativity, one that goes beyond the ordinary power of language to make or describe knowledge.

Thus, at the center of the Mass, which itself was the center of the late medieval religious system, was a special performative speech act which brought about the “real

Examples are appointing, voting, ordering, urging, advising, warning, &c” (151).

¹² Assembled by Pope Innocent III, the council approved over seventy Canons, of which the very first is the

presence” in the Eucharist. The dogma prescribes that the presence of God in the Host is “real.” Since this takes place within a belief system, to examine this phenomenon epistemologically we must assume that the communicants within the system have an earnest belief in the efficacy of this ritual. The broad influence exerted by this system and the devotion of its adherents (while not homogeneous) is generally proven by the work of Eamon Duffy in *Stripping of the Altars*, which begins:

Any study of late medieval religion must begin with the liturgy, for within that great seasonal cycle of fast and festival, of ritual observance and symbolic gesture, lay Christians found the paradigms and the stories which shaped their perception of the world and their place in it. (12)

Critics as diverse as Mervyn James, Rubin, and Duffy describe the great influence of the Mass on late medieval social order. Duffy states, “the sacrifice of the Mass was the act by which the world was renewed and the Church was constituted, the Body on the corporas [is] the emblem and the instrument of all truly human embodiment” (91). As such, the Mass represents a unifying speech act that determines not only the central belief of the Christian community, but sets the extreme boundaries of the function of language and the epistemological system.

This description of the late medieval sacramental system shows that a belief in the corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist was held widely enough within the culture to represent what Foucault calls an episteme. The connection between this special use of language and its implication in the wider world is clear. If we allow that this particular

doctrine of transubstantiation (*Catholic Encyclopedia*)

function of language is efficacious in this context, and was generally accepted in the culture, then it must be possible to widen this context. Keith Thomas describes how the common people in a more mundane fashion apply the performative aspect of language present in the speech act of the Mass through magical thinking (47-50). The implications of Thomas's argument are that as the reformation takes hold in England, the concreteness of this "magical thinking" is replaced by a more abstract view of faith. The "magic" of language effecting change in the real world begins to ebb away and is replaced for most people in the culture with the more abstract notion of language as commemoration.

Mimesis vs. Reperformance

While there seems to be a mimetic or dramatic quality to the speech acts of the Mass, before the Reformation it was not intended as representation but rather as resacrifice. Christ's sacrifice is not just renewed in this rite, but recommitted or re-performed. Pascasius Radbertus, one of the principal disputants in the ninth century debate surrounding the person and substance of Christ in the Eucharist, teaches, "although Christ, having suffered once for all in the flesh, saved the world once for all through one and the same suffering unto death, this offering is nevertheless repeated daily" (Pelikan 3:79). After the Reformation in England, the Mass no longer serves a performative role but rather a commemorative one. According to Pelikan, "already in 1523 [Ulrich] Zwingli," the Swiss reformer, "was insisting that the most important theme [in the Eucharist] was that of memorial" (4:201). Luther and Zwingli, with Calvin

representing a middle ground, represent the infra-reformist debate about the nature of the Eucharistic sacrament. Luther, with all his deviations from the traditional dogma, is the man of the Middle Ages. According to Pelikan, “The word and the sign are for him not merely ‘pictures of the thought,’ but the thing itself. Yet for Zwingli, ... this is a barbarous absurdity. The sacrament is ‘merely’ a symbol, that is, it symbolically represents what in itself it is not” (4:262). In England, what is ultimately developed through the second Prayer Book of 1552 is a Eucharistic doctrine that “seems to be Calvinist, implying a spiritual but not a corporeal presence of Christ at the sacrament” (Haigh 180). A spiritual rather than a corporeal change creates a very different set of ontological questions. Once this is accepted, theories of language in general undergo a transformation from a view that *must* allow for the unique performativity in the Mass to a paradigm that insists primarily on commemorative representation.

This commemorative representation in the Mass can be seen to work in two ways. First, there is a mimetic quality to the service, an *imitatio Christi*. The redemptive quality of the Mass is replaced with a mystic personal relationship with Christ. Here, too, the concreteness of a previous episteme, in actually ingesting the physical body of Christ, is replaced by the abstract and primarily mental notion of this relationship, which goes toward the argument for commemoration. On the other hand, the Host represents (in memory) not only the crucified body of Christ in sacrifice, but also, typologically, Christ in his human form, the incarnation (which is really the first transubstantiation). As such, the communion after the Reformation serves to deepen the interrelation between reformed

Christians and their God.

Once the Mass is no longer the central focus of faith, there is no example of language functioning at this corporeal level, since it was the sole example of this special kind of performativity. As language loses its special performative and sacramental power, it becomes collateral to be traded in precisely Stephen Greenblatt's sense of cultural "negotiation," where artifacts (including religious ritual) become mementos to be traded as commodity in a series of socio-political and aesthetic transactions. According to Greenblatt,

If [artistic works] are the signs of contingent social practices, then the questions we ask of them cannot profitably center on a search for their untranslatable essence. Instead we can ask how collective beliefs and experiences were shaped, moved from one medium to another, concentrated in manageable aesthetic form, and offered for consumption. (*Self-Fashioning* 5)

The condition of literary works as signs of "contingent social practices" relates to the notion of conventionality necessary to existence of a social epistemology that allows the evaluation and justification of held beliefs within a culture. It is the conventionality of accepted contexts that shift and with them validated beliefs. Literary works preserve traces of the conventional systems of thought under which they were created.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries could use the elements and language of the Mass for artistic consumption specifically because its power to perform a central unifying function for individuals and church and its very special effect in the real world had been voided by

the reformers. Its capacity to allude to this former power allows the Mass to maintain a significant social and artistic interest throughout the Renaissance. In the process of this shift, the Mass is transformed from true sacrifice to symbol, to memento, to tradable aesthetic commodity. In the Elizabethan period, however, elements of the Mass are on their way to becoming aesthetic commodities but not yet fully established as such.

The special performative nature resident in the language of the Mass poses some interesting concerns. The Mass as speech act is *sui generis* and is separate from all other speech acts both in kind and intent. As I have said, it is not subject to any of the usual restrictions of declarative/propositional statements or even other performative speech acts. Once the reformers abolish the “real presence” of the traditional Catholic Mass in England, language within the culture can no longer function transubstantially. Thus, uses of language must now begin to conform to an epistemology that emphasizes commemoration. The function of the post-Reformation service is to memorialize rather than re-perform the sacrifice of Christ. Under this commemorative epistemology, uses of performative speech acts, as described by Austin, begin to be restricted to a political/contractual context that achieve their perlocutionary effect in further human action.

Sacramental performativity thus acquires a more transactional quality and even risks reduction to what Austin calls a “parasitic” use (a performative speech act used in a non-serious or literary manner). When the Corpus Christi cycles use the language of the Mass, they do so with the intent of reauthorizing its transformative and sacramental power.

There is no sense in which the cycles parody or mock the central rite of Christianity or its sacramental power. When used or alluded to by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the liturgy takes on the nostalgic qualities of an aesthetic social transaction. It is used not to *reauthorize* or celebrate their power, but to represent it commemoratively, although the audience could still discern within its residual performative power. For Joyce's audience, at a much further remove, what residual power is left accords with Raymond Williams's formulation.¹³

Austin's exclusion of this "parasitic" use of language is Derrida's principal complaint against the theory of speech acts. Derrida challenges "the view that identifies the meaning of an utterance with the intentions of its speaker or writer" and criticizes Austin's "treatment of fictional speech acts as 'parasitic' on nonfictional, normal, or serious ones" (*Limited Inc* 7). He also proposes the notion of iterability, Derrida's word for "the repeatability of linguistic expression in different contexts (which for Derrida always means transformation)" (Culler, *Deconstruction* 25). "Iterability," when considered in relation to the performative speech act of the Mass, has a parallel in the concept of "multilocation"—the presence of Christ within the Host at simultaneously performed Masses.

In defense of Austin against Derrida's first critique, within speech act theory the "intention of the speaker" is non-essential, since the illocutionary or perlocutionary force

¹³ Williams describes the concept of "residual force" in relation to dominant and emergent forces within the hegemony. By residual is meant those beliefs, practices, etc. that are derived from an earlier stage of that society, often very long ago, and which may in fact reflect a very different social formation (different

of an utterance determines its intent without the speaker's underlying intent being considered. For instance, to use one of Austin's own examples, if a man in the process of making a bet utters the words "I bet you fifty dollars that it will rain tomorrow," but intends to never to pay if he loses, his secret intention does not affect the illocutionary or perlocutionary force of his utterance. The utterance causes a contractual agreement between himself and the other bettor. This condition is particularly true in a legal context. What is necessary in terms of intent is the context of the speech act, the authority of the speaker to perform the utterance and the hearer's acceptance of the utterance as valid.

Language, Philosophy and Modernity

The epistemological shift I trace in this study is also related to issues of modernity and the rise of the scientific method. While the scientific revolution of the mid-17th century can be seen as a paradigm shift in itself, there are some interconnections between it and issues of linguistic and philosophical shifts of the period. Attitudes toward both philosophic and scientific inquiry, based upon an analytical system, begin to change in this period. I submit that this change in attitude is primarily due to changes in perspectives on language function and use. It will be noticed that a commemorative epistemology lends itself better to the abstract ideas of modern science.

Where medieval philosophers sought to link signs to a universal language that

political, religious beliefs) from the present. Residual beliefs often remain dominant long after the social conditions that made them dominant have disappeared. See Williams, *Marxism and Literature*.

imbues each word with resonances of the thing itself, modern linguistics sees the connection between signifier and signified as purely coincidental. In the process of the move from language of performativity to language of commemoration (a separation that would have been unknown to medieval philosophers), we are able to separate performance from memory. The idea of memory systems and resemblance, as related to language, plays an important role in the development of this epistemological shift. In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault describes epistemology up to the sixteenth century as composed of four similitudes. He states:

In the sixteenth century, real language is not a totality of independent signs, a uniform and unbroken entity in which things could be reflected one by one, as in a mirror, and so express their particular truths. It is rather an opaque, mysterious thing, closed in upon itself, a fragmented mass, its enigma renewed in every interval, which combines here and there with the forms of the world and becomes interwoven with them. ... The study of grammar in the sixteenth century is based upon the same epistemological arrangement as the science of nature or the esoteric disciplines. (34-35)

Grammar is epistemologically tied to the science of nature because language is seen as having similitude with the things it represents. This interconnection between language and nature allows language its performative role. Once language becomes commemorative, its epistemological arrangement ceases to be tied to nature and begins to be connected instead to abstract ideas.

Keith Thomas observes that the movement from a “primitive” religion, which accepts the use of magic, to a religion that denies the efficacy of magic, involved a slow process of separation between magic and religion. As Thomas sees it,

It is a feature of many systems of thought, and not only primitive ones, that they possess a self-confirming character. Once their initial premises are accepted, no subsequent discovery will shake the believer’s faith, for he can explain it away in terms of the existing system. Neither will his conviction be weakened by failure of some accepted ritual to accomplish its desired end, for this too can be accounted for. Such systems of belief possess a resilience which makes them virtually immune to external argument. (*Religion* 641)

Here, we might recognize why it took so long for this separation to occur (in Thomas’s estimation, from about 1500 to 1700), but not exactly why in fact it occurred. Given the “self-confirming” nature of internalized belief and its resilience to external argument, it is difficult to explain why it changed in the first place. Thomas’s explanation is that “the reaction against magic could thus never come from the cumulative resentment of disappointed clients. It had to arise from outside the system altogether” (*Religion* 642). Thomas acknowledges the difficulty of outlining the reasons for this shift and maintains that,

The essence of the revolution was the triumph of the mechanical philosophy. It involved the rejection both of scholastic Aristotelianism and of the Neoplatonic theory, which had temporarily threatened to take its place. The notion that the

universe was subject to immutable natural laws killed the concept of miracles, weakened the belief in the physical efficacy of prayer, and diminished faith in the possibility of direct divine inspiration. (*Religion* 645)

This movement toward a set of “immutable” natural laws limits and thereby focuses the function of knowledge in the society. The function of language is equally affected by the revolution outlined by Thomas.

As the Mass is stripped of its magical and mystical function and the language used to perform it becomes more restricted in its power—to the point where it has a mental rather than a physical function—language begins to function at a purely ideational level. The Mass in its traditional church context has the perlocutionary power, as a speech act, of changing nature; this action is clearly impermissible in a mechanical philosophy. But in order for this mechanical philosophy to have triumphed, a different function of language had to exist. As long as language served a magical purpose, the natural world was intermingled with the function of language; one could effect change in the natural world with the use of language. Within this shift from a language tied to the natural world to language as only mentally descriptive of it, a new social epistemology develops which determines the ways knowledge can be acquired and disseminated and represents an epistemological shift, a shift that could accommodate the scientific revolution beginning in the 17th century.

Performatives and Intentionality

In Austin's conception, the purpose of a performative speech act could be said to be to change some current state into another. We must be very clear that today this change of state takes place primarily within a statutory legal structure. The articulation of a verdict at the close of a criminal trial effects a notable change in status for the accused, who is thereafter either a convicted criminal or an innocent citizen. In either case, the accused changes his/her political status. In this respect, the sacramental language of penance (i.e. "I absolve you") and baptism have more in common with this conventional and legalistic context than with the language of the Eucharist, which reinforces the uniqueness of the sacrament of the Mass even in comparison to other sacramental language.

The difference between this kind of performative act and what occurs in the Mass, within Austin's theory, is related to what he calls "sequel." In the Mass the change in state is physical (or perhaps metaphysical) and not *purely* conventional, in the sense that its sequel is not carried out by law or another human agent. When the criminal is convicted and remanded to the state's control, or when a couple is married, the state is caused to act in response to the pronouncement of the authorized speaker. The transubstantiation, however, requires no further human action. It occurs of its own upon the pronouncement of the priest. For orthodox Catholics, the priest has the power and authority to effect this change because of his ordination, and this power cannot change with any alteration in the moral or intellectual status in the priests. Transubstantiation

merges two universes; within it the boundary between the corporeal and incorporeal worlds is broken and allowed to flow through the break is the spirit and body of the resurrected Christ.

Representative Literary Texts

My focus will be on particular works that best reflect this shift from a performative to a commemorative function of language. I will use the Corpus Christi cycles to establish the pattern of late medieval epistemology within English literature, the origin and development of which, whether we accept E. K. Chambers and Karl Young's position or any of the more recent critics',¹⁴ lie in the Latin liturgy. Shakespeare represents a middle period, what I will call the "semi-commemorative," where the performativity of language implicit in the Mass no longer holds a unifying influence and is slowly moving away from its sacred position in the culture, and is only nostalgically connected to its sacramental power. Finally, James Joyce represents the final phase of the shift, where language, particularly its function in the ritual of the Mass, has become primarily commemorative and does not have the power of transubstantiation, but for Joyce performs, what I will refer to as a transaccidentation. In the hands of Joyce, a quintessential representative of the modernist movement, language functions in a pseudo-sacramental mode, but it is an aesthetic sacramental system of representation.

Chapter two begins to trace the shift from a performative to commemorative

¹⁴ In the next chapter I will discuss for fully theories of the development of the Corpus Christi cycles, including those of Chambers, Young, V.A. Kolve, and Rosemary Woolf.

epistemology in literature with the Corpus Christi cycles as representative of the old epistemology. The cycles partake of the performative power of the Mass and in one way are responsible for giving the laity an understanding of this function of language in the Mass. The cycles re-authorize the words of consecration by re-presenting the divine history of humanity, but it is not a memorialized history; it is an ever-present one. The “now” was not separated from the past, and through the typological structure of the cycles this point is made clear. There is, therefore, no real past which must be remembered but an eternal present that exists in the mind of God, and in that present all things are linked; language, the natural sciences, the metaphysical, and indeed all of reality are one, and are explained through the unified concept of God.

Since the Mass was performed in Latin and the laity generally did not understand this language, the principal method for the congregants to learn and understand what was happening in the Mass was to attend the plays of Corpus Christi. These plays rely on the performative function of language in the Mass to accomplish the salvation of the believers through an understanding of the precepts of the sacramental system. By analyzing their development and structure, I hope to connect them to this sacramental system and show how the function of language within them is performative.

In chapter three, I will continue the literary analysis with Shakespeare, who demonstrates the ambiguous attitude toward the sacramental power of the Mass of his culture. By Shakespeare’s time, this sacramental power came under official attack from reformers (while in England there had been resistance to the orthodox Catholic doctrine

since the 14th century, it is only in Elizabeth's reign that the English Church becomes officially reformist), but while the official religious system changed from Catholic to Protestant, most of the people had not yet accepted this new faith. Thus, in this period, the shift to a commemorative epistemology I propose begins to occur but always carries with it traces of the old epistemological system.

While traditional Catholic ideas appear in *Hamlet*, most notably the doctrines of purgatory and penance, there is some ambiguity in the use of signs of the old epistemology. Hamlet delays, as many critics have argued, to assure himself that the figure he has seen is the ghost of his departed father. To consider the ghost a purgatorial spirit, however, he must accept the Catholic account of purgatory—and thus its sacramental and epistemological system—so in delaying to determine the ghost's provenance, I will argue further, Hamlet shows his ambivalence between the old religion and the new. The play reveals a conflicted epistemological system, which is exemplified at several levels by most of its characters.

In the famous scene, after the end of the "The Mousetrap," Claudius retreats to a private chapel and begins to pray for absolution:

Whereto serves mercy
 But to confront the visage of offence?
 And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
 To be forestalled ere we come to fall
 Or pardon'd being down? (III.iii.46-50).

He is aware, however, that his prayer will be inefficacious, “My fault is past—but O, what form of prayer/ Can serve my turn?” (III.iii.51-52). Here Claudius is thinking like a traditional Catholic; his repentance is not complete because he is not following the proper form of penance, which under Catholic doctrine was composed of three elements, contrition, confession and satisfaction. When Hamlet sees the king at prayer, he hesitates from seeking his revenge. “Now might I do it pat, now a is a-praying. And now I’ll do’t. And so a goes to heaven” (III.iii.73-75). Hamlet’s thoughts here are ambiguously reformist. Were he to strike now, he sees the action as facilitating Claudius’s passage to heaven, “To take him in the purging of his soul, When he is fit and season’d for his passage” (III.iii.85-86). He reads Claudius’s speech act as efficacious and his thinking reveals the Catholic view of purgatory. However, he is not, as Claudius is, taking into account the Catholic tripartite form of penance.

“The Mousetrap” as a *mise-en-abime* has some performative power within the larger play. The murder of Gonzago as the re-presentation of the murder of King Hamlet does in fact “catch the conscience of the king.” Here, language functions to effect a change of status for Claudius, but this change takes place primarily in mind and requires further human action. Claudius’s running away from the play reveals his guilt to Hamlet and thereby turns Claudius, in Hamlet’s mind, from an alleged murderer to a confirmed one. To the audience of the larger play, the play within the play serves to substantiate its belief in the ghost’s allegations. This is a median space for language performativity; a post-Reformation sense of commemorative performativity serves to affirm a pre-

Reformation belief in traditional church dogma (i.e. that of purgatory). Thus, both systems are operating simultaneously.

My third chapter deals primarily with *Hamlet*, but the conflicted epistemology can be identified in any of Shakespeare's plays. *King Lear*, for example, begins with a performative speech act, in the usual Austinian sense; Lear divides his kingdom among his daughters through the use of certain words: "I do invest you jointly with my power,/ Pre-eminence, and all the large effects/ That troop with majesty" (I.i.129). At this moment, Lear relinquishes the power and authority to execute any further magisterial speech act. Once he has given his daughters the kingdom, he no longer has the authority to perform speech acts of this kind. He cannot, for example, use another performative act to regain his kingdom or undo the banishment of Kent or Cordelia.

While the play is written in post-Reformation England, the action of the play takes place in a pre-Christian era; there is therefore some anachronism and syncretism present. However, certain Christian rites, such as exorcism (as shown in Greenblatt's "Shakespeare and the Exorcists"), are used to indicate the "superstitious" nature of traditional Catholic rituals. Here, we have an example of the confrontation between social order and "social" artist, which follows Greenblatt's argument, that "the result of [the] confrontation between total artist and totalizing society was a set of unique, inexhaustible, and supremely powerful works of art" (*Purgatory* 2). The play engages the performative power of medieval sacramental language to point up contemporary social positions on sacramental language. In this work, once again, two epistemological

systems clash.

The last chapter examines James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which I argue is structured in part by an altered Catholic Mass along with a great number of liturgical allusions. Unlike the reversed Mass of Satanic worship, its object, as Joyce would have it, is the opposite of a "true" Mass. Joyce said that he sees the process of writing as a "transaccidentation," wherein he is trying to keep his substance the same, but change his accident (Ellman 457).

The first words spoken by anyone in the book are those of Buck Mulligan, as he comes in "bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and razor lay crossed.... He held the bowl aloft and intoned: —*Introibo ad altare Dei*" (Joyce 3). From this *introit* in "Telemachus" to Molly Bloom's confession in the "Penelope" chapter, Joyce infuses *Ulysses* with elements of the Catholic liturgy. The main structural service provided by the Mass is in unifying themes, symbols and surfaces as well as other structural elements. As with other exterior structuring devices, Joyce uses the Mass for multiple purposes. The occurrence of the Mass or of allusions to it is prevalent. There is no chapter which does not in some way allude to, or contain a part of the Mass—whether the daily service or a special liturgy (such as a requiem).

As with most elements of the book, critics have argued adamantly about the purpose and place of the Mass in *Ulysses*. Michael J. O'Shea, for example, rejects other critics' attempts to see Joyce's use of the Mass as structuring or sub-structuring *Ulysses*. He compares critics who try to tie the liturgy to its structure to "Catholics who in the

Nicene Creed affirm belief in ‘all things visible and invisible’ little knowing that the latter category encompasses much that is simply not there” (123). Paul Briand, however, has no difficulty in asserting that, “just as James Joyce uses the myth and episodic framework of Homer’s *Odyssey* to help him ‘forge upon the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race,’ *Ulysses*, so does he use the Catholic Mass as another structure for the same purpose” (327). Some critics suggest that the use of the Mass in *Ulysses* only represents “Joyce’s emphasis on the realistic detail of Dublin life,” particularly in its religious aspects (Walsh 328). While this may be part of the use of the Mass, “it does not account for the frequency, accuracy and intellectualized familiarity with the *Missal* [Romanum] and the *Ritual* [Romanum] that an average Catholic would not normally attain” (McNelly, *Deviations* 291).

In Joyce’s intellectualization of the Mass and Catholic liturgy, we see a use of language that displaces the connection and power of language operant in religious ritual and co-opts it for a strictly textual endeavor. The text itself becomes substance and accident beyond which there is no power. The pre-Reformation sacramental function of language becomes literally limited to parodic or “parasitic” uses, where the author becomes both the body and priest of his/her own transubstantiation, “the priest of the imagination.” The shift that begins in the Reformation now locates sacramental language in a paradigm that emphasizes its commemorative rather than its performative function.

As I have said, epistemology is always in flux, always already in process, so it is very difficult to pinpoint where epistemology is headed or what comprises “current”

epistemology at any given time. The scope of this study will be broad, both thematically and temporally. While the Mass and its reformation will be its central focus, my real concern will always be in the uses of language before and after this reformation. By looking at a long block of years, with deep analysis of representative texts, we can make broad assumptions about the ways in which concepts have changed epistemologically.

Chapter II

The Corpus Christi Cycles: God Signified

Introduction

I will begin tracing the shift from a performative to a commemorative epistemology in English literature with a consideration of the Corpus Christi cycles, which may have developed directly out of the Mass or out of liturgical drama. The cycles represent a locus wherein the powerful function of the language of the Latin Mass is used within a vernacular context. As literary works that were immensely popular at the time they were performed, they can inform our discussion of the use and function of language within a public context that determines the conventional knowledge system before the Reformation. The cycles occupy the liminal space between ritual and performance drama; within that space lay the distinctions between community and congregation, between church and market square.

In this chapter I argue that the Corpus Christi cycles, as the principal drama of late medieval England, develop out of the Mass. As a result of this development the cycles retain some of the performative power of the Mass to make and disseminate knowledge—that is, to allow medieval Christians to *know* the efficacy of the words of consecration. Thus, they both reinforce and partake in the sacramental system that allows the special power resident in the central speech act of the Mass. In order to show this, I will begin by tracing how they develop out of the Mass and discuss several theories of their development.

For the last two hundred years, Critics and historians have had differing opinions of the development of the Corpus Christi cycles. While some critics view this development as evolutionary, arising from the Latin liturgical dramas, and others see the two developing along parallel lines from the tropes intoned during the celebration of some Masses, either of these developmental patterns shows an interconnection between the Mass and the cycles.¹⁵ I want to use these arguments to emphasize the interconnectedness of the cycles to the Mass, and the translation of the power of language from its transformative function in the central rite of late medieval Christianity to performance drama. An analysis of the developmental history of the cycles is essential because it helps to locate the cycles within the system of sacramentality that defined the manner of religious observance for late medieval English Christians. Because the cycles develop generally out of the Mass and are intended to substantiate its efficacy, their language participates in the performative epistemology that gives the Mass its transformative power. Although the plays may appear to be wholly dramatic, this developmental structure shows a relationship between the ritual of the Mass and their dramatic aspects.

The Feast of Corpus Christi

The impetus for developing a dramatic cycle that celebrated the body of Christ was the Feast of Corpus Christi, which was established at the council of Vienna (1311) in

Clement V's decree, which adopted Urban IV's papal bull of 1264 (Kolve 44). The feast is established out of its logical location within the liturgical year. It would have made sense to set this celebration during Easter week, probably on Maundy Thursday (the day which observes the occasion of the last supper upon which Christ establishes the ritual which is the center of the doctrine of transubstantiation). Pope Urban IV reasoned, however, that this season, although thematically appropriate, was inconvenient for the celebration, since, at this time, "the entire church, fully occupied as she is with the reconciliation of penitents, the ritual administration of the holy oil, the fulfilling of the commandments [...] does not have adequate time for the celebration of this greatest sacrament" (Kolve 45). Instituting a date outside of the Easter season for this observance gives the occasion an added emphasis. Moving its celebration out of its logical position in the liturgical year—from sometime between March and April to the Thursday before Trinity Sunday (between May 23 and June 24)—also allowed for better weather in which medieval Christians in northern Europe could put on an outdoor festival. This practical condition allowed the celebrations to flourish as outdoor festivals and processions.

The Corpus Christi cycles as celebrations developed in the late 14th century out of the tradition of procession and pageants that emerged from the Feast of Corpus Christi. What happened on the day set aside as Corpus Christi Day, according to Mervyn James:

was that first of all a mass took place, after which the congregation formed a procession in which the Corpus Christi, the Body of Christ, in the form of the host consecrated at the mass, was ceremonially carried through the principal

¹⁵See pp. 55-59, below, for a more detailed argument for this development.

thoroughfare of the place where the feast was being celebrated. (18)

Eventually, pageants, which depicted scriptural scenes, were added to this procession.

The cycles develop out of this impulse to represent salient points in the scriptural history of mankind that both celebrated and elucidated the great gift of the incarnated Christ for the community. As such, their didactic features substantiate the necessity for the sacraments in general and the Eucharist in particular, and in doing so they borrow some of the performative power of its rite.

In these celebrations the community, James demonstrates, is imaged as a body; the body of Christ “becomes the point of reference in relation to which the structure of precedence and authority in the town is made visually present on Corpus Christi Day” (19). Within them we see the interconnection between the Mass, as both central ritual and community-unifying force, and its linguistic correlation to reality. The plays celebrate the efficacy of language in that rite and, as such, participate in its performative function. The plays, like the Mass, perform a unifying function for the medieval English Christian community. Metaphorically, the body of Christ is associated with the body of the Church as represented by the community of believers. The collective belief of this community represents the conventional context that validates the subjective social truth of the transubstantive body as physically present in the Eucharist.

Mass as Drama

The Corpus Christi cycles signify an extension of the performative function of language engendered in the Mass. There is, however, a commutative relationship

between them, an exchange that goes back and forth; the Mass lends some of its linguistic power to the plays, and in turn the plays re-authorize this power in the Mass. According to V.A. Kolve, “This way of ‘celebrating’ this maximum gift of God: instead of concentrating on the Sacrament’s temporal power to work miracles, to convince and convert, it looked instead on its eternal power to alter the destiny of the human race” (48). This is the ultimate power of this “maximum gift,” but before achieving this goal, the temporal power of the Mass to achieve the miracle of transubstantiation through the words of the officiating priest had to be understood by the believers, and in accomplishing this understanding, the cycles proved singularly effective. The cycles are therefore incontrovertibly linked to the sacrament’s linguistic power—for it is the performative power of the words of consecration that perform the miracle that creates the “real presence” of the body of Christ on earth. This body envisioned as corporeally present and metaphorically connected to the body of the church is the object of devotion in the Corpus Christi feast. The cycles aim to celebrate this gift and reveal the power of this daily sacrifice through an enactment of divine human history.

The cycles’ connection to the Mass can best be examined through an interrogation of the plays’ development. The scholarship in this context, beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, reveals three possibilities. The cycles either emerge directly out of the Mass and its ancillary antiphons and tropes, or they evolve from the tropes themselves, or they are transpositions from the Latin liturgical plays performed on feast days of the liturgical calendar. All of these theories for their

development, regardless of any critical shortcomings, indicate a connection between the development of the plays and the Mass. In examining these theories, I hope to highlight this interconnection to show that the cycles took part in the system of signification offered by the function of language at the heart of the sacrament of the altar.

To consider the Corpus Christi cycles' development and possible interpretation as part of a performative epistemology, we must begin by analyzing the system of dramatic representation offered by the Mass and its influence on the evolution into the more mimetic form embodied by the cycles. While David Bevington insists that the distinction between the dramatic and the ritualistic is often difficult to make, we can begin by outlining some of the basic elements required for drama. According to Aristotle's famous definition, drama is "imitated human action." While this definition broadly agrees with our own conceptions of what drama is, in order to give it more specificity we must identify what comprises this imitative action. J.M. Manly lists the requirements for drama as, "(1) a story (2) told in action (3) by actors who impersonate the characters" (qtd. in Holman and Harmon 148). The requirement of spoken dialogue may be added to this list, and thus we arrive at a specific definition that covers the basic necessities for drama. The distinction between drama and ritual, however, is not made any clearer through the elucidation of these elements, since they can be easily discerned in almost any form of ritual. Thus, it is necessary to view this distinction in terms of the objectives of the two forms.

Anthropologist Victor Turner¹⁶ has argued not only that ritual always contains drama, but also that drama is always ritualistic. However, Kenyan Tomaselli defines the goal of rituals and their aim as

the collectively patterned performance forms through which processes of cultural or sacred signification are integrated into consciousness and social practices.

They are also 'enacted' by sign-user communities to confirm cosmological locations, relationships to universal forces and to solidify social organization.

Through ritual, the social world is realigned with the world of belief, lending to the latter a 'transformative' power. (*Dramas* 50)

While drama, which may contain elements of ritual, aims to re-present human action to an audience for entertainment, illumination and/or to inspire social change, ritual's primary focus is on "transformative power." In this sense, the distinction between Corpus Christi plays and ritual is even more problematic. While their presentations are similarly dramatic and their purposes are interconnected, they remain distinct forms. The transformative power resident within the ritual is co-opted by the drama, and if we accept that there is residual ritualism in the enactment of plays, we clearly recognize the problematic nature of this distinction. This complicated distinction may be addressed in terms of the focus of these respective forms of presentation. The Mass can perform its transformation of the Host only within a belief system; the plays reinforced that belief

¹⁶ Turner developed the concept of "social dramas," "public episodes of tensional irruption," which transform social ritual into sudden unscripted drama. According to Turner, "they may range from personal advice and informal mediation or arbitration to formal juridical and legal machinery, and, to resolve certain kinds of crisis or legitimate other modes of resolution, to the performance of public ritual" (*Dramas* 47).

system through a sharing of its semiotic presentation.

The representation of Mass is essentially mimetic; however, the primary importance of the Mass in the lives of late medieval Christians was not as mimetic representation, but as “true” sacrifice—or, more precisely, re-sacrifice—and yet elements of representational drama are present in the movements and utterances of the celebrant.

In one sense, as Sarah Beckwith states in this context:

One might say that the mass was indeed theater, but as Anthony Kubiak¹⁷ has pointed out, “though the mass is indeed grounded in the theatrical ontology—for the “administration of the sacraments... represented the outward show of Christ’s presence and power,” yet “the problematic of appearances central to theatre” (that its illusion is embraced as truth) is inverted, for in the mass, “empirical reality is presented as an illusion that conceals truth (as, for example, when the actual presence of Christ is revealed *under the appearances of bread and wine*).” To expose the mass as theater is to suggest then that the efficacy of its words are not operable, that they cannot cause what they signify for there are no performatives in theater. (62)

“Theatrical ontology” here refers specifically to the presentation of the Mass as existing within a system of theatrical representation; the Sacrament exists as a sign (in the medieval conception, as the visible form of an invisible grace). The presentation of the Mass is primarily a theatrical or dramatic one in that gestures and speech acts are

¹⁷ Kubiak, *Stages of Terror: Ideology and Coercion as Theatre History* (49), reads theatricality as the conflict between appearance and reality, through which he reads the movement of history as a drama.

performed within a special context that does not correspond with their common usage.

These movements and speech acts are scripted and reiterable, but their expression is not to be taken as illusion. Within this presentation, believers are witness to a miraculous transformation, and this transformation takes place through the function of language. For Aquinas,

in the sacraments the words are as the form, and sensible things are as the matter.

Now in all things composed of matter and form, the determining principle is on the part of the form, which is as it were the end and terminus of the matter.

Consequently for the being of a thing the need of a determinate form is prior to the need of determinate matter: for determinate matter is needed that it may be adapted to the determinate form. Since, therefore, in the sacraments determinate sensible things are required, which are as the sacramental matter, much more is there need in them of a determinate form of words. (*Summa Theologiae* 1A.60.3)

Aquinas's argues here that "determinate words" are essential to the sacraments. In doing so, he privileges the "form" of the words as over and against the material substances (the determinate sensible things) used in the sacraments. The material objects could represent the inversion Kubiak reads as existing between the ritual and the drama, so that the bread and wine, after their consecration, and in their material reality obscure their true significance. They are no longer the prosaic stuff of daily life, but reach out across the cosmos to connect to the deity; through this connection the believer can attain salvation. In theater, the fictive/illusive world must be temporarily accepted as reality, whereas in

ritual, the visible objective reality is accepted as an accident that occults the true substance of the sacred object.

In this structure, the visible sign of invisible grace resides within the “matter” of the objects used in the sacraments, but the form of the sacrament is really composed in the “determinate words” employed to bring about this transformation. The bread and wine remain signs of this invisible grace, for they signify the spiritual nourishment afforded by Christ’s sacrifice, but they remain so only until the moment of consecration, and at that point become no longer signs, but the thing signified, that is, the body of the incarnate deity.

In order for medieval Christians to participate in this ontological structure, which gives language the power to change the substance of physical objects, they would have to believe not only in the power and grace of God, but in the power of language to effect such a change. As Aquinas reasons,

sacraments may be considered on the part of man who is sanctified, and who is composed of soul and body: to whom the sacramental remedy is adjusted, since it touches the body through the sensible element, and the soul through faith in the *words*. Hence Augustine says (Tract. lxxx in Joan.) on John 15:3, “Now you are clean by reason of the *word*,” etc.: “Whence hath water this great virtue, to touch the body and wash the heart, but by the *word* doing it, not because it is spoken, but because it is believed?” [emphasis added] (2A.60.3)

The sensible elements (in the case of the baptism, the water) provide a tangible or tactile

representation of the sacrament, that which can physically “touch” the human body, and that which in turn is touched and transformed through the words of the ritual into a sacred substance. The bodily connection is much less important than the spiritual connection, dependent upon faith in the “word.” In the Mass the “word” comprises the form of the sacrament, whereas in theater it can be read as only representation, but as ritual it is transformative, relying on the faith of believers to connect to their God and establishing a social context within which the performative power of its speech acts is justified.

The relationship between the sensible elements of the sacrament and the words (which are, according to Aquinas, the “form of the sacrament”) is analogous to the relationship between the dramatic and ritualistic aspects of the Mass. The meaning is conveyed to the congregants through a mimetic representation of events while the ritualistic elements carry the true form of the sacrament. In this sense, as Beckwith insists, the Mass cannot be taken as pure drama, because “there are no performatives in theater.” Here, Beckwith takes Austin’s exclusion of fictive language from his performative speech act theory as fixed. This exception, as I have said, is the point of Jacques Derrida’s principal arguments against Austin’s theory. Derrida insists on the “citationality” and “reiterability” of language precisely in literary contexts. As John Searle argues in response to Derrida, however, Austin’s exclusion of what he calls “parasitic” uses of performative speech acts is only a provisional step for convenience’ sake and not to be taken as a permanent exclusion. As I noted in the previous chapter, the use of performatives in representational drama can be efficacious in two ways, but at a

reduced level from their function within ritual. Within Corpus Christi theater, this performative power, while it does not transform physical reality, functions as a unifying force for the community and as authorizing the sacred rite which it celebrates. Thus, it helps to create the social context within which performatives speech acts work to transform physical reality and as such participate in a performative epistemology.

To see the Mass as a primarily theatrical presentation does not necessarily negate its performative power, although arguments from the Lollards to the reformists insisted on just such a configuration. It is only when the Mass is seen as *mere* representational drama that its transformational power is eradicated because the efficacy of performatives in pure drama functions at a different level than it does in ritualistic drama. Before the Reformation, this transformational power is translated *mutatis mutandi* into the theater of Corpus Christi. While the aims of its theatricality are admittedly different from those of the Mass, the two forms are inextricably linked. The theatrical characteristics of the Mass are incontrovertible, even when for the believers what occurs is a real physical transformation. This transformation, however, is achieved not simply by the mimetic representation embodied in the dramatic elements, but by the belief in the power of its “words,” which for Aquinas are the “form of the sacrament.”

The celebrating priest performs the Mass in *imitatio Christi*; his gestures, movements and actions represent a mimetic or emblematic—though not realistic—simulation of Christ’s passion, and the antiphons and tropes sung as part of the Mass denote several speakers in dialogue. These features together may not add up to a drama

in the narrow sense, but they are significantly dramatic. The aim of the Mass, however, is not to present an event mimetically—for this may be considered a commemoration of that event—but, as I have said, to re-create that event in order to effect the substantial physical change of the sacramental species. The dramatic elements of the Mass are supplemental to this primary purpose, but constitute its presentation. It is ritual staged as drama, or drama performed as ritual. The late medieval Christians went to Mass to experience the miracle of transubstantiation and thereby participate in their own salvation; the dramatic elements offered in the Mass were a means by which to accomplish this central rite of Christianity and not merely a drama or play.

For medieval Christians, the Mass was primarily an ocular communion, which would tend to emphasize its dramatic aspects as over and against its ritualistic purpose.

As Beckwith declares:

All historians of the mass stress the extent to which it became a clerical celebration observed by onlookers, in which consecration, not communion, was understood to be the most important moment. That visual theophany, the moment of turning, crucial yet not apparent, is more important than the communion of the faithful. (61)

The central point of the experience was in seeing the elevation of the Host as the true body of Christ raised by the celebrating priest at the sacring. While the action of elevating the Host may be interpreted as symbolic of the risen Christ, the consecrated Host was not seen as just a mere symbol of the body of Christ, but as the true and real

presence of God on earth. Thus, the dramatic features of the Mass exist to allow the congregants to witness this miracle of transformation. The inversion Kubiak notes between ritual and drama is very much a part of the distinction. The ritual elements of the Mass preclude a view of the consecrated bread and wine as just symbols of the body and blood of Christ; the transformation is that of the signifier, which was previously only a symbol, into the signified, which does not represent but *is* the thing itself. The Mass asks not that its witnesses temporarily suspend disbelief in an illusory representation, but that they accept as truth what empirical reality occludes: they should believe what they do not see, not what they do see.

Evolution of Medieval Drama

E. K. Chambers and Karl Young, the preeminent scholars of medieval drama in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, trace the progress of these dramatic features of the Mass from central rite to principal drama and argue against a view of the Mass as primarily a dramatic representation. Individually, they claim that medieval drama in general and the Corpus Christi cycles in particular evolved from the literal and figurative movement of these dramatic elements from inside the church to the market square. Their focus on the *Quem quaeritis* trope as the initial dramatic form from which medieval drama would develop became the standard view until the 1960s, when critics such as V. A. Kolve and O. B. Hardison began to question this evolutionary theory of development.

Chambers and Young focus on the *Quem quaeritis* trope because of its patently dramatic effects. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, “a trope is an interpolation in a liturgical text, or the embellishment brought about by interpolation (i.e. by introductions, insertions, or additions)” (“Trope”). Tropes were added to the liturgical texts of the Mass for the purpose

of amplifying and embellishing an independently complete liturgical text (e.g. the Introit, the Kyrie, Gloria, Gradual, or other parts of the Mass or of the Office sung by the choir). These additions are closely attached to the official liturgical text, but in no way do they change the essential character of it; they are entwined in it, augmenting and elucidating it; they are, as it were, a more or less poetical commentary that is woven into the liturgical text, forming with it a complete unit. (“Trope”)

Beginning around the tenth century, half choirs usually sang these short additions to the liturgical texts antiphonally. Tropes were sung as part of the *Introit*, *Kyrie*, *Sanctus* and other parts of the Mass. The trope is different from other embellishments to the Mass, such as the Sequence or Prose, since it remains tied to its liturgical text. Thus, the tropes are named for the liturgical texts to which they are connected, and cannot stand independently, while a Sequence or a Prose was interpolated between texts and can stand independently.

Initially, the *Quem quaeritis* was a simple three-line *Introit* trope sung during matins at Easter that represented in dramatic form the visit of the Marys to the tomb of

Jesus as related in the gospels. According to Chambers and Young, this simple drama becomes the initial terminus from which medieval drama would evolve. This trope begins with the question, “Whom do you seek?” spoken by a cleric in imitation of the angel of God at Christ’s tomb and directed at three other clerics who assumed the roles of the three Marys (the Virgin, Magdalene and Cleophas) in search of Christ’s body. In its initial version the trope requires few stage properties and costuming; however, there are minimal stage directions, which indicate that the clerics representing the angel and the Marys are to imitate the actions described by Saints Mathew and Mark in the Gospels. According to Chambers, the *Concordia Regularis* (circa 980) fixed the custom at least Winchester:

Let four brethren vest themselves. Let one of these, vested in an alb, enter as though to take part in the service, and let him approach the sepulcher without attracting attention.... Let the remaining three follow, and let them all, vested in copes, bearing in their hands thuribles with incense, and stepping delicately as those who seek something, approach the sepulcher. *These things are done in imitation of the angel sitting in the monument, and the women with spices coming to anoint the body of Jesus.* [emphasis added] (Chambers 2.14)

The imitative action represented here has a clearly more narrowly defined dramatic form than the use of drama to achieve or present ritual. For Chambers, this “liberal scenario...makes plain the change which has come about in the character of the *Quem quaeritis* since it was first sung by alternating half-choirs as an *introit* trope” and

“dialogued chant and mimetic action have come together and the first liturgical drama is, in all its essentials, complete” (15). Chambers’s description only requires “mimetic action” and “dialogue” for “drama”; the implied narrative of the Gospels provides dramatic plot (or story), the element lacking in Chambers’s definition. Rosemary Woolf seems to agree with Chambers about the requirements for drama, though she locates its initial form with the *Visitatio* rather than the *Quem quaeritis*. For Woolf,

What is essential to the emergence of drama was that the two types of liturgical impersonation [mimetic action and verbal impersonation] should be brought together, so that the dramatic words normally sung by clergy and choir solemnly stationary became united to the mimetic action which had not hitherto been accompanied by words implying impersonation. (5)

These liturgical impersonations first come together in the *Visitatio*, which Woolf reads as elaborating the mimetic action represented by the *Quem quaeritis* trope.

According to Young, the development of the Latin liturgical drama, while tied into the *Quem quaeritis* trope, requires further evolution to be considered a complete drama. As the trope becomes more and more elaborate, its dramatic elements become more mimetic in their imitation of the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ. The trope then becomes the basis out of which the Latin liturgical drama developed. Young’s further requirement for completeness is located in a more mimetic or realistic representation of events dramatized. While he places the beginning of the mimetic impulse in the *Quem quaeritis* trope, for Young, the Latin liturgical dramas represent a middle step between

trope and complete drama. Woolf argues that the influence of the Latin liturgical drama “rather than literary sources, provided an abiding authoritative model for the mystery cycles” (39). While she sees the liturgical plays as precursors for the cycles, Wolf claims, they “owed the fact of their existence to liturgical drama [but] any other debt was minuscule” (22). Woolf’s developmental structure for the cycles suggests that the thrust for dramatic representation began with the *Quem quaeritis*, was expanded from the trope to the Latin liturgical dramas, and from those dramas, albeit not as direct sources, the mystery plays emerge.

Like the *Quem quaeritis*, which was first tied only to Easter ceremonies and later expanded to Christmas and Ascension Day, the liturgical plays were occasional. The plays would dramatize narratives relevant to the liturgical season in which they were respectively performed. Like the *Quem quaeritis*, they were performed in Latin, not in the vernacular and, as occasional scenes, the liturgical plays were not cyclical and remained tied to the liturgical calendar. As such, they could not perform the didactic function attributed by many to the Corpus Christi plays. On the other hand, their use of Latin (the official language of the Church and the Mass, and a language the vast majority of medieval Christians encountered only in the sacred rites of the church) along with their performance within the church allowed these dramas to remain attached to official church rites rather than become a separate dramatic form.

While both Chambers and, more particularly, Young see a direct relationship in the Latin liturgical drama, the *Quem quaeritis*, and the development of the Corpus Christi

cycles, Kolve has argued that the cycles organized for the Feast of Corpus Christi do not develop from Latin liturgical dramas. One of Kolve's arguments against the liturgical drama as ancestor to the cycles has to do with the variety and breadth of the cycles (*qua* cycles), as opposed to the occasional nature of the liturgical drama. He sees the cycles as encompassing all of human history from creation to doomsday in an attempt to "explain [the sacrament's] necessity and power" (48). As such, the liturgical dramas differ from the cycles in both scope and content. While the liturgical dramas follow the feasts contained within the liturgical calendar, the cycles step out of that calendar. The cyclical structure of the Corpus Christi plays emphasized the unity of divine action across the entire history of human existence, as over and against the individual episodes represented by the liturgical dramas.

These episodes were chosen to dramatize events in their occasional position in the liturgical calendar. According to Chambers, in the season around Epiphany, for example, the *Officium Stellae* was performed from about the tenth century in Rouen and Limoges (2:45). This play dramatizes the events surrounding the visit of the three Magi to the manger. In its more complex versions, such as those of Rouen and Fleury, this play is expanded to include scenes of Herod interviewing the Magi and his rage against them after being tricked. According to Woolf,

Whilst the characterisation of Herod in the vernacular cycles cannot be reduced to the simple influence of liturgical drama, it would be perverse not to allow that the indications of Herod's rage in the twelfth century version of the *Officium stellae*

might have provided the germ of the idea. (23)

While Kolve disputes the connection between the liturgical dramas and the Corpus Christi cycles, Woolf is willing to grant that the one influenced the other and uses this particular episode as an example. The kind of influence suggested by Woolf—that while there is not a one-to-one relationship between the cycles and the liturgical plays, their existence encouraged the development of the cycles—is what I would like to stress here. This is an important connection to my discussion because if the cycles develop through the liturgical plays, which are connected to the Mass, and they in turn develop out of the tropes, which are even more integrally attached to the sacrament, then the cycles can be seen as an extension of that rite.

This liturgical drama is also important because it includes the use of a scenic prop in the form of a star (*stellae*), and because it ultimately becomes joined to the *Officium Pastores* (Shepherds' play), which of course becomes the model for the cycle plays of the same theme. The use of the “star” as a scenic prop is different from the use of the Host or cross in the *Visitatio* or *Depositio*. In this use of staging, the liturgical drama steps out of the sacred symbolism of the Host or cross and moves closer to representational drama. The *stella* is a symbol for the star that leads the Magi to the newborn Christ, but its symbolism, unlike that of the sanctified Host used in the *Visitatio*, is disconnected from the sacred rite. The determinate sensible object (in Aquinas's words) used in the presentation of the play is no longer connected to the matter of the sacrament. Also, when joined to the shepherds' play, the *Stella* begins to show the tendency toward a more

comprehensive treatment of Biblical sources, a movement that Bevington suggests began sometime in the twelfth century. As the liturgical plays become more elaborate in their mimetic representation and in their scope, they begin to display the growth necessary for the cycles.

The cycles develop out of two different impulses. On the one hand, there is the general human inclination toward mimetic representation. This is Chambers's hypothesis, which is borne out by the fact that between the tenth and twelfth centuries there was an explosion in the number of scenes represented by liturgical dramas.¹⁸ On the other hand, the impulse toward a cyclical form must have been due in part by the establishment of the Feast of Corpus Christi in 1311. How does a cycle that represents events from creation to doomsday celebrate the Corpus Christi feast for which it is named? Scholars, including Kolve, have concentrated on the typological connection in the content of the cycles as related to the life of Christ.

The Feast of Corpus Christi was established to celebrate the supreme gift of the sacrifice of the Mass. Therefore, the cycles, instituted as part of this celebration, must, as Kolve argues, incorporate within their structure and content a mimetic representation of both the life of Christ and typologically connected Biblical scenes. Kolve focuses his analysis of the cycles on the method of selection for these scenes. If the cycles do, in fact, represent the history of mankind from creation to doomsday, they must do it symbolically, choosing to represent only specific scenes which are typologically related to

¹⁸ "The evolution of the liturgical play," Chambers suggests, "may be fairly held to have been complete about the middle of the thirteenth century" (2.69). Leading up this completion there is a rapid expansion of

the more general history embodied in the rest of the Bible and which connect to the sacrament of the Mass.

Since the 1960s, studies of the development of medieval drama take Chambers and Young to task on a number of fronts. O.B. Hardison¹⁹ saw the then “orthodox” view expressed by Young and Chambers as flawed primarily by the influence of Darwinian evolutionary theory. Hardison argues “that in the ninth century the boundary that Chambers and Young posited between religious ritual (the services of the Church) and drama did not exist. Religious ritual *was* the drama of the early Middle Ages and had been ever since the decline of the classical theater” (viii). He argues against the idea of plugging the development of a literary form into notions of organic evolution, where there is a movement from a simpler to a more complex structure.

His argument against both Chambers and Young is twofold. First, if the *Quem quaeritis* developed (or rather, evolved) like an organism, then its earliest appearance would be the simplest and its latest would be the most complex, and this is not, according to Hardison, what the evidence indicates. Second, the *Quem quaeritis* cannot represent a break from the “non-dramatic” Mass, from which vernacular drama would develop, since the Mass itself was already dramatic. However, the distinction between drama and ritual, as I have been arguing and Bevington suggests, is a “paradoxical distinction like that separating day from night: although ritual and drama differ profoundly from one another,

the themes and occasions celebrated by liturgical dramas.

¹⁹ See O. B. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*, and Peter Meredith in “The York Cycle and the Beginning of Vernacular Religious Drama in England” for some of the counter arguments to the Chambers/Young view.

the precise point of demarcation between the two is inherently obscure” (8). The difficulty of this distinction is further problematized by the fact that ritual always seems to include dramatic elements.

In the Mass, the system of resemblances is further complicated by the idea of reproducing a very specific desired effect that has already taken place and the belief that the current event does not so much resemble the initial sacrifice, but rather renews it. In this sense, the drama engendered inherently by ritual can never become purely or wholly dramatic, and this is particularly true for a ritual which is seen not so much to represent a hoped for event, but to actually *be* the event itself. While the ritual is presented as a drama, it cannot be considered a pure dramatic form. It has been argued for centuries that the Mass itself does represent an early form of Christian drama. In the ninth century, Amalarius, bishop of Metz, whom Hardison reads as initiating an allegorical and therefore dramatic interpretation of the Mass, writes in the preface to *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*:

Sacraments should have similitude to some part of the matter that makes them sacraments. Therefore, the priest is similar to Christ just as the bread and the wine are similar to the body of Christ. Thus, the priest is sacrificed on the altar in a different way than Christ was sacrificed on the cross. (qtd. in Young 81)²⁰

In this configuration the priest (*sacerdos*) takes on the role of Christ in imitation, in a manner similar, but clearly different from the way the bread and the wine become the

²⁰ *Sacramenta debent habere similitudinem aliquam earum rerum quarum sacramenta sunt. Quadpropter, similis sit sacerdos Christo, sicut panis et liquor similia sunt corpori Christi. Sic est immolatio sacerdos in*

symbols of Christ's resurrected body and blood. The resemblance between the priest and Christ is at a different level from the similitude between the bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ. The condition of the priest in relation to the host is analogous to the relationship between ritual and drama. The priest stands as a symbol of Christ, as do the bread and wine, but his condition in this arrangement is purely representational; he is not in any way substantively transformed. However, it is within his role as the representative of Christ and in imitation of Him that the priest echoes His words and thereby transforms the Host. The consecrated Host, however, is at once a symbol for the risen Christ and His literal presence on earth. Analogously, ritual works to materially alter the physical characteristics of an object, where drama serves to merely represent. The Mass, like any ritual, must by necessity contain representational elements, which can be defined as drama, but these elements exist only in the service of its transformational purpose. The Corpus Christi cycles, because they are so closely linked to the Mass, in their development and their stated aim, share some of its power.

Young contends that, "what [Amalerius'] subsequent treatise really conveys, however, is a congeries of suggestion as to ways in which liturgical details may be regarded as *symbols* of biographical episodes of Christ's life" (82). Here, Young emphasizes the symbolic nature of the Mass as over and against its mimetic or dramatic qualities. Young's emphasis may seem to show an either/or approach to the question of whether the Mass was dramatic or ritualistic; however, neither Young nor Chambers is prepared to completely discount the dramatic elements of the Mass altogether. In fact, for

alteri quodammodo ut Christi immolatio in cruce. [My translation]

Chambers:

The dramatic tendencies of Christian worship declared themselves at an early period. At least from the fourth century, the central and most solemn rite of that worship was the Mass, *an essentially dramatic commemoration* of one of the most critical moments in the life of the Founder. It is his very acts and words that day by day throughout the year the officiating priest resumes in the face of the people.

And when the conception of the Mass developed until instead of *a mere symbolical commemoration it was looked upon as an actual repetition of the initial sacrifice*, the dramatic character was only intensified. [emphasis added] (3)

Despite what they see as the essentially dramatic character of the sacrament, however, Chambers and Young focus on its ritualistic elements.

They see the early church as suppressing the natural mimetic tendencies of humanity and as ultimately responsible for the collapse of classical theater. Chambers, particularly, spends a considerable part of his comprehensive study, *The Medieval Stage*, tracing the last vestiges of “the mimetic instinct, which no race of mankind is without,” (1) after the fall of the classical stage. It is in the context of the break from Greek and Roman influence that Chambers plots the development of medieval drama. It is a development that progresses from the liturgical to the vernacular and toward Shakespeare and the Renaissance. For both Chambers and Young, the final step into the Renaissance represents a new break with tradition rather than a last step in an evolutionary progression. Hardison sees this presumed break in development as an essential and

obvious flaw in the “evolutionary” theories of both Chambers and Young.

Dramatic Performatives

The essential difficulty in assessing the ritual versus the dramatic nature of the Mass and their respective influence in the later development of vernacular/secular drama can be overcome in the context of performative speech acts. Bevington argues,

even well-developed liturgical plays were committed to the literal truth of Christ’s real presence among men; the Visit to the Sepulcher was not intended as a mere imitation of an action but as a demonstration of the living reality of Christ’s resurrection, performed in a style that remained highly formal and symbolic rather than mimetic. (7)

In the *visitatio*, which represents an expansion of the Easter *Quem queritis* trope, the dramatic elements present in the Mass begin to break loose from their sacramental mooring. The “literal truth of Christ’s real presence” is demonstrated through enactment. The Corpus Christi plays are intended as an extension of the demonstration of this “literal truth” throughout divine history. As such, the cycles, like the *Visitatio* and the *Depositio*, remained committed to the revelation of truth hidden by empirical reality. If we accept Hardison’s premise that the distinction between ritual and drama was not available during the Middle Ages, we are left with a rather consistent structure. The sacramental elements always present in the Mass are performative. The intent of the ritual, unlike drama, is to perform an actual physical act, the transubstantiation of the

Host (“the literal truth of Christ’s real presence”); it is never meant to be representational or purely mimetic drama. While the gestures, antiphons and dialogues are meant to prepare the way for the consecration and could be considered dramatic in that they present an event in dialogue and action, they would never be properly called *ludi* (plays). The central speech act of the Mass is its most clearly performative element; however, all of the speech acts leading to this moment of transformation are preparatory to it. The prayers leading up to the consecration set the conventional context for its central performative speech act. As in a wedding, where a number of contextual circumstances must be established before the final pronouncement of the couple as married, the words of consecration exist in a series of speech acts that ultimately will result in the transformation of the Host.

The priest represents the language and movements of Christ symbolically, but he could never be said to be “playing” Christ (within church doctrine, such “play” would be sacrilegious). The distinction between this sacramental use of the dramatic and actual drama can be made clearer if we examine Kolve’s view of the purpose of the cycles:

The aim of the Corpus Christi drama was to celebrate and elucidate, never, not even temporarily, to deceive. It played action in “game”—not in “errest”—within a world set apart, established by convention and obeying rules of its own. A lie designed to tell the truth about reality, the drama was understood as significant play. (32)

This conception of the role of the cycle plays accords with Kubiak’s distinction between

ritual and drama, quoted by Beckwith, where the relationship between representation and reality are inverted in drama and ritual. In the case of the Corpus Christi plays, however, there is a twist on this theme. The usual pattern of theater is slightly altered, since the cycles are intended to make clear the necessity of the sacraments. The usual theatrical context asks its audience to accept its obvious ficticity as real, and to a certain extent this is also true of the mystery plays. The average citizen attending the plays must have been aware that the actors representing Biblical characters were not in fact those characters. However, in their relationship to the sacrament and their position within the sacramental system, the cycles assume some of the inversion of ritual suggested by Kubiak. If they are a “lie designed to tell the truth about reality,” they ask their audience to accept that objective reality is not what it appears to be and that there are universal truths underlying that apparent reality. If the cycles “played action in ‘game,’” the Mass depicted the truth of the sacrifice and real presence of Christ in “earnest,” but the “game” existed to endorse and authorize the earnestness of the sacrament. To do so, the plays must include some of its power in their presentation, and to do this language in the plays functions performatively.

Development of Vernacular Drama

Essentially two possible developmental structures emerge in this debate. If we accept the Chambers and Young schema or the Woolf structure, the *Quem quaeritis*, which may have begun life as a trope for the *Introit* of Matins on Easter Sunday,²¹ either

²¹ The position of the trope within the Easter Mass depends on which exemplar is accepted as original. The

becomes “complete drama” in and of itself or becomes more and more elaborate and takes on more and more dramatic elements. These elements become less reliant on their liturgical underpinnings and ultimately progress from inside the church, to the church grounds, and finally to the public square. While there are some differences on this point between Chambers and Young, their analyses of this development involves a gradual movement from inside to outside the church. Their difference is that Young and Chambers read the development as taking place within Latin liturgical drama, whereas Woolf sees liturgical and vernacular dramas developing simultaneously out of the Easter and Christmas *Quem quaeritis* tropes and the *Visitatio sepulchri*.

From Hardison’s viewpoint, the Mass itself is the precursor to the development of both vernacular and liturgical drama, and there is no evolutionary development that leads from a simple to a complex form. In this scheme, the progression is a haphazard one, with forward movement complicating previous exemplars at times and at others simplifying them. In either case, there is some development of dramatic elements, and the Mass and its ritualistic elements influence this development either directly or indirectly. This second point is the most important in our current discussion. Since the action of the Mass could be seen as dramatic in nature while its function is primarily ritualistic, any influence of the Mass on vernacular drama permits a translation of its performative power. Medieval vernacular drama, particularly the Corpus Christi cycles, whether evolved from Latin liturgical plays, directly from the Mass, or the *Quem*

origin of the *Quem quaeritis* is debatable. Chambers and Young both see the St. Gall (950) as the original, but Hardison follows Edith Wright’s suggestion “that Limoges [923 CE?] is the original and St. Gall a

quaeritis, use the performative power of the Mass and reveal in this usage the epistemological system which allowed language this performative power.

Whether or not we accept the Chambers position that in the *Quem quaeritis* liturgical drama was complete, it provides an ideal locus for examining the development of vernacular drama in the Middle Ages. The simplest, and most widely accepted (although for Hardison not the earliest) version of the trope occurs in St. Gall as a trope before the *Introit* of the Mass of Easter, in about 950. The St. Gall version reads:

Question: Whom do you seek in the tomb, followers of Christ?

Answer: Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, oh heavenly one.

He is not here, He has risen, as he predicted; Go, announce that He has risen from the tomb. [my translation] (Bevington 26)²²

The structure of this simplest version of the trope already carries within it obvious dramatic elements. It assumes at least two speakers in dialogue and implies a mimetic representation of an event through dramatic action. As an independent object it must be considered purely dramatic; however, when attached to the Mass, as it is in the St. Gall manuscript, its intention is not to simply represent the resurrection of Christ, but to prepare the way for the consecration. In its location before the *Introit* and during the blessing of the church and other preparatory prayers, the trope serves a cleansing function to allow the pure spirit of Christ to enter. This is emphasized by the last word of the

simplified copy" (Hardison 183).

²² Interrogatio: Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, Christicolae?

Responsio: Jesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o caelicolae.

Non est hic, surrexit sicut praedixerat; ite, nuntiate quia surrexit de sepulchro.

trope, *Resurrexi* (I am risen, not *He* is risen), which sets the stage for the phrase: *Introit ad altare Dei*, spoken by the officiating priest, and signifying the solemn entrance to the altar of God, which would occur immediately after. Here, the priest takes on the role of Jesus and shows that he has been adequately prepared to say Mass through the *Asperges me* and *Vidi aquam* prayers which have preceded the trope.

In this simple form, deacons or minor clergy would have spoken the trope, but as previously stated, only their clerical vestments and typical church equipment are indicated for use as costumes and stage properties. This scene is made more dramatic by its incorporation into the *Visitatio sepulchri* where the physical space, furniture and properties of the church would be more fully exploited to dramatic effect. As Woolf has put it, “for reasons that have nothing to do with literature, the Church had in its structure and liturgy conditions from which drama might accidentally develop” (5). In the *Visitatio*, the Host (or a cross), which had been deposited (or “buried”) into a “sepulcher” on Good Friday, would represent the crucified Christ. On Easter Sunday, three members of the clergy would take the roles of the three Marys, as a fourth would portray the angel at the sepulcher. When the three arrive at the sepulcher, the “angel” would ask the question and the others would respond according to the trope. When the “Marys” look into the sepulcher, they find that the host or cross has been removed; this is a symbol of the risen Christ. Since the *Depositio* and the *Visitatio* were performed in a space just outside the church, the movement accords with Chambers and Young’s scheme of a physical and figurative movement out of the church.

In the Fleury example of the *Visitatio* (ca. 1550), the dialogue and other dramatic elements are much more elaborate than in the St. Gall trope. It begins with the Marys lamenting the loss of their Lord and searching for spices and oils with which to anoint the body of Christ, and includes a “race” to the sepulcher by the Apostles Peter and John. What may have begun as a simple three-line trope, with at most four speakers, is here expanded to more than eighty lines with intricate stage directions and costuming. However, it remains fixed to its liturgical occasion, since, as Bevington indicates, “performance takes place at the end of Easter matins” (39 n1).

The same kind of expansion takes place in the Fleury Christmas service of the same time. The Christmas version of the *Quem quaeritis* trope begins exactly as its Easter precursor, with the Marys replaced by shepherds and the sepulcher replaced by a manger. As with the Easter trope, an angel standing nearby asks the shepherds for whom they seek and shows them where the child Jesus is lying with his mother. The joyousness of the Christmas season allowed a more festive approach to the dramatic representation. Therefore, the expansion was not confined to a single occasion, but represented other Biblical scenes in the early life of Christ. According to Bevington, “the Fleury play of Herod, sung presumably at the end of matins on Epiphany, shows a tendency of twelfth-century Christmas drama toward rapid expansion and the inclusion of materials from different feast days of the Christmas season” (52). This view closely follows Chambers’s evolutionary development, as Chambers also sees the Christmas season as the principal site for expansion of the liturgical drama. This expansion shows a more

complex, dramatic and mimetic representation, but remains tied to the liturgical language of ritual, a language whose purpose is performative. If the cycles develop from these models and out of this impulse, their language remains connected to this performative function.

The expansion of Biblical materials used for dramatic representation in these occasional plays may not yet show a tendency toward the cycle, but *do* show a tendency toward more extensive treatment of the scriptural sources. While both Bevington and Hardison argue against the development of the cycles from the liturgical dramas, they place, I believe, too much emphasis on a direct line of descent. Bevington, for example, considers “most important of all,” in the argument against a development from liturgical drama to cycles of plays, that “church drama did not dramatize many of the stories that were to be included in the cycles” (228). This seems an unnecessary requirement on the hypothesis. First, many of the episodes that would become part of the cycles were indeed represented in their liturgical occasions. Second, since the selection process required choosing Biblical episodes that develop a typological structure between Old Testament exempla and the life of Christ, this is precisely the development necessary for the movement from occasional liturgical drama to the cyclic form. As Prosser argues, “The cycles were not compiled by a loose following of chronology, from Creation to Judgment. Episodes have been carefully selected to fulfill a strictly theological theme: man’s fallen nature and the way of his salvation” (*Drama* 23). Salvation is of course predicated on mankind’s understanding of its fallen state and more importantly on the state of grace

offered by the incarnation, sacrifice and resurrection of Christ. This careful selection of episodes is designed, Prosser further argues, to drive home the idea of repentance, which like the sacrament of the altar was performed through language (24). In order to drive this point home the plays relied on this careful selection of episodes many of which, particularly those of the Old Testament, were not represented by the Latin liturgical plays.

The theory that the cycles evolve out of the liturgical plays does not require a one-to-one relationship between them. The thesis, after all, is not that the liturgical dramas became cyclical and were then translated to vernacular languages, but that the cycles developed *out* of the liturgy, more in keeping with Woolf's line of reasoning. This movement out of the liturgy requires, precisely, that episodes previously not represented in liturgical drama, and on their occasions in the liturgical calendar, be incorporated into cyclical representation. Since liturgical drama had never had a cyclical form, the cycles, in order to fulfill their proposed aims, in a sense, had to close the circle. This cyclical expansion would also explain the exclusion of episodes that had been presented as part of the occasional nature of liturgical drama, but which did not comfortably fit into a cycle structure based on this careful typological arrangement. Kolve's principal argument revolves precisely around how the writers and organizers of the Corpus Christi cycles determined which episodes to include for representation. If there was no liturgical play for the chosen episode, it would necessitate that one be created. Woolf, as I have said, suggests that while the liturgical plays influence the cycles, they were not direct sources for them. Kolve all but rejects the influence of the liturgical plays on the cycles and

suggests that while the Latin liturgical plays were widespread throughout medieval Europe, and there was a broad variety of episodes dramatized, these two conditions did not exist simultaneously in any one locale. Thus, there was no locality where the variety of liturgical plays showed a tendency toward the cyclic form of the Corpus Christi plays. His conclusion is that “the influence of the liturgy on the cycle-drama was direct—akin to that of the Vulgate and the vernacular religious poems—but it is unlikely that the Latin drama of the Church was often the midwife at its birth” (41). We need not reject the influence of the liturgical drama out of hand, but I would assert, following Kolve, that the most direct influence on the Corpus Christi drama is the liturgy itself. I see the liturgical drama as motivating the development of dramatic representation, though not necessarily as a direct source for the cycles.

Corpus Christi Cycles

The development of the Corpus Christi cycles in England is important to my general discussion because within it we can see a movement from the strictly sacramental/transformative nature of language in the Mass to a more mimetic, and therefore more commemorative, usage in the plays. The relationship of the cycles to the Mass, as I have been arguing, is more complex than just a mimetic representation of the ritual of the Mass. The plays do more than just simulate the action of the Mass. While their function was to venerate the sacrament as the ongoing manifestation of the greatest gift from God, the influence of the Corpus Christi cycles went far beyond the celebration instituted in the feast.

As Kolve sees it, it was necessary that the content of the feast celebration be related to a symbolically comprehensive view of human history, precisely because of its position in the liturgical calendar. We may see in this dislocation within the liturgical year one of the reasons why the liturgical drama, which according to Bevington had “tended to remain static during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries,” (228) suddenly moved toward the cyclical form in the Corpus Christi cycles.

Kolve clearly indicates the importance of the cycles to the medieval audience and its relationship to the sacraments, including the Mass:

In the Middle Ages, sacraments existed which could bring man to heaven—that was confidently believed—but their efficacy for any man depended in part upon his understanding something of their meaning, which is to say, their authorization by Christ, their necessity, and their future consequence. God had made man a rational creature that he might “know” Him and share in that way the bliss of heaven. Before the Fall, such knowing had been immediate and without obstruction; with the Fall, that perfection of knowledge, that intimacy and likeness, was lost. Instruction became necessary, and in this enterprise the medieval Church relied on confessional teaching, sermons, wall paintings, stained glass, and in certain parts of England, a drama that showed the history of the world. (3)

We could see the necessity of knowing God and understanding the sacraments as consonant with St. Augustine’s preference for belief over understanding. Yet, in order to

reach that belief, as Kolve makes clear here, some understanding is necessary. The plays then become very effective tools of instruction and perhaps, as Lauren Lepow argues, “aspects of the plays’ language, themes, and organization may be examined as possible embodiments of counter-Lollard forces” (12). Lepow sees the plays as answering the criticism of Lollards, who questioned the “spectacular” nature of the Mass, by showing the evidence for the necessity of the sacrament. If we accept Lepow’s position, the plays were meant to answer Lollard criticisms of the Mass and simultaneously to instruct worshipers as to the available evidence for the necessity of the sacrament. In them, the populace could see, in a *tableau vivant*, relevant scriptural evidence for the establishment of the sacraments that would allow them to reach heaven. Especially important was the notion of typological connection between the Old and New Testaments.

This typological relationship predominates throughout the cycles. As M.D. Anderson posits in her book *Drama and Imagery in English Medieval Churches*, which reads the context and staging of the cycles through surviving church iconography,

Typology was unquestionably the dominant factor which determined what Old Testament subjects should be shown in imagery, but literary historians sometimes ignore it. Dr. Hardin Craig writes of the sacrifice of Isaac in the *Chester Plays* “the choice of this great subject was merely formal, or accidental” whereas in the context of imagery such as the east window of the Corona at Canterbury, it appears as the essential antetype of the Crucifixion, God’s sacrifice of His own Son to redeem Mankind. (45)

Typology is important because it helps to demonstrate the truth of the sacrament and its necessity as part of the sacramental system that would insure salvation for believers. This typological arrangement is not restricted to imagery, but is obviously made clear in the plays themselves both in content and probable staging.

The closest typological association represented in the cycles is this near sacrifice of Isaac. Lepow reads Abraham's actions as representing those of a "protopriest." "God appears and commands the sacrifice of Isaac; the remainder of the play presents Abraham in a sacerdotal role as he enacts his obedience" (73). Abraham's sacerdotal role is itself a proleptic typology, since the play tells the story of Abraham in full awareness of its perfected type. The typological arrangement requires a level of anachronism by definition, since a figure representing a type pre-dates the fulfillment of the type, however, these connections are rendered curiously anachronistic by the cycle plays wherein these figures are represented as wholly aware the connection. Throughout the cycles there are repeated anachronisms of this kind that both signal and fulfill their typological structure. As Abraham is a priest before there were priests, his perfect obedience assures the audience of priestly goodness and foreshadows Christ's own priesthood. At the same time, Isaac shows his own perfect obedience and willingness to sacrifice himself in deference to both his priestly father and God. While this willingness to suffer prefigures Christ's passion, Isaac may simultaneously denote the obedient Christian community, which will never be forsaken by God. The lamb, which is sacrificed in his stead, then becomes a symbol for Christ who will indeed be sacrificed to

rescue humanity. According to Lepow, “[t]he final tableau, grouping priest, parishioner, and *Agnus*, would sharply prefigure the Mass” (74). The scriptural source already contains this imagery, but the play provides a typological interpretation that makes its connection to Christ and thereby to the Mass overt.

At the moment before the ultimately aborted sacrifice of Isaac in the York Cycle, Isaac suggests to Abraham that he should bind his feet and hands,

I am ferde that yoe sall fynde

My force youre forward to withstande.

Therefore is beste that ye me bynde

In bandis faste, boothe fute and hande. (Play IV.211-14)

Bound in this fashion, Isaac more faithfully represents the crucifixion of Jesus, of which he is the figure. His words, too, echo, or more accurately presage, the condition of Jesus at the cross:

Nowe whillis I am in myght and mynde

So sall yoe saffely make offerrande,

For fadir, when I am boune

My myght may noght avayle. (Play IV.215-18)

In saying “My might may noght avayle” Isaac signals his typological connection to Christ and His willingness to suppress His great might, for despite Christ’s omnipotent power, as God, He is prepared to be offered for sacrifice to redeem humanity, as is Isaac in this scene. This is the same sacrifice Christ is willing to renew on a daily basis in the Mass.

The typological bond between Isaac, as the representative of Christ, on the one hand, and an obedient Christian servant, on the other, signals the relationship between God and humanity generally and Christ as the physical incarnation of God on earth more specifically. The physical binding figures a metaphysical holding back of His great power, whereas Isaac permits a withholding of his own physical power against his father's sword. In word and action the figural connection between Isaac and Christ is illustrated in the play for medieval viewers who easily saw the relationship of this near sacrifice, Christ's actual sacrifice and that offered in the Eucharist. The medieval view that through typology concretized the relationship between the passion of Christ and the consecrated host is contrary to the modern view. According to the Prosser,

To the modern Christian, Christ crucified is for the most part an abstraction—an abstraction, to be sure, with real meaning in human experience. Nonetheless, the dead body is conceived of as a symbol. ... To the audience at York—the audience that the critic must try not only to understand but also to respect as he stands among them—the Biblical stories were factual history. The York Crucifixion was more than a colorful act of communal devotion, more than an historic pageant. It was the living truth, both past and present. (*Drama* 14)

Obviously, the original audience of the cycles would have had a very different reaction to the presentation of the plays from that of the modern scholar. In the medieval audience's experience, the typology, which points to this final culmination of Christ's passion, is plainly seen not as an abstraction but as a physical presence—as the "living truth."

This typological structure works on several levels at once. While Isaac is meant to represent Christ at the moment before the sacrifice, his sacrifice is never carried through. Isaac then becomes the representative of the ultimate salvation of faithful Christians. The animal that is sent by God to substitute for Isaac's "offerrande" is most often identified in the cycles as a lamb, whereas in the Old Testament it is a ram. The lamb, one of the symbols most closely associated with Christ, becomes a different kind of figure for Christ. Isaac, then, becomes the antitype of the lamb, which in turn becomes the antitype of Christ as the substituted sacrifice. The lamb, of course, is symbolically tied to the Passover lamb, which further connects the story to the feast of the Eucharist.

The consecrated Host of the Mass is the perfected type of Christ's sacrifice. While it may seem counter-intuitive to suggest that the sacrifice of the Mass is a more perfect one than that of Christ's initial sacrifice, through this renewed ritual the Christian community is brought to salvation. Christ's initial sacrifice becomes retroversionally the symbol of what will ultimately be the continued sacrifice He is willing to make daily within the office of the Mass. Its chief function is to re-perform the initial sacrifice. The dramatic and mimetic aspects of the Mass are more fully explored in the plays, but in each case the purpose is to show a clear example of the relationship between the sacrament and scripture. In this context, the plays take part in the performative power of language inherent in the Mass. The typological structure serves to ground the plays within sacramental and scriptural language, from which they may draw performative power. Their allusion to the sacrament and scriptural human history gives the plays

authority to use this power. The plays use direct interpretive cues internally to demonstrate their didactic function in authorizing this power.

As elsewhere in the Chester cycle, an expositor enters the play to insist on these typological connections. After Isaac has been saved by God's provision of a sacrificial lamb, the expositor says:

Lordinges, this significatyon

of this deede of devotyon—

and yee will, yee wytt mon—

may torne you myche good.

This deede yee seene done here in this place,

in example of Jesus done yt was,

that for to wynne mankind grace

was sacrificed one the roode. (Play IV.460-67)

The Chester cycle, here as in other Old Testament scenes—such as the story of Melchizedek, to which I will turn in a moment—seems not to rely on the dramatic presentation to press its point but instead uses declarative statements that are to be taken as universal truths. The expository explication of a scene just dramatized is not performative in a technical sense; it is in fact a constative proposition; however, it helps to reaffirm the condition and function of language as a performative tool.

In explaining the “significatyon/ of this deede of devotyon,” the expositor’s statement obviously determines the significance of the scene, but more importantly,

because of its typological arrangement, it shows the authority of the sacrifice of the altar. The cycle plays similarly rely on declarative statements as identifying tags for characters, rather than on costuming or imitative action. Throughout the plays, characters announce their identity for the audience. Again, this is not exactly a performative act, but can be read as such. When, for example, in the Chester play, Balaack introduces himself by saying, "I Balaack, kinge of Moab land,/all Israell and I had in hand," (Play V.89-90) his speech serves to identify the character. In a certain sense, this structure constitutes the "theatrical ontology" alluded to by Beckwith. Within the theatrical world of the play, Balaack exists because the actor makes this identificatory statement, and this speech act theatrically creates the reality it names. Although the statement is generally declarative, it can be understood to mean, "I proclaim that I am Balaack." As a speech act within the play, this proclamation has the illocutionary, and in a sense ontological, force of creating the character for the audience. Unlike a realist play, where mimetic resemblances, such as costuming and imitative action, transform the actor into the character, in the cycles these specific identificatory statements perform this function. This device would appear to be heavy-handed in a secular play, but in theater of Corpus Christi it is important that the audience be absolutely clear about roles the actors play. Since its function is more didactic than literary, this identification cannot be left up to the interpretation of the audience. This identificatory technique is used to very different effect in the play of "Antichrist" in the same cycle. Antichrist falsely identifies himself as Christ when he says,

Your saviour nowe in your sight
 here may you saffelye see.
 Messias, Christ, and most of might,
 that in the lawe was you beheight,
 all mankind to joye to dight
 ys commen, for I am hee. (Play XX.11-16)

Given that other characters announce their true identity in this fashion, Antichrist's false declaration might seem rather confusing. It is so for the four kings in the play, who, after some proof from Antichrist, accept him as God. The proof that he is not is given quite subtly at first. The reward he offers "For all that will leeve me upon" is "worldlye welth" (233-34), not eternal life. Soon his attempt to impersonate Christ becomes parodic as his claims to great might begin to sound more and more like the boasts of Lucifer. The kings, however, happy with the gifts they receive from him, fail to recognize the trick. Ultimately, Enoch and Elijah are sent from heaven to expose the Antichrist as a fiend and deal with him.

Antichrist's displays of power prove convincing to the people until Elijah reveals that they:

were no myracles but marvells things
 that thowe shewed unto these kynges
 through the fyendes crafte.
 And as the flower nowe springes,

falleth, fadeth, and hanges,
 so do thy joye; nowe raygues
 that shalbe from the rafte. (Play XXIII.410-16)

Elijah here shows the power of the devil to deceive humanity while putting Antichrist on notice that he will be exposed. Antichrist insists, however, that his conjuring was indeed miraculous and that, "Of my godhead I made thee wyse/ and sett thee ever at micle pryse" (424-5). In order to assure the people that this convincing fiend is not Christ as he insists, Enoch suggests a test:

Bringe forth those men here in our sight
 that thou has reysed against the right.
 Yf thou bee so micle of might
 to make them eate and drynke,
 for very God we will thee knowe
 such a sing yf thou wylt shewe,
 and doe thee reverence on a rowe
 all at thy linkynge. (545-52)

Antichrist accepts the challenge, which has at its heart the image of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Before he will let the two corpses Antichrist has raised from the grave eat the bread, Elijah must bless it by saying,

This bread I blesse with my hand
 in Jesus name, I understand,

the which is lord of the sea and land
 and kinge of heaven on hie.
 In nomine Patris—that all hath wrought—
 et Filii virginis—that dear us bought—
 et Spiritus Sancti—ys all my thought—
 on God and persons three. (569-76)

Once the bread has been consecrated, the fiends cannot abide it. The formula shows an affinity with the Eucharistic miracle stories, which often included Jews attempting to desecrate the Host.²³ The effect of the play is to act as a warning about the deceitful nature of the devil in the form of the Antichrist. It is also a metaphor for the way to salvation, which can only be achieved through the body of Christ in the form of the Eucharist. The Host becomes a litmus test for those who are saved. The Mass is also figured in this speech act, which in its Latin expression also emphasizes the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Latin words used in Elijah's speech act are simple and familiarly associated with the Mass where the medieval Christian would have heard them again and again. The combination of the dramatic presentation mostly in English and the validation of the power of the Eucharist with these simple and familiar Latin expressions, allowed the audience an understanding of the sacrament that could justify their belief. Since the ritual

²³ According to Miri Rubin, "Stories of abuse by Jews proliferated from the late thirteenth century, eventually replacing the tales which had survived from the early Middle Ages and which spoke of blind doubt and ridicule rather than vicious and intended abuse" (126). See also Greenblatt and Gallagher, "The Wound in the Wall," in *Practicing New Historicism* (75-109).

was not performed in vernacular language, the plays were the only site where the medieval laity could hear a semblance of the language of the supreme performative power of the Mass. In this sense, the plays go beyond the didactic function suggested by both Kolve and Lepow. In the play of Abraham and Isaac, the laity could clearly see the typological connection between this story and the sacrifice of Christ, particularly since, given the cycle form, they would soon experience this latter event for themselves in the play of Christ's Passion.

If this overarching typological structure was in any doubt, the Chester Cycle again makes its existence abundantly clear. In it, the story of Abraham and Lot, as they return home from having conquered their enemies, is dramatized preceding the Abraham and Isaac episode. The Biblical source of this story occupies but three short verses.

Melchizedek, the King of Salem, received Abraham and he

brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. (Genesis, 14:18-20)

Melchizedek is presented here as a priest and in the New Testament he becomes a typological symbol for Christ as a priest. According to Cook and Herzman,

This identification of Christ with Melchizedek, both priest and king, is important because Melchizedek becomes an important prefiguration of Christ in medieval art and the liturgy. Furthermore, Christ as priest and king becomes an important

element in the development of theories of spiritual and royal authority” (25).

The Chester Cycle reemphasizes this prefiguration and its connection to the elements of the Mass. The parallel between the bread and wine offered as a thanksgiving by Melchizedek for Abraham’s success and the sacramental bread and wine offered as a resacrifice of Christ in the Mass would have been clear to medieval Christians, but the Chester cycle makes it even clearer. After dramatizing the story the expositor again enters the scene and expands upon the typological connection:

... what may this signifye
 I will expound yt appertly—
 the unlearned standinge herebye
 may knowe what this may bee.
 This present, I say veramente,
 signifieth the newe testamente
 that nowe is used with good intende
 throughout all Christianitye. (Play IV.113-120)

Here both the connection of the old and new law and the reasons for dramatizing it are shown. Melchizedek is cast as a priest as he is in the Old Testament. In this case, he is a protopriest of the New Testament. He performs the very first consecration of bread and wine and offers it as if it were a sacrifice. The importance of dramatizing the scene is for the instruction of those “unlearned standinge herebye.” Through this representation—to return to Kolve—those who were in need of instruction to understand the sacraments

would be made aware of both priestly power and scriptural evidence for the sacrament. Beyond the didactic functions of the play, language functions as a reinscription of the linguistic power of the words of consecration and corroborates the performativity of sacramental speech acts.

The act of tithing—so important in the story of Cain and Abel, where Abel also represents a “proto-priest” according to Lepow—becomes important here as well. Melchizedek’s bread offering follows the rules for cereal sacrifice plainly expressed in Leviticus where the sanctity of the priestly class is made clear by saying, “Thou shall sanctify him therefore; for he offereth the bread of God: he shall be holy unto thee: for I the Lord, which sanctify you, am Holy... He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy” (Leviticus 21: 8, 22). The sanctity of the priestly class, established here, would support the power of priests against the anticlerical attacks of the Lollards, as well as their ability to accept tithes in the name of God. As the first acknowledged priest, Melchizedek institutes the protocol for the ceremony of the Mass, and as a proto-priest, he establishes priestly power to sanctify the ordinary and presages the founding of a priestly class, later to be taken up by Aaron and his sons.²⁴

In the Bible, the movement from a blood sacrifice involving the killing of an animal, as performed by Abraham—once the ram is sent by God—a few verses after Melchizedek’s Eucharistic sacrifice, to a more “perfect” bloodless sacrifice, as

²⁴ The typological structure of Melchizedek as the precursor of all priests and of Christ as priest and king is further emphasized scripturally in the Epistle to the Romans, where Christ is “called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec” (Romans 5:10) and in Hebrews which states: “Observe, in the first place, that his name means the king of justice; and further that he is king of Salem, that is, of peace. That is all; no name of father or mother, no pedigree, no date of birth or of death; there he stands, eternally, a priest, the

established in the New Testament by Christ himself, is intimated in the medieval play:

In the owld lawe, without leasinge,
 when these too good men were livinge,
 of beastes were there offeringe
 and eke there sacramente.
 But synce Christe dyed on roode-tree,
 in brede and wyne his death remember wee;
 and at his laste supper our mandee
 was his commandement. (Play IV.121-128)

This passage spells out the condition of Melchizedek's offering as an antetype of the Mass. The Mass itself becomes the type *in perfectio* of sacrifice. While this story is but a few lines in its Biblical source, in the Chester cycle it occupies more than 140 lines and is interconnected with the story of Isaac's near sacrifice. This expansion of sources helps the cycles to perform their didactic function by making the connections between the old law and the new more palpable. Those unlearned spectators could see the representation of divine history as a coherent unified plan in the mind of God and would thereby understand both the meaning and necessity of the sacramental system that bound their lives as Christians together. The plays are intended to do something; their language represents an extension of the sacramental system that made salvation possible for the Christian community, and created a conventional system that would authorize their belief in the real presence.

true figure of the Son of God" (Heb. 7:1-3).

Finally, the expositor makes the typological connection between Melchizedek and priests and Abraham as the “Father of heaven” crystal clear:

By Abraham understand I maye
the Father of heaven, in good faye;
Mechysedecke, a pryest to his paye
to minister that sacramente
that Christe ordained the foresayde daye
in bred and wyne to honour him aye.

This signifyeth, the sooth to say,

Melchysedeck his presente. (Play IV.137-144)

In this construct, Abraham is cast symbolically as God, the father, and as the obedient servant of God, which he will prove to be in the story of Isaac. While the typological, mimetic, and symbolic aspects of this presentation may seem complex and difficult to interpret, their representation as drama makes these connections clear to the people. Because of this ability to show these complex connections, the plays become instructive tools. Within their presentation medieval Christians could see and learn the necessity and power of the central speech act of the Mass as related to scriptural evidence.

While most medieval Christians believed they lived in the end times, the spectacle of the cycles was presented as coeval with the Biblical events it narrated. In York, as Martin Stevens has shown, “the entry into Jerusalem imitates the civic liturgical

procession, it also mirrors another kind of procession, the royal entry" (52). Stevens uses this civic similitude to underlay the argument in which, "York, the city, becomes a *theatrum mundi*" (30). But the allusion to the physical space of the city does not end with the procession route nor is it exclusive to York. In all of the cycles apparent anachronisms indicate a connection of geographic and chronological contemporaneity of the plays. They exist within what M.M. Bakhtin might refer to as a "chronotope,"²⁵ in that they present a unified time/space. The Shepherds' play is a perfect example. In the Chester Shepherds' play, the third shepherd in describing his store of food says:

And here ale of Halton I have,
 and whot meate I had to my hyer;
 a puddinge may noe man deprave,
 and a jannock of Lancastershyre. (Play VII.117-20)

Later the same night, they will see the bright star declaring the birth of Jesus and wend their way toward Bethlehem. But long before they meet the angel who will tell them, "Christ is borne tonight" (470), they seem fully aware of what they will find there:

Nowe followe we the starre that shines,
 tyll we come to that holy stable.
 To Bethlem boyne the lymes;
 followe we yt withowt any fable. (Play VII.452-55)

²⁵ In "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," Bakhtin develops the concept as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationship that are artistically expressed in literature." (84)

The shepherds seem to know all about Mary, Joseph and Jesus even though Jesus is not yet born. But they seem to know of them with the familiarity of a neighbor. They walk, it seems, from the English countryside to Bethlehem to witness the occurrence of an event with which they are already familiar.

Corpus Christi as Social Force

As dramatic works the cycles had an extraordinarily long run. While it is difficult to accurately date the composition of the full cycles, we can reasonably estimate that they began to be played sometime before 1415 in York, the year for which “there existed in that city a complete descriptive list of all the pageants that were then included in the dramatic procession” (Stevens 13). However, as Martin Stevens asserts, “there is no doubt that the cycles, in one form or another date back in some locations—certainly in York and probably in Chester—to the late fourteenth century” (12). Many other scholars, such as Miri Rubin, argue for this early start to the tradition of the cycles. From this early date until at least 1579, when the York records show that the last performance was produced, the Corpus Christi cycles held sway as the primary dramatic work of the cities in which they were performed.

As the primary mode of dramatic representation for roughly two hundred years, the cycles exerted an enormous amount of social influence. Given their ecclesiastical sources, they contributed to and took part in the general sacramental epistemology of the age. While the function of language within the universe of the cycles is not strictly speaking performative in the same sense that it is in the Mass, it does share some of its

power. But it is a cooperative relationship. The Mass gives the cycles sacramental authority, while the cycles reinforce an understanding and belief of the sacramental system in the hearts and minds of their audiences. This is done through the selection of stories to be presented.

The selection of episodes in the cycles shows a systematic and complex method based primarily on typology. The idea of performing a play that told the story of the history of humanity from creation to doomsday in honor of the most sacred ritual of the church necessitated this kind of symbolic completeness. Yet this completeness relied not on a step-by-step description of the events in scriptural human history, but on very specific thematic structure that elaborated a relationship between humanity and God, and the connection of the sacrifice of the altar to both Old Testament stories and episodes in the life of Christ. The events selected for depiction exemplified this relationship and viewed time as a unified whole in the mind of God.

This unified concept of time is seen in the intricate use of anachrony in the plays. When, for example, in the Wakefield Cycle play of Noah's flood, Uxor, Noah's wife, anachronistically swears in her observation, "We women may wary / all ill husbandis; I haue oone, bi mary! / that lowsyd me of my bandis," it may be taken as an accidental or simplistic use of anachronism. In the play of Abraham and Isaac, Abraham echoes the words of Pilate in judging Christ:

I were leuer than all wardly wyn,

That I had fon hym onys vnkynde,

Bot no defawt I faund, hym in:

I wold be dede for hym, or pynde;

To slo hym thus, I thynk grete syn,

So rufull wordys I with hym fynd. (Play IV.217-222)

There is considerably more at work here than a mere anachronistic error. Abraham simultaneously takes on the roles of priest, executioner and judge. If Isaac is typologically cast as a precursor of Christ, then it is important that Abraham find him guiltless. It would not be typologically sufficient if Isaac were sacrificed for some previous sin. Abraham, as the symbol of God the Father, must be willing to sacrifice his guiltless son for the sake of mankind in order for the typological arrangement to work.

Both Isaac and Abraham are obedient servants of God. While Abraham may consider the slaughter of his son a “grete syn,” he is nonetheless willing to commit it in obedience to God’s command. Isaac in turn shows an incredible fortitude in accepting his fate, although there are some obvious differences of interpretation on this point between, for example, the York and Wakefield cycles. In the York Cycle, Isaac is staunchly reconciled to his imminent death, while in Wakefield he clearly is more defiant. He asks his father for an explanation of his crime:

Isaac: What haue I done, fader, what haue I saide?

Abraham: Truly, no kyns ill to me.

Isaac: And thus gyltles shall be arayde.

Abraham: Now, good son, let sich wordis be. (Play IV.205-8)

He repeatedly beseeches his father's mercy. In York, Isaac's only question after being informed that he is to be the sacrificed beast is: "Why fadir, will God that I be slayne?" (Play V.189). Once Abraham assures him that this is so, Isaac immediately acquiesces to the deed:

And I sall noght grouche theragayne,
 To wirke his wille I am wele payed;
 Sen it is his desire,
 I sall be bayne to be
 Brittynd and brent in fyre,
 And therfore morne noght for me. (Play V.191-196)

Here, Isaac exemplifies Christian obedience to the Word of God; the proper question is not "what have I done to deserve this," but "is this what God wants of me."

If we read the Mass as representing a literal re-sacrifice, it is typologically connected to the original sacrifice of Christ, which is itself typologically represented in scripture from Abel and Isaac to the slaughter of the innocents. This reading does not preclude the interpretation of the Mass as true sacrifice, for despite its symbolic connection, it can remain a "real" event. The connection between the Old and New Testaments, as embodiment of the Word of God, becomes liturgically represented in the Mass. The Mass is symbol and action, event and teaching; it encompasses within its sacramental structure the history of mankind through the Word of God. This mystical arrangement is explored by all of the Corpus Christi cycles in which there is a

relationship between the power in the language of the Mass and its representation in the plays.

Corpus Christi and Performativity

The plays themselves are not actually performative in the sense that the Mass is, but within them we can recognize the system of sacramental epistemology that obtained throughout the Middle Ages. As dramatic representations of sacramental history that might bring man to salvation, they do in fact perform an action outside of themselves. The plays co-opt a salvific language that engenders ways to know God.

In the Chester cycle this co-option is clearly seen in several places and at several levels. One example of this is the stage directions, which throughout the cycle, with few exceptions, are written in Latin. In making this observation a distinction must be made between the plays as performed and their written text—for obviously the players would not have read the Latin stage directions in performance. However, the association of Latin with the sacred ritual of the church is clear. Furthermore, the use of Latin is not restricted to stage directions. The first Chester play begins with God speaking in Latin, as He does in the other three extant cycles. He says, “Ego sum alpha et oo,/ primus et novissimus” (Play I.1-2). Within the dramatic world of the plays, God’s words have performative power. Rendering his speech in Latin serves to authorize this power. In the Creation play, as in the Bible, God accomplishes his deeds through language.

As He arises from the tomb in the Chester Resurrection play, Jesus makes clear allusion to the power of the Eucharistic sacrifice:

I am verey bread of life.
From heaven I light and am send.
Whoe eateth that bread, man or wiffe,
shall lyve with me witowt end.
And that bread that I you give,
your wicked life to amend,
becomes my fleshe through your beleeffe
and doth release your synfull band. (Play XVIII.170-7)

Here, Christ gives authority to the words of consecration, for the bread which becomes his flesh does so through the performative function of the language of the Mass and is possible only if the community “believes.” Christ also warns anyone who “eateth that bread/ in synne and wicked liffe,” who rather than receive salvation “receaveth his own death” (Play XVIII.178-80). Eucharistic power in this instance cuts both ways; those who truly believe will be redeemed, those who do not will be damned. This is obviously the ultimate lesson that the plays in their didactic function are trying to impart. But, to believe in Him, one must also believe in the power of words to create a physical change in the substance of the bread.

The moment Jesus rises from his tomb in the cycle is one of the most dramatic. The play begins with Pilate, Annas, and Cayphas discussing methods of containing

Christ's body within the sepulcher. The danger and possibility that He will somehow escape them is also discussed. As Pilate enters the scene, we hear him taking on the kind of language that has already, in previous plays, been associated with performative power. This language is shown as genuinely powerful when spoken by an authorized speaker. When spoken by God, for example, there is real power in this language, but when spoken here by Pilate, it is seen as obviously false. In saying:

for I am most fayrest and freshest to fynd
 and most highest I am of estate;
 for I am prynce pereles,
 most royall man of ryches. (Play XVIII.12-14)

Pilate echoes the words of God in the creation play:

For all the meirth of the majesty
 is magnified in me.
 Prince principall, proved
 in my perpetuall provydence, (Play I.20-23)

Pilate's attempt to put on this performative power must result in infelicity under the Austinian speech act schema, since he lacks the authority to make this speech function at a performative level. Lucifer's words in the Chester play also share the false echo of God's performative speech acts. As he begins to sit on God's throne, Lucifer says,

Above greate God I will me guyde
 And set myselfe here; as I wene,

I ame pearlesse and prince of pride,

For God hymselfe shines not so sheene. (Play I.186-89)

For Lucifer to sit in God's throne is symbolic of an attempt to co-opt God's power for himself and reverse the divine hierarchy. Like Pilate, Pharoah and Annas, Lucifer's attempt to use the language of God as self-descriptive will be infelicitous. These utterances are not merely false in the manner of a constative or propositional statement, although it seems to take this form.

These characters lack the authority to give their speech performative power.

Christ, however, has full authority when in the Resurrection play, He says:

I am verey prynce of peace

And kinge of free mercye.

Whoe wyll of synnes have release,

One me the call and crye;

And yf they will of synnes sease,

I grant them peace trulye

And therto a full rych messe

In bread, my owne bodye. (Play XVIII.162-168)

His words take the same general form as Pilate's and Lucifer's, but Christ's words have the authority, context and referent to achieve a transformative power. It is not simply that Pilate's words are false and Christ's are true. In His speech act Christ clearly alludes to the words of the Mass. This represents a linguistic and iconic connection to the

sacraments in general, and that of the altar specifically. Here in the context of the tomb the risen state of Christ is proclaimed not by an absence, as in the *Quem quaeritis*, but by a presence—Christ Himself appears to declare that presence. The prime symbol of Christ’s presence, which in the *Quem quaeritis* and the *Visitatio* is determined by the empty tomb and the discarded funeral shroud, is re-imagined in the play in His palpable presence.

At this moment, there is a unification of the central symbols of the faith. The Chester cycle dramatizes the three principal moments in the life of Christ that for medieval Christians represent the formation of the church; those are the last supper, crucifixion, and resurrection. The last supper is renewed in the central rite of medieval Christianity; the crucifixion is represented in the quintessential icon of the faith—the cross; and the resurrection represents the eternal hope of all Christians. All three are present at the moment of consecration, and, in the play, Christ’s words unite all three moments, not only to each other, but also to all of their typological antecedents. The performative power of these words escapes the boundaries of the pageant stage. It is not that the words of the character playing Christ have performative power, but that the imagined Christ’s words would have this power. In this speech act, Christ promises to redeem mankind through the bread that has become His body. Because the plays were seen as the literal truth, this dramatized promise, made in play, has a binding force. This force goes beyond Austin’s exception of literary language. It helped those “unlearned here” to understand the mechanism through which they would attain salvation and made

the symbols of the faith tangible. As such, these words exert sociological pressure on the populace. The people understood and ultimately believed, because they could see Christ making this promise.

Kolve sees the Corpus Christi plays as a “game,” both in the sense that average citizens would “play” the roles of historical personages as in a game, and also as “play” in the dramatic sense. Wycliffites and Lollards read this kind of play as both superstitious and blasphemous. According to Sarah Beckwith:

Corpus Christi theater became idolatrous when it was regarded as confining the limitless and potent God to the body of an actor, to his mortal gestures and banalizing mimicry, and when the actor’s act was understood to be scandalously imitating rather than gestically signifying God. Religious theater, in a long struggle in which it was the vehicle as well as the object of argument, became profaning by definition...” (3)

The reformers’ arguments, which echoed the earlier arguments of the Lollards and Wyclifites, ironically reinforce the plays’ performative power. In this reading, there is some accounting of the power of language resident in the speech act of the Mass, which has in this interpretation the power to damn. The concerns of the reformers and Wyclifites over the plays’ indecorous treatment of the sacred are illustrated, according to Mervyn James,

in an early fifteenth century Wyclifite critique of the Corpus Christi drama, which both foreshadows the later Protestant criticism and provides a dimension of depth

the latter lack. The Wyclifite preacher presents the plays as essentially rites of reversal. In them, the truths of religion are turned into stage illusions; and in the audience restraint and gravity are dissolved into emotional self-indulgence and enjoyment. (46)

To read the plays as “stage illusions” would have been clearly blasphemous to Catholics as well. If they are read through the inversion of drama by ritual and as an extension of ritual, where rather than illusion the plays elucidate scriptural truth as hidden behind experiential reality, they become not only not blasphemous but pious symbols of Christian faith performed for the benefit of the community. The Wyclifites’ argument against the plays is an extension of their argument against the Mass itself. The traditional Catholic view that the corporeal body of Christ was present in the consecrated host was challenged by Lollards as a reversal of the spiritual truth of Christian faith as early 1395, and according to Keith Thomas, “the enemies of Roman Catholicism fastened upon the magical implications which they saw to be inherent in some fundamental aspects of the Church’s ritual” (51). While the Lollards and Wyclifites attacked the Mass as “conjuraton,” for the orthodox Catholic faithful, the Corpus Christi plays themselves emphasize the transformative power of the Mass by underscoring its sacramental authority and its role in encompassing the whole of divine history. In this structure, the divine history of the world, and time itself, is seen as a unified whole. Within this whole, the language of creation and the language of the Mass are commingled into one kind of force.

We see the power resident in God's thought in the Wakefield Creatio, where God speaks of his power:

All maner thyng is in my thoght,
 Withoutten me ther may be noght,
 ffor all is in my sight;
 hit shall be done after my will,
 that I haue thoght I shall fulfill

And manteyn with my myght. (Play I.13-18)

God's thought here is consonant with his speech acts. In Genesis his deeds are fulfilled solely through his speech acts. The same is accomplished in the New Testament through Christ, who represents the Word of God made flesh.

The God's speech acts in the Creation play are echoed in the Wakefield play of Pharaoh. Pharaoh represents a false figure of Christ when he takes on the language and power of God:

Peas, of payn that no man pas;
 bot kepe the course that I commaunde,
 And take good hede of hym that has
 youre helth all holy in hys hande (Play VIII.1-4)

In these words Pharaoh depicts himself as all powerful, and unlike Melchizedek who, as both king and proto-priest, properly prefigures Christ, Pharaoh sounds more like the overprideful Lucifer in the creation play of the same cycle. The same is true for Herod in

his play. In each case, these characters attempt to put on the power of God through use of language that echoes His. If we examine the language of these characters throughout the cycles, we can see them as boastful braggarts, who in their respective shows of power refuse to admit any might greater than theirs. In contrast to this representation, the plays offer the humility of characters like Abraham and Melchizedek as the proper Christian attitude. Abraham is sanctified and rewarded specifically because he shows himself to be the obedient servant of God. His language always shows his subservient role. If the plays are instructive, one of the lessons they teach is that language has a double power. When used properly, language has the ability to bring forth salvation, but when misused it is damning.

As Kolve suggests, restricting this power of language within the universe of the plays was possible, but some concerns in the relationship between the world of the play and reality did arise. To play a human character within the drama was not a problem, but if the play involved the representation of a sacred figure such as Christ or God the Father, “the image and its referent are so different in kind that blasphemy or sacrilege may be involved” (9). This difficulty is overcome, Kolve contends, through a re-imagining and redefinition of the concept of theater. In this conception represents a clear division between the world of the dramas and the physical space in reality where the play is enacted.

Some leakage exists, however, across the liminal space between real life and theater as in the (perhaps apocryphal) example in *A Hundred Merry Tales*, quoted by

Kolve, “[o]f hym that playd the devyll and came thorow the waren & mayd theym that stale the connys to ronne away” (21). Within the world of the play, in this example, the player and his representation are ironically seen as “safe”; outside of this bounded system of theater the player ceases to be representational and becomes confused with the real. While this story might be a fiction, the conception of it was one that could be projected within the epistemological system, in which there are some traces of a one-to-one relationship between representation and referent. Kolve quotes Etienne Gilson in this context as saying, “Images so obviously participate in the nature of their objects that to religious images, for instance, is often attributed a sort of inherent sacredness that really belongs to that which they represent, that is, to their meaning” (9). This same contention may be what is involved in Amalerius’ distinction between sacrament and symbol.

The participation of the image in the reality of the referent is just as true of language and its representation of meaning, so that as language makes meaning of reality, it partakes of the power to make reality within the system. This is most true in the language of the Mass, but part of the goal of the Corpus Christi plays was to substantiate this power of language as God sent. The role of the players in this “game” was to create a reality within the separate space of theater that would explain the mysteries of divine history, but in doing so they took part in the grand sacramental system that undergirded medieval epistemology.

The combination of the ritual of the Mass and the dramatic representation of the Corpus Christi cycles relates to a system that reflected the structure of medieval

sacramental epistemology. This sacramental arrangement bound the ways knowledge could be acquired and disseminated. It was both a social and natural structure, within which the laws that govern natural science, social interaction and metaphysics were contained. This sacramental and, ultimately, epistemological system affirmed, debated, and reaffirmed from about the end of the fourth century, would be seriously challenged by the Reformation in England roughly two hundred years after the first cycle was performed. Ultimately, the reformers would tear down the sacramental system that sustained a performative epistemology. In its place a system of commemorative representation, wherein language would function to show resemblance of past events and never again to re-perform them, would develop.

Chapter III

The Body of the Time

Introduction

The Reformation overturned the system of sacramentality that shared its performative power with the Corpus Christi cycles. Like any other period in history, the Middle Ages was not epistemologically homogeneous; the orthodoxy of the traditional Catholic Church, however, insured a certain level of homogeneity among believers. In England during the Elizabethan period, the safe assumptions of a unified devotional system sanctioned by the state were to be conflicted by a number of factors.

It has long been a commonplace that Shakespeare lived in an age of radical political and religious change. In this period, the Reformation, occasioned by Henry VIII's break with Rome, ultimately succeeded in moving the majority of English people away from the traditional religion that had been constant for 900 years. What is not a commonplace is how radically these changes affected the function and use of language, and ultimately the ways of thinking and making meaning in Renaissance England. Catholicism's sacramental system and particularly the Mass, which had been a primary influence on medieval epistemology, came under pressure from the reformers. In Shakespeare's lifetime, traditional forms of worship were in mid-shift, between Catholicism and Protestantism. The ideas embodied by the reformation, however, had not yet taken hold for most of the population.

While many critics have attempted to identify Shakespeare as either a reformist or a traditionalist, what is apparent in his writing is an amalgamation of both. Neither the plays nor the known biographical data reveals his adherence either to a Reformist or a Catholic position because of the conventions of dramatic form, the political and religious vicissitudes of his time, and the ambiguity of the language and contents of his work. Thus, his literary production does not reflect Shakespeare's personal position in the political and religious controversies of his day; instead, they demonstrate the ideas that were current and controversial for his society, without taking a position. In his work, we see not one man's position, but the currents of the times.

In this chapter, I will argue that because the devotional attitudes and practices of Elizabethan England were in flux, a hybrid epistemological system arose—through the continuing but diminishing influence of the Catholic Mass and the increasing impact of Protestant commemoration. While there were radical reformers and entrenched traditionalists, the vast majority of the people were somewhere in between. I envision the shape for the people's religious allegiances in this period as a bell curve with radical Protestants occupying one end and traditional Catholics the other. The wider center represents most of the people, for whom the controversies of the times did not so much convince as confound. Ultimately, the devotional system of England, partly through attrition, became primarily Protestant, but for most of the Elizabethan age it was in conflict. The epistemological system, circumscribed by the performative function of language at the center of the Catholic Mass in the medieval period, eventually turned to

commemoration, but in this period the primary defining force shaping epistemology was the conflict itself.

Before going too far, it is necessary to state some distinctions and definitions.

The distinction between a speech act and an utterance, as defined by Austin, needs some clarification, as it will become important to the discussion of *Hamlet* later in the chapter. Austin's approach, as I have said in the first chapter, was to examine utterances out of a grammatical framework and to focus instead on the effect of an utterance in being used. In this scheme, Austin separates the act of uttering certain sounds, which he calls "locution," from the intended function or effect of that locution (illocutionary force) and, further, from the consequence of the utterance (perlocutionary force). In making an utterance "with a certain sense and reference," roughly equivalent to meaning (including constatives), we perform at least three separate actions. The distinction between an utterance/sentence and a speech act is not a matter of intrinsic difference between the terms, but of the manner of analysis. Generally an utterance and speech act are approximately equivalent. When analyzed from the perspective of speech act theory, however, an utterance becomes simply the articulation of certain words, while a speech act constitutes the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts produced in the issuance of the utterance.

This distinction is of primary importance in this chapter because here I will try to relate an analysis of the play to what occurs in the speech act of Mass; it will become necessary to refer to what in grammatical terms might be called statements of the play as

speech acts. Examining the words of consecration grammatically we can arrive at the meaning of the utterance, but their most important feature is left out. When the priest says the words, “*hoc est enim corpus meum*,” a grammatical interpretation yields a meaning that does not really make sense. It is the issuance of a statement which can be assigned a truth-value (what Austin calls a constative) and in this context, the statement, “this is my body,” is not true even for devout believers, since the object of the sentence (body) cannot belong to the speaker. When analyzed through speech act theory, however, the focus becomes not what the statement *means* but what it *does*, and this reveals the importance of the speech act quite clearly. Similarly, when the King Hamlet’s ghost says, “I am thy father’s spirit,” a grammatical interpretation leaves us with very little information about what this statement does. As a speech act, this utterance is more than an indicative true or false statement. While it is not performative in the strict sense, it does prepare the way for the oath to vengeance King Hamlet will render from Hamlet. Throughout this chapter, I use “speech act” to refer to utterances, when I focus on the performative effect rather than their grammatical structure. In this context, I am primarily concerned with the illocutionary and sometimes perlocutionary force of the speech acts. I will use “utterance” when the focus is on the locution and in a sense the “usual” grammatical examination of a statement.

Since this chapter ultimately deals with a work of drama, Austin’s exception of speech acts used in fiction must also be addressed here. I take this exception to have been

a temporary maneuver on Austin's part, as John Searle has argued.²⁶ Because of Austin's initial exclusion of dramatic or fictional use of a speech act, many critics have insisted that there are no performatives in a work of fiction. However, performatives can be seen to operate within a fictive work in at least two ways. First, while it is clear that when characters in a play use the performative speech acts of a marriage ceremony, the result is not that the two actors playing those roles are thereby married, but within the fictive world of the play the characters indeed are. Since drama is the mimetic representation of an event using "ordinary" language, the rules for performative speech within the fictive world of the drama function in the same manner as in the real world outside of it.

There is another sense in which performatives can function in play outside of its fictive world, and this has to do with their effect on the audience. In *Hamlet*, for example, "The Mousetrap" functions outside its fictive condition within the play to cause Claudius to reveal his guilt. In this case, the relationship between the "play" ("The Mousetrap") and the world of *Hamlet* is similar to the relationship between the play (*Hamlet*) and the real world. The audience of *Hamlet* can see the "The Mousetrap" functioning performatively for its audience (primarily Claudius and Hamlet). The "play" changes Claudius' status, at least for Hamlet and Horatio, from a suspected murderer to a confirmed one. I will discuss this particular example later in the chapter, but for now it is sufficient to say that, as we saw in the Corpus Christi cycles, dramatic works can function performatively in these two ways.

²⁶ See "Reiterating the Difference: A Response to Derrida" (199) and more generally *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*.

While critics argue that in Shakespeare's dramatic works we can discern his adherence to either Catholic or Protestant devotion, his plays offer us a view of the conflict caused by the controversies of the period. The author's own point of view is not immediately accessible in a work of drama, since ideas are expressed through the intermediaries of characters. While the ultimate argument of the play may give some sense of the author's position, we cannot, for example, determine if the views expressed by Hamlet also represent those of Shakespeare, nor do we have any means of determining which character, if any, can most closely be related to the author. Even if we could say that this or that character does express a close affinity with the author's ideas, these ideas are not expressed in a language that would give us conclusive proof of this affinity. Finally, the very limited surviving biographical data about Shakespeare's life can only inconclusively prove his religious beliefs, since the evidence is often contradictory. While some critics have made convincing arguments about Shakespeare's religious belief, the very persuasiveness of these arguments on both sides and the contradictory nature of available evidence place him somewhere in the middle of the bell curve I describe above.

Reformation Historiography

The English Reformation has become a much more problematic field of study since the 1960s in contrast to the early part of the 20th century. Long dominated by "Whiggish" historians, who saw the English Reformation as a populist attempt to retrieve

the true faith from the hands of a corrupt “popish” regime, it has more recently been the domain of scholars who take a much more political approach, such as Christopher Haigh, A. G. Dickens and John Scarisbrick who see the Henrician Reformation as strictly a top-down affair, albeit for very different reasons. Through a reading of contemporary wills, Haigh insists that the “Traditional” Church was alive and well in the minds and hearts of the English laity. Haigh’s 16th century English countryside is peopled with devoted Catholic believers, who in their last earthly act reaffirm a belief in the intercessory power: of prayer, the cult of the saints, virgin Mary and most importantly in the redemptive power of the Mass. According to Dan Danner, this view “dismisses the influence of the Lollards, the Cambridge Lutherans who gathered at the White Horse Inn in Cambridge, and a general feeling of anti-clericalism that [A.G.] Dickens and his school views [sic] as important” (2). G. R. Elton reads this initial Reformation as a political expedient accomplished primarily through the maneuverings of Thomas Cranmer.

Depending on which scholars one agrees with, Henry’s divorce becomes either the *primum causa* of the break with Rome, or a political tool used by either Henry or Cranmer to effect such a change: for Henry, one toward royal supremacy and dynastic assurance through a potential male heir, and for Cranmer, toward his own secular political power. Haigh sees Henry as sincerely struggling with the moral rectitude of secession from the Holy See and harboring a genuine belief in the possible incestuous nature of his marriage to Catherine. In this view, Henry’s divorce comes not as an expedient to royal supremacy over the English church, but as a necessary device to dissolve a marriage he

saw as truly cursed. Haigh conceives Henry's personal struggle as one that involved abandoning one precept of the faith he loved as over and against another.

At his death in 1547, Henry left in his will a provision for "£666 to the poor to pray for his soul, and another £600 for a chantry of two priests at Windsor and four solemn obits each year" and asked "for intercession by Mary and the saints, and insisted on the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist" (Haigh 167). Henry died, according to Haigh, a traditional, "though a rather bad Catholic" (167)—his ambivalent Reformation notwithstanding. That Henry did not intend serious theological change in his "Reformation" is made clear in the Act of Six Articles (1537). This is particularly true in terms of the sacrament of the Mass, which is the first of the six articles:

in the most blessed Sacrament of the Altar, by the strength and efficacy of Christ's mighty word (it being spoken by the priest), is present really, under the form of bread and wine, the natural body and blood of our Savior Jesus Christ, conceived of the Virgin Mary; and that after the consecration there remaineth no substance of bread and wine, nor any other substance, but the substance of Christ, God and man. (Janz 287)

While his separation of the English Church from the authority of Rome may seem to represent a Protestant abandonment of traditional theology, Henry displays here the loyalty to the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation that had earned him the title of "Defender of the Faith" in 1527. Ultimately, the Henrician Reformation does not reshape doctrinal beliefs. The initial turn from the auspices of the traditional Catholic Church

does not lead to thoroughgoing doctrinal reform. Questions of papal authority arose immediately, but the deeper, more radical theological concerns would have to wait at least until the Elizabethan “settlement” for an enduring English resolution.

During Edward VI’s short reign (1547-1553), the Reformation, now engineered through Edward Seymour (Earl of Hertford and later Duke of Somerset) along with a Protestant council, would continue apace. This second Reformation would indeed begin to challenge many Catholic doctrines:

In 1548 church images were pulled down, and an Order of Communion introduced English prayers to the Latin mass. In 1549 a half-Protestant Book of Common Prayer replaced the Latin rites, and the clergy were permitted to marry. In 1550 altars were exchanged for communion tables, and a new Ordinal provided Protestant pastors rather than Catholic priests. In 1551 the episcopate was remodeled and a corps of missionary preachers created. In 1552 there was a decisively Protestant second Prayer Book. In 1553 redundant mass equipment was confiscated, the Protestant theology of the Church defined in Forty-Two Articles, and a Catechism published to teach the new religion. (Haigh 168)

All of this was to be reversed after Mary Tudor’s accession in 1553. During Mary’s reign, the English church returned to Catholicism. Beginning with the executions of the Duke of Northumberland, Edward’s advisor and protector, and Lady Jane Grey, and continuing with the burning of many Protestants, Mary showed that she would give no quarter in returning England to the traditional fold. The stage seemed set for a permanent

Catholic England, but, as with Edward, Mary died before she could either make these changes endure or provide an heir that would. In 1558, this Marian restoration to Catholicism was to be reversed by Elizabeth Tudor. Elizabeth took a much more calculated and perspicacious route to reform. Protestant by nature, she took the *via media* that would finally establish England as Protestant, though perhaps not as evangelical as some of the members of her council desired.

It is, perhaps, because of this vacillation between reformist and Catholic ideas that this historical era has had such long-range effects on British culture and literature. This is particularly so if we accept the Haigh/Scarbrick viewpoint, which sees the various “reformations” as imposed upon the laity through political and Episcopal pressure from above, while the laity struggled to fit their faith and beliefs into the changing schema designed by monarchs and church officials. But even if the transitions from Catholic to Protestant and back again had been a grassroots movement organized and carried through by a dissatisfied laity, they would have had a serious effect on the minds of the English citizenry.

Elizabethan Historiography

In 1564, when Shakespeare was born, the Elizabethan Settlement was as yet unsettled, although it later began to stabilize the religious turmoil begun by her father’s break with Rome, and her brother’s more doctrinal reformation, and problematized by her sister’s return of the English church to traditional Catholicism. Many histories of the

period consider the shift from a predominantly Catholic populace to a Protestant one as a *fait accompli* in the Act of Uniformity of 1559.²⁷ This Act abolished the Mass and attempted to standardize religious service in the realm. According to Eamon Duffy, however,

The confusion evident in the minds of clergy and laity about the likely direction of the religious policy of the regime is understandable, even as late as 1560, given the ambivalence of the religious measures. The modifications in the Elizabethan prayer-book from that approved in 1552 did seem designed to soften its more starkly Protestant features. (567)

The exact direction the English Reformation would take was unresolved as late as the 1580s. The confusion caused by Elizabeth's attempts at compromise and the political conditions that preceded her and persisted during her reign account for the confluent epistemological system that arose at this time.

The 1559 Act itself was not wholly or thoroughly reformist or at least did not go as far as many radical reformists would have liked. Even if it had been more radical, it could not have changed the minds and hearts of much of the populace, who, from a reformist perspective, stubbornly held on to the traditionalist superstitions of the "Papists." Long into Elizabeth's reign, the population could be classified into roughly three categories: those who remained loyal to the traditional forms of worship—the

²⁷ See for example, William Allan Neilson, *The Facts About Shakespeare*, for whom England is "well on its way to being Puritan" by the end of Elizabeth's reign (17).

“godly,” the radical reformists (including “presbyterians,”²⁸ who argued for a change in the polity of the church)—and the conformists, who yielded to the queen’s middle way. These categories must not be applied too strictly, however; it would be more appropriate and accurate to view the forms of worship during Elizabeth’s reign as spread across a broad spectrum, represented by continuously varying rather than discrete categories.

According to Patrick Collinson, “Elizabeth’s personal contribution to the government of her Church was one of occasional intervention, prompted by an angry reaction to the reports which reached her, as often as not, unofficially and spasmodically” (60). This sometimes indifferent approach along with the queen’s traditionalism in certain aspects of church governance and ritual and reformist views in other respects sent the general populace a mixed signal and was partly responsible for the variability of worship within her church.

This situation was exacerbated by the fact that the official English church, transformed by the Tudor monarchies, had undergone such rapid and wide-ranging swings from traditionalist to reformist and back again. In less than twelve years, from the death of Henry VIII in 1547 to the accession of Elizabeth in 1558, the state-sanctioned form of worship would go through three turbulent transformations. Early in Elizabeth’s reign the recent memory of Mary’s accession in 1553 and the ensuing return to traditional Catholicism gave determined conservatives the greatest hope that the nation might

²⁸ Patrick Collinson’s *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* convincingly details the political and religious maneuverings of the radical reformists, including a detailed account of the development of the puritan movement, which was not a singularly organized. Arguments arose between Archbishops Matthew Parker, Edmund Grindal, and John Whitgift and the more radical “puritans,” such as Thomas Cartwright, beginning in the 1570s, over the hierarchical structure of the English church. These arguments followed the rather

ultimately go back to the Roman Catholic faith. Hope, for some of the more traditionalist-minded, and fear for radical reformists lay in the potential rise of Mary Stuart to the English throne.

The people lacked confidence that the English Reformation would be permanent, as physically evidenced by the secreting of Catholic paraphernalia (including rood screens, altars, iconographic art and vestments) against the iconoclasm of Edward VI and Elizabeth's visitation commissions.²⁹ The traditionalist clergy and laity hoped to store these items until such a time as the church would return to the traditional fold. In this context the conservatives had reason for hope. On Mary Tudor's accession the hidden church equipment and furnishings necessary for the celebration of Mass were quickly replaced or repaired. According to Duffy,

It was at once clear that Catholicism would be restored, and some communities proceeded to Counter-Reformation without tarrying for any. At Melton Mowbray the altar stones were put back up immediately, in order to sing Mass and 'Dirige' for the King who had put an end to the Mass and prayer for the dead (Duffy 527).

Duffy indicates that "Protestant historiography," which had dominated historical accounts of the period, fails to account for "the religious attitudes for the broad majority of the nation who accepted" and "welcomed the return of the traditional religion" (524). Both Duffy and Christopher Haigh, through readings of contemporary wills and other public and private documents of the time, attempt to account for this broad majority of

famous vestment controversies of the middle mid-1560s (135).

²⁹ See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*; Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations*.

entrenched traditionalists living under reformist monarchs.

If we accept this premise, the situation of this broad majority indicates an English populace divided along religious lines, within which we can discern a convolution of reformist and Catholic ideas. As Diarmaid MacCulloch points out, however, reading these contemporary documents can be used to support either the position that Elizabethan devotion was one of entrenched traditionalism or radical Protestantism, primarily because these conclusions depend on a geographic or regionalist organization with the north-west representing the most traditionalist and the south-east the most radical reformist, but with much variety even within these regions.³⁰

Not only traditionalists felt as if the Protestant reform would not hold; Protestants also feared that the Elizabethan settlement would be fleeting. Until February 1587, with Mary Stuart and her Catholic leanings as a possible successor to Elizabeth, and the sudden deaths of both Edward and Mary Tudor, this fear would not recede. Once the threat from Mary Stuart was eliminated, following the Babington plot of 1586, radical reformers could breathe easier, and they insisted that the reformation should be completed at once. In the 1570s, controversies over clerical vestments and ritual gave way to much deeper concerns about church governance instigated by the “presbyterian” movement. By 1573, the “puritans” or “precisians” had come to represent as significant a challenge as the “papists” to the *via media* of the official church. In October of that year, after two cases of “criminal assault,” the queen and her counselors moved to quell “presbyterian” uproar against the hierarchical structure of the official church with a stern proclamation

against Puritan agitators. According to Patrick Collinson, this second, “more resolute proclamation censured bishops and magistrates for their negligence in suppressing nonconformity, and insisted on imprisonment for anyone who defamed the Prayer Book” (150). A previous proclamation along the same lines, suppressing Thomas Cartwright’s and other “presbyterian” works, had been largely ignored.

The revolutions engendered in the various religious transformations of Tudor monarchs culminated during Elizabeth’s reign. Elizabeth, however, would not really go further than Edward’s 1552 Book of Common Prayer, and in some cases would recoil from his starker reformist project, emending some of its more reformist elements back to the less radical 1549 version, omitting the notorious “Black Rubric.” While her more evangelical councils grew restive, Elizabeth stood firm against more sweeping reformation of the English church, impeding more radical reformist legislation.³¹ Ultimately, however, the Elizabethan reformation would succeed in moving the majority of the population toward Protestantism through attrition. By the end of her reign, a large majority of the population was conforming members of the Anglican Church, with very few admitted Catholics and a number of puritan evangelicals. According to Haigh, “In 1603 the bishops reported to their new king that there were 2,250,765 Church of England communicants and only 8,590 adult recusants” (266). Haigh acknowledges that these numbers represent an exaggeration, and that they do not account for pseudo-conformists,

³⁰ See MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603*, 105-113.

³¹ For a discussion of the political machinations behind Elizabeth’s vacillation between Protestant and more traditional theological ideas see MacCulloch’s *The Later Reformation, 1547-1603* (1990). And for a discussion of the influence of John Calvin and the Marian Exiles on the form of worship of the English

or church papists, but nonetheless they reveal that, “within two generations, the Catholics had dwindled to numerical insignificance” (266). Even if exaggerated, the numbers do indicate a vast change in the religious inclinations of a vast majority of the laity.

The Elizabethan Settlement is first established through the Act of Uniformity passed during the first year of her reign, the revision of the Edward VI's Book of Common Prayer in 1559, and the Thirty-nine Articles in 1563. The latter summarized the doctrines of the English Church, again following Edward's example but removing elements that might most offend traditionalists. The Act of Uniformity attempted to legislate conformity to the state church through mandatory church attendance. However, it did little to prevent nonconformity outside of church, and what ultimately was created was an uneasy compromise, never quite in step with Continental reformist progress, especially that of Geneva.³² The Settlement was a political maneuver designed to keep both radical evangelicals and more conservative traditionalists at bay. In effect Elizabeth's middle way created frustration for both sides. What emerged during Elizabeth's reign was a divided church that retained too much resemblance to traditional Catholic worship for the more radical-minded reformers but did away with too many of its more central rites and notions for persistent traditionalists. Due to this combination of reformist and traditional ideas, Elizabethan England did not develop a homogeneous form of worship but a populace practicing a variety of religious devotion both within and out of

Church during Elizabeth's reign see: Christina Hallowell Garrett's *The Marian Exile: A study in the origins of Elizabethan Puritanism*.

³² Dan Danner's *Pilgrimage to Puritanism: History and Theology of the Marian Exiles at Geneva* details the influence of Marian exiles in Geneva on Elizabeth's church government.

the bounds of the official English church. Though many conformed to Elizabeth's *via media*, for a long time religious worship was most influenced by a pulling and pushing, from reformist toward further reformation and Catholics toward less.

Catholics were not the only ones persecuted during Elizabeth's reign; in fact, for a time it seemed as if traditionalist Catholics were more tolerated than radical Puritans, as long as they made an outward show of conformity. Soon enough this nominal conformity came under attack, not only from reformers but from traditionalists as well. For traditionalists, the result was to drive their form of worship underground. Some made the expected show of conformity to the state church, but held the Mass in the houses of traditionalist gentry. "Church Papists,"³³ as evangelicals negatively called them, would attend the services of their parish churches in order to avoid prosecution for recusancy, a practice that was attacked by Puritans as well as uncompromising Catholics, especially Jesuit missionaries. According to Alexandra Walsham, "one appealing alternative to insolent refusal to attend weekly services was deliberate abstention from Holy Communion, a sacramental rite in which ecclesiastical injunctions and canons required the laity to participate only three times each year" (86). While Catholic counter-reformers railed against attendance in the "schismatic" English church, Catholic believers had little choice in the matter. Their immortal souls may have been at stake in their duplicitous presence at "heretical" reformist church services, but their workaday survival was threatened by civil sanctions that could have disastrous effects on their lives. The fines

³³ For a discussion of Church papist and their influence in the controversies of the Elizabethan era, see Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papist: Catholicism, Conformity and confessional Polemic in Early Modern*

imposed, along with censure, prison, or even death, kept some traditionalists from defying the Protestant magistrates.

Initially, the policy of the official church was to attempt coexistence. This was particularly true in terms of its attitude toward the Eucharist, for the settlement allowed each group to maintain their own view of what was present in the host. MacCulloch states, according to the terms of the 1559 settlement:

the 1552 Communion Service was modified in the new Prayer Book to add the words for administering bread and wine from the 1549 book to the 1552 words: so when a communicant received the communion bread, he or she would hear the words “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life’ (1549). ‘Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving’ (1552). (26)

This liturgical formula, according to MacCulloch, allowed those attending the service to witness the Eucharistic ritual and find in it either the real presence of Christ or a memorial of his sacrifice, according to their personal belief. This linguistically ambiguous solution to the issue can be seen as an emblem of Elizabeth’s settlement.

Famously squeamish about providing “windows to men’s souls,” Elizabeth was careful about not revealing her own religious position, although it is known, for example, that she never cared for married clergy and that she loved “beautiful church music,” but hated the Mass; aside from these hints at her religious attitudes on specific points little is known

England.

about her personal religious faith. Generally, she seemed to have a “live and let live” attitude toward personal worship. Over the course of her reign, however, issues of political and personal security would lead the queen and legislators to acts of more stringent control over official observance, as would again be the case for James I after the Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

At Shakespeare’s birth, the new state-authorized form of religious practice in England was but six years old. While the particularly Anglican church doctrine had been officially established early in Elizabeth’s reign, the population did not immediately accept the ideological transformation engendered within it. At this time, according to William A. Neilson, “England was still largely Catholic, as it had been for nine centuries” (1). The political and Episcopal pressures that caused tension within the English church between populace and state would not be overcome until popular religion closed the rift between itself and mandated doctrine. This situation may have been even more significant during Shakespeare’s lifetime because of the confusion caused by the queen’s ambivalent attitude toward radical reform and the vacillation in the preceding reigns’ between Catholic and reformist forms of worship. Shakespeare lived during a period when this rift was closing but was not yet completely closed. Eugenio Maria de Hostos considers this rift an ideological abyss, which constitutes a general revolution of which *Hamlet* is a particular example (8). In this context, Hostos focuses on the revolution involved in the process of the “individual soul”; Hamlet, for him, is a single individual who comes to represent the general revolution of ideology of the state and populace.

While the official English Church had changed from Catholic to Protestant, it was too soon for the people's attitudes and the linguistic system, and thereby the epistemological system undergirding them to have shifted. Added to this circumstance was the ambiguous nature of the reform itself. Therefore, Shakespeare writes in a period when the tumultuous changes that had occurred in the generation before had begun to settle, and the rift opened up by these changes had begun to close but were not yet fully established in the minds of the people. This phase of reform, when religious practice, sanctioned and enforced by the state, is in the process of fundamental change, is far more dangerous for non-conformists than when the state-sanctioned belief system is stable. In parodying, using or citing the rites, language or sacraments of the Catholic Church, Shakespeare and his contemporaries must walk a delicate line. If the citation proved an alignment with Catholic ideas, the playwright might have been suspected of "papist tendencies." Given the indistinctness of Elizabeth's reform, the issues surrounding many elements of the division between Catholicism and English Protestantism had not yet been convincingly settled. Today's clear-cut division between Catholic and Protestant ideas was not yet as well established. Many of the laity had an ambivalent attitude between the traditional beliefs and devotions they had come to know and the new religion established by the state.

The long-held Whiggish historiographical position that the old church was corrupt, unpopular and inefficient can no longer stand in light of recent self-proclaimed "revisionist" histories, such as Haigh's and Duffy's. The position expressed by Haigh

and Duffy that the reformation was foisted upon a deeply Catholic nation is, however, just as difficult to demonstrate. What the evidence seems to indicate is that there was a broad spectrum of responses to the reformation. There is no doubt that for some people, such as Haigh's Roger Martyn, the reformation had diminished the English church; for others it did not go far enough and was only a step away from regressing to idolatry and superstition. Ultimately, the vast majority of the populace, as Haigh concludes, "went to church: they prayed again to their God, learned again how to be good, and went off home once more" (295).

Somewhere between the radical evangelism of the Puritans, the queen's ambiguous reformation and the steadfast resistance of old Catholics, we might find the sentiments of the folk and along with it what is reflected in Shakespeare's work. For in his work we find the currents of his time, and in his time there was change. If he was a Catholic, he was most likely a conforming church papist and would not want to call attention to it in his work. If he was a Protestant, there is little evidence that he was a very radical one.

Shakespeare Biography

The biographical data for Shakespeare is notoriously scarce, particularly in regard to his personal beliefs; the documentary evidence, as would be expected, relates to public and legal action (wills, marriage license, lawsuits and the like). The anecdotal information may help to give a picture of the man, but it is more or less unverifiable. It is

therefore difficult to map out Shakespeare's place on the religious spectrum described above. While there is some support for the argument that his father was a Catholic, there is also verification that his children were raised as Protestants (despite some indication that his daughter, Susanna, was a recusant Catholic).³⁴ All we know, as Roland Frye suggests, is that "he lived and died a conforming member of the Church of England, by which he and his children were baptized, and in which he was buried." That he at least maintained the semblance of participation in the authorized faith is shown, according to Frye, by the "lack of evidence to the contrary" (3).

It is highly unlikely that a theatrical figure so well known as Shakespeare would have been able to violate the attendance requirements without attracting the notice of anti-theatrical London officials. Certainly Ben Jonson's recusancy can be fully documented. (Frye 4)

While this suggests that Shakespeare took part in the attendance required by the Act of Uniformity, which obligated English citizens to participate in the new religion's weekly service, it does nothing to shed light on his personal faith.

The appearance of Shakespeare's father, John, on a list of recusants in 1592, and his "Spiritual Last Will and Testament," discovered in the 18th century, are often cited in support for the argument that he followed the old faith. Attached to the recusancy list, however, is a contemporary note that his absence from church was due to "fear of process

³⁴ See E.A.J. Honigsmann, *Lost Years*: "The poet's elder daughter, Susanna, was cited in 1606 in a list of recusants at Stratford; the authorities were vigilant of 'persons popishly affected,' and this seems to have been thought her crime" (116). However, Honigsmann also states that she was never fined and that a year later she married John Hall, a Protestant. For further evidentiary information see Samuel Schoenbaum, *Documentary Life*.

for debt.” Since this was a common ploy for “church papists” accused of recusancy and for debtors attempting to avoid process, it does not prove the case one way or the other.

The spiritual will was a document designed by St. Borromeo and disseminated by Jesuits missionary.³⁵ The will, if authentic, as Peter Milward³⁶ insists, may go a long way to support the Catholic connection of the playwright’s father. However, Samuel Schoenbaum flatly declares, “this document, since lost, is of doubtful authenticity” (“Life” 2). That John Shakespeare may have been a practicing Catholic is possible, and if this were true, that he would raise his first-born son within that church may follow, but no conclusive evidence exists in either case.

John Shakespeare had risen through the ranks of local Stratford politics to become the high bailiff (or mayor), but by 1577 he had begun to have financial difficulties. These difficulties support the contention that his appearance on the recusancy list of 1592 was due to fear of prosecution of debt. However, Honigmann asserts, “I am not convinced

³⁵ Samuel Schoenbaum describes this document as, “not a will in the usual sense but, rather, a declaration of faith. In fourteen articles, it follows the model composed during a time of plague by St. Charles Borromeo, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, and presumably disseminated in England by Jesuit missionaries (Schoenbaum 123). In 1580 Borromeo was visited in Milan by a group of Jesuit missionaries, led by Father Edmund Campion, the English recusant who two years later was tried and gruesomely executed for treason. Campion and his colleagues brought back with them to England numerous copies of Borromeo’s testament. Campion and his colleagues ordered “Three or four thousand or more of the Testaments” from Rome, “for many persons desire[d] to have them.” Once back in England, Campion passed through the Midlands — specifically Lapworth, just twelve miles from Stratford—en route to Lancashire. Campion’s host at Lapworth was Sir William Catesby, a relative by marriage of the Ardens, who was arrested and imprisoned in the Fleet for his pains. Even if the testament is in fact genuine and not a fabrication of John Jordan, who offered it to Edmund Malone, one line quoted by Schoenbaum may show that the poet’s father did not die a traditional Catholic believer. The document “begs that ‘this present writing of protestation’ be buried with him”(Honigmann 117). The fact that it was found in the 18th century in the rafters of the Henley Street house clearly shows that this request was not carried through. If Shakespeare continued to be a Catholic in 1601—had he ever been one— we can presume he would have known about the document and made sure that it went to the grave with his father according to his wishes.

³⁶ Milward’s argument stresses the Ardens’ connection with Campion and the authenticity of this spiritual

that his problems were merely financial". Honigmann leans heavily on John Shakespeare's business ventures, particularly his "four prosecutions in the Exchequer in the 1570s" for usury and illegal wool trading, to show that while the poet's father was indeed having financial troubles in the late 1570s (a time when William was a young teenager), he was wealthy enough to absorb his losses (*Lost Years* 115). The question of whether John Shakespeare used recusancy to avoid debt or debt to avoid recusancy is not conclusively proved even through Honigmann's careful analysis. The evidence does prove that the elder Shakespeare had been a rather shrewd businessman not averse to illegal practices, and perhaps shrewd and cunning enough to adjust his beliefs to suit the religious and political climate of the times. It was during Mary's reign that he rose to local political prominence, a course most likely available only to a practicing Catholic in those troubled years. Well into Elizabeth's reign, however, until the troubles starting in the late 1570s, when his presumed Catholicism would have hindered his progress, John Shakespeare continued to prosper in both business and local politics. Thus, it is possible that John Shakespeare was a man more concerned with political and commercial power than religious doctrine.

The tradition that between the birth of his twins Hamnet and Judith in 1585 and his appearance on the London theater scene in 1592—the so-called "lost years"—he spent some time as a "schoolmaster" in the household of Alexander Hoghton, a wealthy Catholic in Lancashire, is often cited as support in the argument that William Shakespeare was a Catholic. This tradition is based on a will left by Hoghton, in which

will in an attempt to prove the poet was a member of his church.

he mentions one William Shakeshaft, and on the independent information from William Beeston, who knew Shakespeare and claimed, “he had been in his younger years a school master in the country” (Honigmann 4). These two bits of information, however, may not be linked, for Beeston’s observation places Shakespeare as “a schoolmaster in the country” but makes no mention of Lancashire, and the will does not specifically identify this “Shakeshaft” as a schoolmaster. The Lancashire connection would be an important one in the context of Shakespeare’s possible Catholic affinities since, as both Haigh and Honigmann point out, this county was more heavily Catholic than perhaps any other in 16th century England. Although Honigmann persuasively reasserts this position through a meticulous investigation of connections between Shakespeare and Hoghton, there is again no conclusive proof for it.³⁷

Honigmann traces the movements of John Cottom, possibly Shakespeare’s schoolmaster at Stratford’s grammar school, and the most likely Lancashirean connection. He shows that Cottom was associated with the Hoghtons and that he left Stratford shortly after 1581. Honigmann assumes that Cottom is the link between Shakespeare and Alexander Hoghton in Lancashire, perhaps through a recommendation of his precocious student. In hiring a schoolmaster for his household, Hoghton very probably would have chosen someone who shared his Catholic faith. If the “Shakeshaft” mentioned in the will

³⁷ Honigmann does some daunting investigative work in *Shakespeare: The Lost Years*, which goes a long way toward proving the connections between Alexander Hoghton, Thomas Hesketh and Shakespeare through John Cottom (who he assumes was Shakespeare’s schoolmaster at Stratford). However, while he asserts that this connection proves the theory that Shakespeare was a Catholic at the time of his supposed employment with Hoghton and Hesketh, Honigmann theorizes that Shakespeare must have later changed his religion. It should also be noted that Honigmann dates the beginning of the so-called “lost years” before 1582; this is necessary to established that the “Shakeshaft” mentioned in Hoghton’s 1581 will is the poet.

was this schoolmaster, and if “Shakeshaft” were indeed William Shakespeare of Stratford, the logical conclusion would be that he was then a Catholic. This series of events, convincingly argued by Honigmann (though admittedly not conclusively proven), does not preclude that Shakespeare may have put on a Catholic disposition in order to secure the post. If he left Stratford either soon after Cottom or just before him in 1580-81, perhaps under the financial pressures of his father or as Honigmann suggests because he had already begun a relationship with the much older Anne Hathaway, the sixteen or seventeen-year-old Shakespeare or his father would have been keen to secure just such a position.

Honigmann concludes that William Shakeshaft is indeed Shakespeare and that he had been a Catholic at the time of the Houghton will but subsequently became a conforming member of the established church. Such may be the case. Honigmann persuasively marshals a significant amount of documentary and anecdotal evidence to support his position; nonetheless, the case remains plausible, but ultimately inconclusively proven. If Shakespeare had indeed converted to the established church by 1592 (when, as is noted above and well known, he appears on the London theater scene), this action would seem to result from one of two decisions (and I believe this is true of recent religious converts): either he conveniently changed religion for some ulterior motive, or he became a devout follower of his new faith. It seems a rare occurrence for a recent earnest convert to remain lukewarm in the newly adopted religion, or else why convert? Many critics have attempted to prove Shakespeare’s religious tendencies

through association, with Marlowe as a possible atheist influence and Ben Jonson as a Catholic one.³⁸

The available biographical data will not prove one way or the other whether Shakespeare was a hidden recusant or if he truly believed in the tenets of the nascent Anglicanism of his time, and this may be somewhat beside the point. We can see within the plays evidence of the influence of the theological anxieties of his age. We do know that he lived in a period on the edge of religious and political upheaval and that he must have been influenced by it. This influence is not particular to Shakespeare, but represents a prevailing circumstance of his society.

Catholic, Protestant, Pagan and Secular Readings

While many critics have endeavored to decipher the theological underpinnings of the plays, most insist upon strictly Catholic, Protestant, pagan or, in at least one case, atheist interpretations.³⁹ Similarly, when critics turn to Shakespeare's personal religious beliefs in the context of the plays they have fallen mostly into two distinct camps. The A. C. Bradley camp insists on reading Shakespearean drama exclusively from a secular perspective, while G. Wilson Knight and his followers perceive in Shakespeare's plays, particularly the tragedies, an emphatic influence of Christianity (either Catholic or

³⁸ W.J. Birch's *An Inquiry into the Religion and Philosophy of Shakspeare* [sic], for example, attempts to show that from the "force of association with Marlowe in his early days" Shakespeare turned to atheism; Shakespeare's friendship and the fact that he was the godfather of one of Ben Jonson's children is often cited a proof that he was a Catholic. The argument is that Jonson's conversion to Catholicism and the necessary fervor that would naturally follow precluded him from choosing a non-Catholic as the godparent of his child. See William Allan Neilson and Ashley Horace Thorndike, *The Facts About Shakespeare*, and J. Dover Wilson, *The Essential Shakespeare*, in this connection.

³⁹ For a discussion of this position see Birch, "Shakspeare [sic] treated religion with less respect even than

Protestant).

Trying to establish Shakespeare's personal religious beliefs from the content of the plays is to assume falsely that matters of historical fact can be established from fictional texts. We can make some assumptions, but we can never be quite certain how right or how wrong we are. Critics who attempt to discern Shakespeare's personal religion from the contents of plays make at least two critical errors. They assume that an author encodes within his fictional work an abstract of his/her personal beliefs and that it can be gotten at through an intense investigation of the texts. They also ignore the influence of cultural historicity. Even if Shakespeare were a traditional Catholic, evidence of his faith would not necessarily be present in his creative output. Indeed, if we were available to decode his dramas and find this evidence, church officials of his time would have more easily discovered it and arrested him for recusancy, as was the case with his friend Ben Jonson.⁴⁰ If he had been a Roman Catholic in perilous Elizabethan England, it is in fact more likely that he would have done everything in his power to keep his beliefs from appearing (even as subtexts) in his work.

In drama, characters, and not the playwright, express opinions. It is, therefore, nearly impossible to ascribe the opinions or beliefs of one character or another to the author. Authors generally use the circumstances and people they know best as the raw materials of their art. It is clear that Shakespeare did so. It is not clear or provable that he

Marlowe. He introduced obscenity, and went beyond him in profanity" (3).

⁴⁰ While recusancy normally referred to an absence from prescribed church service, particularly Easter communion, it was considered a sign that the violator was "popishly affected." Jonson's case was in fact more serious than this

used his own personal religious beliefs to draw attention to the controversies of his time. Rather than trying to discern Shakespeare's religious convictions in his work it would be much more productive to look within the plays for signs of the religious controversies of his day.

Hamlet: When Men Are Unprepared and Look Not For It

Vamos a asistir a una revolución. Hamlet es una revolución.

*We are going to assist in a revolution. Hamlet is a revolution.*⁴¹

Eugenio Maria de Hostos

If *Hamlet* is a revolution, what is the play a revolution from? And what manner of revolution is it? When we examine the play within the context of traditional revenge drama, we can see that the plot is comparatively revolutionary. While *Hamlet* has some affinity with Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and the Senecan tradition from which it derives, Shakespeare humanizes the plot upon which the revenge drama depends by drawing its protagonist as an individual rather than a type. For Peter Milward:

in taking over this story of murder and revenge from the dark age of 11th century

Denmark, Shakespeare makes it into something subtly different, by pushing the

theme of revenge with its early mediaeval setting into the background and

imparting to it a strangely contemporary relevance—replete with anachronism and

oblivious of Renaissance decorum. (35)

Important in this note is the notion that while the play is set in medieval Denmark its religious anxiety is more in keeping with the situation in Renaissance England.

In *Hamlet*, the conflict in the revenge plot is both more complicated and more ambiguous than the typical revenge drama. While Shakespeare Christianizes the context of his sources there is an ambiguity as to which Christian context (Catholic or Protestant) is operational in the play. Before the reformation there had been only one possible English Christian church, and during Edward's reign doctrinal reform had been much more strictly Protestant. Only in Shakespeare's time, with Elizabeth's *via media* and the ensuing heterogeneous forms of worship (as described above), did it become possible, for the first time in English history to represent two different Christian ideologies. The movement from one Christian context to another is the revolution occurring in the Elizabethan period and what I believe *Hamlet* represents.

For Hostos, the revolution in *Hamlet* depends upon the turning of the individual soul:

A soul in crisis; a spirit in progress, a moral revolution; an interior struggle to make the progress of the self triumph within itself; the cataclysm of a soul: this is the most dignified spectacle that can offer itself to human consciousness. This is the spectacle that Shakespeare offers us in *Hamlet*.⁴² (16)

In Hostos's estimation, the greatness of Shakespeare, whom he calls "the most delicate of psychologists" (17), lays in the fact that rather than create characters that can fit into the action of the plays, he devises "human" characters whose natural motivations and moral

⁴¹ Hostos begins his book on *Hamlet* with these lines. [My translation.]

⁴² "Un alma en crisis; un espíritu en progreso, una revolución moral; una lucha interior para hacer triunfar un progreso del ser en el ser mismo; el cataclismo de un alma; ése es el espectáculo más digno que puede ofrecerse a la conciencia humana. Este es el espectáculo que Shakespeare nos ofrece en *Hamlet*." [my

affinities lead to the action of the play. If *Hamlet* is a revolution of the “individual soul in crisis and a spirit in progress,” beyond the fictive world of the revenge drama, it also represents a collective revolution within the real world of the playwright. Hamlet’s individual progress, then, represents the general progress of the Elizabethan devotional system. As Richard C. McCoy has put it, in a different context:

Hamlet can be easily seen as a text-book demonstration of the theological irresolution and liturgical failure of the Elizabethan compromise. It too is haunted by its own ghost from an older religious world... (“A Wedding” 123)

This “theological irresolution” haunts both the play and its principal character. In responding to his peculiar circumstances, Hamlet will find some difficulty containing that response within one or the other religious systems available. Hamlet is a theologically conflicted character within an already conflicted play. He will react contradictorily to the tension that this situation offers. His response, like that of the text itself, will be conflicted between reformist and traditionalist ideas, which reveal a conflicted epistemology, one that is midway to becoming commemorative rather than performative.

The play begins with a question: Barnardo’s careful, perhaps apprehensive, “Who’s there?” (I.i.i). In this first utterance, according to Zulfikar Ghose, the play reveals that it will have much to do with the use of language and meaning, appearance and reality and the difficulty of distinguishing one from the other:

the scene clearly marks out the frontiers of that abstraction which is the ultimate

translation]

business of literature: to test relationships between language and reality. If we could only hear or speak or arrive at the words which explained, we would *know*; and having the illusion that there is a necessary correspondence between language and reality, we are driven to despair when our words seem to reveal nothing. (8)

It is precisely the relationship between language and reality and the correlation between language and knowledge, which corresponds exactly with the definition of epistemology, upon which I would like to focus here. Inga-Stina Ewbank sees language in *Hamlet* as “being stretched and re-shaped to show the form and pressure of the *Hamlet* world” (89).

I would like to extend Ewbank’s analogy to the “Shakespeare world.” The function of language in this world is stretched and reshaped to reveal the pressure caused by the religious anxiety of the age, and ultimately has an effect on the epistemological system for which it is the medium of expression.

In the “*Hamlet* world,” the power of language is revealed, according to Ewbank, in that “words control the fates and the development of the characters, and not only when they are spoken by the Ghost to Hamlet and turned by him into a principle of action...” (89). Barnardo’s question reveals from the start that the characters of the play, in seeking answers to dangerous uncertainty, will have to contend with finding the proper language to express their questions. Language functions at times to commemorate events and at others to create reality. To gain knowledge, the characters will have to use both functions of language.

The two sentinels watching on the platform alert the audience to the need for

caution; some lines later Horatio informs us about the need for this “same strict and most observant watch” (I.i.75). The state is in preparation for war. Barnardo’s apprehensiveness interrogative along with Horatio’s explanation gives a univocal meaning to the utterance. Intervening between these two points, however, the ghost makes his first appearance on the stage, and the audience begins to see that it is not the martial preparations that have so affrighted Barnardo, Marcellus and Francisco. The ghost is a fearsome figure that, as Horatio points out, “harrow[s]” the observer with “fear and wonder.” At this point, the significance of Barnardo’s question becomes more equivocal. While the question is consistent with the reality of war-preparations, there is another reason for Barnardo’s nervousness: the anticipation of the ghost’s re-appearance. Given this fearsome possibility, Barnardo could have asked, “what’s there” rather than “who’s there.” The first apparent meaning of the question does not mislead the audience; this meaning remains active even as the cause for apprehension becomes attributable to the ghost in addition to the war preparations. Since both meanings are in force, the audience experiences a language already functioning equivocally. The two meanings are simultaneous in one utterance. By their very presence the guards signal the first meaning and Horatio’s explanation reaffirms it. The ghost’s appearance, however, gestures toward a different cause for concern and dread. How to speak to the ghost and what sort of being it is become more important questions than the concern for the war.

In Horatio’s attempts to speak to the ghost, we have a linguistic renaissance formula for dealing with spirit apparitions. Horatio, who has shown skepticism about the

ghost, keeps to the prescribed, orthodox response to a spirit by invoking the name of heaven in questioning it. The ghost's response is to be "offended" and "stalk away." But which Christian response is Horatio employing? On the one hand, Horatio responds as a Protestant by imploring to the ghost to speak "by heaven." On the other, his questions upon the ghost's second appearance seem to be more in line with a Catholic cosmology. First he asks, "If there be any good thing to be done/ That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,/ Speak to me; (I.i.133-35). Two words in this speech act should give us pause.

The first clause contains the word "good," and the context implies the Catholic idea of "good works." The formula also corresponds to this idea, for it is in precisely this context for which a purgatorial ghost might come back to earth. In the economy of the Catholic perspective, Horatio might be able to help the ghost's progress through purgatory by performing some good work (either through prayer, or Masses, etc.), and in exchange he might receive some benefit in his own purgatorial progress.

In the second relative clause of this speech act, however, the benefit Horatio suggests he might receive is "grace." "Grace," that word so pregnant with meaning in the Protestant/Catholic controversies over salvation, might here indicate a Protestant position. But it is already in conflict; the formula is Catholic, the word echoes the Protestant argument about salvation through grace alone, and is at variance with the Catholic notion of salvation through "good works." Already, in trying to speak to the supernatural apparition, Horatio reveals that the play will not be stable in its Christian context, and this instability relates directly to the linguistic and epistemological systems being used.

Rather than reveal a Catholic or Protestant ideology, the play shows a conflation of these ideologies. The epistemology operant in the play's language is influenced by both Catholic and Protestant ideas. This *tertium quid* represents a middle step between an epistemology of performativity (as influenced by the centrality of the Catholic Mass and its fundamental speech act of consecration) and the development of a commemorative epistemology, as determined through the reformers' abolition of this principal Catholic doctrine.

The power of Horatio's speech act serves to sift the ghost. This scheme exposes the residue of a performative epistemology. In invoking heaven, Horatio expects his speech act to do something. If the ghost is a malevolent spirit, as Eleanor Prosser insists,⁴³ its reaction to the invocation of heaven (stalking away) is to be expected, for demonic spirits could not stand to hear the name of heaven. This was true for both Catholics and Protestants. The two systems seem to be simultaneously operational in Horatio's speech act. This will prove to be as true for Hamlet as it is for Horatio.

Much has been written about Hamlet's delay in carrying out the revenge demanded by the ghost; but the delay is essential to the plot of the play. As Fredson Bowers puts it, "there are, of course, numerous technical dramatic reasons, divorced from all considerations of character, why an instant revenge cannot be taken, including the prime fact that there would have been no problem and no play" (87). The question of

⁴³ Prosser convincingly argues throughout *Hamlet and Revenge* that the ghost is a demonic spirit on a mission of damnation.

why Hamlet delays may be simply, if unsatisfactorily, answered by saying that the play demands it. According to David Young:

Perhaps it is by now a truism that Hamlet's indecisive and delaying ways have been much exaggerated, on the basis of his own self-condemnations more than on evidence in the plot. (20)

The play, in effect, takes place within the temporal space provided by the impediments to swift justice. Both in Saxo Grammaticus and Belleforest's versions of the Hamlet story (which were of course not dramatic works), the prince's youth and frailty cause the postponement of the revenge. Amleth is unable to act because he lacks the strength to fight against his powerful uncle. Shakespeare is emending his sources to give Hamlet internal rather than external obstacles, in keeping with Hostos's analysis of the "individual soul in process."

In both Saxo Grammaticus's account in *Danish History* and in Belleforest's adaptation, Amleth, or Hamblet is bound by duty to exact revenge for his father's murder, and Shakespeare has incorporated this Pagan principle into the Christian milieu to which he has transposed *Hamlet*. Stephen Greenblatt, in fact, points to the ghost's appearance as unnecessary in these two analogues because in them "the social code manifestly demands" vengeance (Purgatory 205). In Shakespeare's play the ghost's appearance is required to both acquaint Hamlet with the murder and urge him to revenge. In Saxo's account, there needs no ghost come from the grave to tell Amleth of the murder, since the fratricide is a public act, nor is it necessary to urge him toward revenge since the social

code insists on it. After cunningly contriving to execute his revenge against Feng, his fratricidal uncle, Amleth addresses his people, declaring his actions righteous and just:

I have been the agent of this just vengeance; I have burned for this righteous retribution; uphold me with a high-born spirit; pay me the homage that you owe; warm me with your kindly looks. It is I who have wiped off my country's shame; I who have quenched my mother's dishonour. (Saxo 121)

When he is done recounting his great exploits in exacting this “righteous retribution,” Amleth is “appointed king by prompt and general acclaim” (122). Having feigned mental weakness, not quite madness, Amleth has bided his time long enough to carry out an elaborate revenge, which makes him a hero to his people. Amleth emerges from his revenge plot triumphant and, more importantly, alive. His proclamation of the “righteous retribution” allows Amleth to become the new king. His speech, therefore, has performative power.

Hamlet cannot exact a public revenge of this kind. As Bowers insists, the Christian context does not allow Hamlet this possibility (137-154). While the code of honor may propel Hamlet toward the action of revenge, both the Christian moral code and dramatic convention require a delay. In arguing that Hamlet's tragic flaw is not his delay, Bowers states:

By its climax the plot tells us that it was the breaking of the inaction that was the fatal error, indeed the tragic flaw that justified his final death and made it acceptable, in Aristotelian as well as in Christian terms, to the audience of his

own and of our day, for Hamlet must expiate the murder he has committed. (150)

Bower here refers to the murder of Polonius, which he sees as the climax of the play.

However, he leans, I think, a little too heavily on Aristotle in analyzing the plot of a Renaissance play, where Aristotle's specific requirements for tragedy may no longer be essential.

If we insist too much on the problem of Hamlet's delay, we must ultimately conclude that Shakespeare's device is clumsily designed or used. The success of the play belies this possibility. Some critics resolve this issue by asserting that there is no delay at all; that Hamlet moves immediately to carry out the Ghost's command.⁴⁴ What, then, hinders the ultimate fulfillment of the command until Act V? One of the chief differences between other Renaissance revenge dramas and *Hamlet* in this respect lays in the fact that the heroes of most other revenge plays deal with much more concrete obstacles to revenge. Though he yearns for revenge when he finds his son hanging in an arbor, Hieronimo, in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, cannot act until he has determined who murdered him. Hamlet seems to have the will, opportunity and means to execute his revenge long before Act V, yet fails to act.

Hamlet's first obstacle is in assessing the nature of the ghost. This is important to my argument because in determining the nature of the ghost two possibilities arise, and those are consonant with either a Catholic or Protestant perspective. While in either the Catholic or the Protestant view the ghost may be a demonic spirit, only the Catholic context allows the ghost to be the actual soul of Hamlet's father. In accepting the ghost

as his father's spirit, Hamlet takes an apparent Catholic position, but this position is always in conflict. While he seems to first accept the ghost as the purgatorial spirit of his father, there is clear evidence in the text that later he is not so sure. As the ghost enters the scene, Hamlet exclaims, "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" (I.iv.39), a proper Protestant response; but, the next five lines show a less orthodox reaction:

Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs of heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee. (I.iv.40-44)

This is precisely the wrong response to a "questionable" ghost. According to established tradition, a spectral apparition was more likely than not to be the work of the devil. This was particularly true if the figure took the shape of a recently deceased loved one. In the Renaissance, several tests distinguished "healthful spirits" from "goblins damned," among these were several questions that should be asked about the appearance of the ghost.⁴⁵ A Christian should never ask anything of a ghost before invoking the name of heaven, as Horatio does in the first scene (I.i.51). Hamlet, in fact, has sworn, "If it assume my noble father's person, /I'll speak to it though hell itself should gape/ And bid me hold my peace" (I.iii.244-46) before he meets the ghost. Contrary to Catholic and

⁴⁴ See John Erskine Hankins, *The Character of Hamlet*.

⁴⁵ For a thorough examination of the Renaissance methods of determining the nature of supernatural apparitions see Elanor Prosser ; See also Hankins, "On Ghosts" (131-171) which reviews different 16th century theories for the sources of ghosts.

Protestant warnings about ghosts, Hamlet is prepared to speak to the spirit regardless of its nature or where it has come from. He reiterates his commitment to speak to it even as Horatio and Marcellus attempt to intervene.

According to John Hankins, five possibilities for the origins of ghosts existed in the Renaissance. A ghost might be the “hallucinations of a diseased ‘fantasy’” (134), “a physical phenomenon portending danger to the state” (142), “the ‘spirit’ of the deceased” (151), “the actual soul’ of the deceased (159), or “an evil demon” (165). Since he is not the only or even the first person to have seen the ghost, Hamlet, in delaying his action to determine its nature must eliminate the possibility that the ghost is a hallucination. It cannot represent some vague astronomical or astrological sign or trick of nature “portending danger to the state,” since its appearance and its instructions are too specific.

The third option is also not acceptable, since the ghost has more than a vague consciousness of an earthly mission. He has, in fact, a very specific earthly mission, to exact revenge on the fratricidal Claudius. This leaves Hamlet with two alternatives; the ghost is either the soul of his dead father come from purgatory—one possible Catholic view—or a demonic spirit (a possibility for both Catholics and Protestants, but the only possibility for Protestants). Only the one Catholic possibility allows the ghost to be the soul of Hamlet’s father. This option remains possible yet unlikely even for Catholics.

Some critics read his mission as indicating a demonic unchristian ghost. Within the Catholic scheme, the ghost has one earthly mission, to ask for intercessory prayers that would facilitate his transition out of purgatory (a possibility considered by Horatio in

his questions to the ghost), but not to seek revenge from his murderer. If the ghost is indeed in purgatory, two things must be true: the religious system underlying belief must be a Catholic one, and the elder Hamlet must be a saved soul whose sins are in the process of purgation. As such, his strange un-Christian request should give Hamlet pause in carrying out the revenge. As a saved soul, it seems unlikely that his father would come from purgatory to command that Hamlet perform an act for which *he* will most likely be damned.

Since the ghost himself describes his “prison house” as a place where he is “confin’d to fast in fires,/ Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature/Are burnt and purg’d away,” he gives an accurate description of the Catholic notion of purgatory. The ghost, if it is honest, must, by definition, be Catholic, and therefore to believe it is the soul of his dead father, Hamlet must accept the Catholic account of purgatory, a possibility he has ignored in his first dialogue with the ghost.

Eleanor Prosser, who rejects the view of many critics that Hamlet is duty bound to accept the ghost’s command, argues that despite purgatorial controversies,

Both Protestants and Catholics agreed that a soul could not return from Heaven or Hell. By banishing Purgatory, the Reformation thus eliminated any possibility that the soul of the dead could return to earth. (*Revenge* 102)

For Protestants, “Since the ghost could not be a human soul, it could be only a good or evil spirit, an angel or a devil” (103). Thus, Hamlet’s response in categorizing the “thing” before him as either a “spirit of health” or “goblin damned,” shows an affinity

with the Protestant view; there is no mention here of a possible purgatorial spirit. As Greenblatt notes in *Hamlet in Purgatory*, “nothing Hamlet says in the wake of his fateful exchange with his father’s spirit explicitly acknowledges a third possibility, a middle state between Heaven and Hell...” (233). However, Greenblatt continues, implicit in Hamlet’s oath, “Yes, by Saint Patrick,” there is the acknowledgement of purgatory, for Saint Patrick is closely associated with purgatory in medieval and early modern tradition, as is Hamlet’s phrase in response to the ghost’s command from the cellarage, *hic et ubique* (here and everywhere).

The Catholic view, while not completely excluding the possibility that the apparition might be the soul of a departed human, rendered this possibility unlikely. A spirit could only come back to earth from purgatory with the expressed consent of God, and only under some “extraordinary occasions if God so permits” (Prosser 106).⁴⁶ These occasions would be so rare as to constitute a miracle. Both Catholics and Protestants in the 16th century, Prosser argues, “were warned to be thoroughly suspicious of any supernatural visitation,” and “in most cases spirits professing to be dead souls were actually devils” (107, 106).

In suggesting only two possibilities, and thereby taking an apparent Protestant view, Hamlet essentially assumes that the ghost cannot be the purgatorial soul of his dead father and is most likely not a “spirit of health,” but a demon.⁴⁷ However, in his further

⁴⁶ Prosser here quotes from Father Noel Teillepied, *A Treatise of Ghosts*, which attempts to explain St. John Chrysostom’s position, referred to by Protestants, that spirits do not return to earth.

⁴⁷ While generally the critical tradition has accepted the ghost as the spirit of the murdered king, I find Prosser’s argument rather convincing, especially, given the nature of his un-Christian command to Hamlet.

exhortations to have the ghost speak, he chooses to call him “Hamlet, /King, father, royal Dane” (I.iv.44-45). Hamlet, against his better judgment, seems prepared, at least temporarily, to accept this apparition as the soul of his dead father even before the ghost proclaims, “I am thy father’s spirit,” though his later thoughts and actions indicate that he does not have complete confidence in the spirit’s provenance. In this passage he has admitted the possibility that the ghost may be an evil spirit come from hell, but he just does not care.

When Horatio and Marcellus warn him against following the ghost by saying, “Look with what courteous action/ It waves you to a more removed ground./ But do not go with it,” (I.iv.60-63), Hamlet reasons poorly for a Renaissance Christian (either Protestant or Catholic):

Why, what should be the fear?

I do not set my life at a pin’s fee,

And for my soul, what can it do to that,

Being a thing immortal as itself? (I.iv.65-68)

While he is right in that the ghost cannot assault his soul materially, his “prophetic soul” fails to acknowledge another possibility: that the spirit, if demonic, may be trying to induce him to an unnatural act that will bring him eternal damnation. If demonic (the most likely possibility according to Prosser), the spirit uses language to set Hamlet on a course of damnation. According to Harry Morris,

In this argument Prosser is following Roy Battenhouse, “The Ghost in *Hamlet*: A Catholic Linchpin,” and is followed by Harry Morris, *Last Things in Shakespeare*.

Perhaps most telling of all against the possibility of heavenly origins for the ghost are its purposes. The injunction is revenge. Apart from the widely accepted belief that revenge as a motive for action was totally unacceptable in the sixteenth century, we may observe an unpleasant selfishness prompting the ghost. (21)

The ghost's provenance is rendered doubtful by contemporary ghost lore, its unnatural command, and both Catholic and Protestant eschatology, all of which seem to indicate that rather than a purgatorial spirit, the ghost is a demonic presence on a mission of damnation.

Situated as he is: a beloved father dead, an usurping uncle in his place, a "most seeming-virtuous" mother faithlessly drawn by lust to the "enseam'd bed" of the very same usurping uncle, Hamlet is primed for a demonic attempt to damn his soul. In this first meeting with the ghost, Hamlet, like Laertes in Act IV, will "dare damnation." If the ghost is indeed demonic, in pronouncing the speech act that he will speak to it even if it brings "blasts from hell," Hamlet has already set a course for damnation. His lack of care of his mortal body, setting its price a "pin's fee," is no less important to this course.

The ghost is a perplexing character; the description of his "prison house" and his very existence as a purgatorial spirit are only possible within a Catholic universe, his request for revenge seems either a pagan or demonic act, and yet he advises mercy for his "faithless" wife. If we continue reading the ghost as a demonic spirit, the mention of the queen might serve a purpose different from one of mercy. According to Prosser, the image of his mother's incestuous relationship with his uncle is what most perturbs and

haunts Hamlet's thoughts. The ghost places the image in Hamlet's mind in the most crude and carnal terms:

Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
 So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
 Will sate itself in a celestial bed
 And prey on garbage. (I.v.54-57)

These images in association with his mother will echo in Hamlet's thoughts throughout the play and was already mutedly present in his consideration of his mother's overhasty marriage to Claudius. As Morris contends, "[f]irst among Hamlet's thought at play's opening, that sin still dominates the Prince's mind when he pours venom down his uncle's throat at play's end" (14). The ghost's most direct command for revenge reemphasizes this idea:

If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not,
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
 A couch of luxury and damned incest. (I.v.81-83)

While the ghost's stricture against Hamlet taking any action against his mother is purportedly merciful, the mention here in connection with the incestuous, murderous uncle insinuates her complicity in the initial crime. Gertrude denies this complicity in her responses to Hamlet in the closet scene, but Hamlet has assumed, from the ghost's insinuation, that his mother is as guilty as Claudius. Prosser suggests that the ghost knows exactly what to say to get Hamlet to damn his soul. The ghost displays verbal and

psychological skill throughout his first interview with Hamlet.

Before he actually swears, Hamlet promises to listen to the ghost's tale:

Ghost: Lend thy serious hearing

To what I shall unfold.

Hamlet: Speak, I am bound to hear.

Ghost: So art thou to revenge when thou shalt hear. (I.v.6)

The use of the word "bound" by Hamlet, here, may mean prepared or ready or obliged by proximity and not necessarily obligated by duty. In the ghost's linguistic manipulation Hamlet has by logical extension already promised revenge. Even if Hamlet has meant by "bound" that he has a duty to give "serious hearing" to the ghost's tale, he does not intend an entailed promise to avenge his father's murder, particularly since he does not yet know of it. The ghost's astute manipulation of language transforms Hamlet's promise to listen into an oath of revenge. The ghost's linguistic maneuvers cause Hamlet into a performative speech act, an oath to revenge. He makes this oath before he has had a chance to assess the nature or motivation of the apparition. Once he has made his promise, he is bound by duty carry out his promise to the ghost he has only momentarily accepted as his father's.

The duty to which the ghost alludes is not a Christian one under either the Protestant or Catholic context. In fact, the action the ghost requires of Hamlet is a damning act from either a Catholic or Protestant perspective. Many critics have placed the revenge commanded by the ghost in the dichotomous context of either private revenge

(damnable) or public justice (laudable).⁴⁸ Within this context “to find the ghost demonic,” as Morris suggests, “does not mean that Hamlet, when he completes the revenge desired by the ghost, has damned his own soul. Heaven’s goal and hell’s may be identical.... The difference lies in motives and means” (33). In this context, Hamlet’s delay implies yet another purpose. Hamlet delays just long enough for the means and motives of the revenge to become more in harmony with heaven than hell.

Horatio expresses the proper Christian response to the ghost in the first scene (I.i.133-134). Horatio’s response to the ghost, while conflicted is consistent with Catholic doctrine, for to attempt to bring ease to the dead suffering in purgatory was considered a “good work” and might indeed bring “grace” to the performer. Hamlet’s promise is not bound by this formula; he promises to perform an action, which will not be a “good work” and will not bring him “grace,” but damnation. Hamlet is not ignorant of this fact, for in the soliloquy that follows the ghost’s departure (the speech in which he makes his vow) he asks, “O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?/ And shall I couple hell?” (I.v.92-93). Having at first assumed that the ghost may be his father’s spirit, he now wonders if the ghost is not “honest.” Harold Jenkins notes, “Hamlet does not ignore that that which he now pledges himself may embrace both good and evil” (221 n. 93), but this pledge does not embrace “both good and evil.” Within a Christian ethical system, it is only evil, and in the question “shall I couple hell?” Hamlet makes clear his awareness of the fact.

When the ghost makes his demand for revenge, Hamlet responds as if he will act

⁴⁸ See particularly, Fredson Bowers, “Hamlet: Scourge and Minister” (132)

in the usual revenge mode:

Yea, from the table of my memory
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
 That youth and observation copied there,
 And thy commandment all alone shall live
 Within the book and volume of my brain,
 Unmix'd with baser matter. Yes, by heaven! (I.vi.98-104)

In this utterance, Hamlet echoes Antonio in *Antonio's Revenge* in swearing a monomaniacal devotion to the ghost's commandment although he will not immediately act upon this promise. What is the nature of this promise? The ghost's last words before the crowing of the cock sends him back to his prison house are "Remember me," and it is to this commemoration to which Hamlet seems to swear.

At the end of the long soliloquy that follows the ghost's exit, Hamlet repeats the final words of the ghost, "Adieu, adieu, remember me," and then, "I have sworn't" (I.v.11-112). The juxtapositioning of this reiteration of the ghost's final command may indicate that it is to this that he has sworn. The "I have sworn't" sounds like a mustering of resolve, as if to say, "I have sworn, now I must do it." Hamlet has previously begun to fulfill part of this oath by "setting down" his uncle's name on his "tables."

Writing his uncle's name on his tables is a most curious action. That Hamlet would go out to the battlements to meet the ghost carrying with him a writing tablet and

quill and ink (for what purpose? taking notes) seems rather odd, as does, writing his uncle's name on this tablet. Why? because he might forget that he has just seen the ghost of his father who has told him that his uncle is his murderer? The image of the tablet and Hamlet's writing in it may be an emblem for his scholarly interests. Writing on the tablet is a concretization of the metaphor Hamlet has used in swearing his oath. Recording his uncle's name in this fashion on the tablet is a performative act; it serves as a contract of his promise to the ghost. The metaphor is an old one, going back as far as Aeschylus.⁴⁹ The promise of revenge and commemoration co-exist in this act, and perhaps the revenge vow is present within the vow of remembrance. This may be the most explicit example of the mingling of performative and commemorative epistemologies in the play. Hamlet's vow has been sworn in his speech act to the ghost and given more weight in being written down (even if figuratively). It is, however, an oath to commemoration; whatever Hamlet will do, he will do it in memory of his murdered father. Hamlet will honor the memory of his father by fulfilling the ghost's demand for vengeance, even if it brings him damnation.

The French word for goodbye repeated twice, in Hamlet's iteration, and three times by the ghost, seems out of place. This word, in French, means both farewell and "to God." On the one hand, it may help identify the ghost as a "healthful spirit" rather than a "goblin damned," since in this farewell he casually mentions the word for god

⁴⁹ Harold Jenkins cites Theobald as showing "that the metaphor is as old as Aeschylus. Cf. Sidney, *Apology*, 'Let Aeneas be worn in the tablet of your memory'; and Blakemore Evans in relation to an emblem by Whitney: "'saints in show, with Judas hearts,' which recommends testing the correspondence of a man's words and deeds by noting them on 'a table'" (*Hamlet* ls. 98 and 107n.)

(albeit in French). On the other hand, connected, as it is, with the request for commemoration, it may represent an appeal for something akin to intercessory prayers, that is, “remember me to God,” and not just “remember me, yourself.” If we allow this to be true this is another example of the commingling of commemoration and performativity.

In the next scene, as Hamlet attempts to assure himself that Horatio and Marcellus will not talk about the appearance of the ghost, he makes them swear by his sword. Hamlet is much more precise in his use of this performative act than was the ghost. Although Horatio has already promised to fulfill Hamlet’s request even before hearing what it is, Hamlet insists on a formal oath by the cross formed by the hilt of his sword. Horatio’s promise takes the truncated form explained by Austin as sufficiently binding (which is a first person pronoun with a performative verb in the future indicative). “Give me one poor request,” asks Hamlet. Horatio responds, “What is’t, my lord? We will” (I.v.148-49), speaking for both himself and Marcellus. After Hamlet makes the request, “Never make known what you have seen tonight,” they both respond with one voice, “my lord, we will not” (I.v.149,150). Hamlet, however, is not satisfied with this response as a proper vow and commands them “nay, but swear’t.” Again Marcellus and Horatio swear they will not reveal what they have seen, and this time they each add the phrase “in faith” to their performative speech act. Still not satisfied, Hamlet makes them swear by his sword, “upon my sword.” Marcellus protests, “We have sworn, my lord, already.” But Hamlet insists, “Indeed, upon my sword, indeed” (I.v.154-156).

Hamlet's insistence shows a determination to follow the proper form for a performative speech act. An oath is one of Austin's primary exemplars of performative speech acts. In his precision, Hamlet attempts to assure that their speech act will be felicitous; that is, that the vow to which they will swear will have a binding sequel. In this attempt, he tries to provide proper context, authority and form to the oath. The authority is here represented by the cross of the hilt of his sword, which resonates with Catholic symbolism and approximates the veneration of the cross, which Protestants scorned as idolatrous.

At this point, the ghost enjoins Hamlet's companions to "swear by his sword," which goes against Christ's own scriptural injunction against all swearing in Matthew:

Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. (5:34-37)

Shakespeare's awareness and understanding of this injunction, if not proven by its common understanding in the period, is shown in an allusion to it in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Romeo swears his constancy by the moon; Juliet, who is concerned that the moon's variability will result in Romeo's inconstancy, echoes the words from scripture with a twist: "Do not swear at all;/ Or if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,/ Which is the god of my idolatry" (II.ii.112-14). Juliet here expresses the dubious power of oath taking as

proscribed in Matthew. She shows the idolatrous nature of an oath taken upon anything but God. In essence an oath by God comes from evil, and an oath by anything else is idolatry. A few lines later Juliet will change her mind and again ask Romeo “Well, do not swear” (II.ii.116).

In his own oath, Hamlet has made an extravagant show of his commitment, but rather than clearing all but one item “from the table of [his] memory,” Hamlet will use his learned reasoning skills to evaluate the ghost’s commands and the revenge he will seek from his uncle. As according to Hankins, Hamlet’s delay in carrying out his revenge is not exactly dilatory, as many other critics have seen it, but carefully considered. Hankins analyzes the time frame of the action of the play to determine how much of Hamlet’s delay in exacting revenge results from his vacillation over and against his need to verify the ghost’s story. Hankins lends more credence than most critics to the idea that Hamlet must assure himself that the ghost’s tale is accurate in order to act appropriately. According to Hankins, the time between Hamlet’s promise to the ghost and the end of “The Mousetrap” is taken up with Hamlet trying to devise a scheme by which to “catch the conscience of the King” and more particularly the queen’s. In this attempt, the first scheme Hamlet conceives of is to “put an antic disposition on.” This scheme is not particularly effective in discovering the guilt of either the queen or the king, although it does seem to distract them. Bowers suggests, that Hamlet’s antic disposition, in fact, places him in more danger from Claudius because it leads him and Gertrude to conjectures about the source of his “madness” (105). Only with the players’ chance

appearance does Hamlet come up with an effective method of corroborating the ghost's story and the king's guilt.

The questions Hamlet asks the player about adding a scene to "The Murder of Gonzago" make clear that Hamlet has hit upon this idea before the "rogue and peasant slave" soliloquy which follows the player's scene, although he will reveal it to us later. In this soliloquy, we see Hamlet very specifically considering the power of words. This speech is so central that it merits quoting at some length:

Is it not monstrous that this player here,
 But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
 Could force his soul so to his conceit
 That from her working all his visage wann'd,
 Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
 A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
 With forms to his conceit? (II.ii.545-551)

This long question suggests some surprise at the power of words to animate passion even in a fiction. The player's ability to assume the emotion of the scene and give his words the power to move the listeners amazes Hamlet. When he turns to his own cause and considers what the player might do in his place, Hamlet says:

What would he do
 Had he the motive and the cue for passion
 That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,

And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amazed indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears. (II.ii.554-60)

Hamlet suggests a series of responses for the player, which reveals the power of language and its limitations. Hamlet suggests that if the player were in his position, he would “speak daggers, but use none,” and this speech act would have power indeed. In this soliloquy, Hamlet is not only chastising himself for his inability to act, but for his inability to speak. In continuing the comparison between his response and what he imagines the player’s would be, he says,

Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing—no, not for a king. (II.ii.561-64)

The comparison implies that the most powerful reaction is a verbal one that would have a performative effect. It suggests also that to say something is to do something.

As the soliloquy continues, however, Hamlet resorts to name-calling:

I should ha’ fatted all the region kites
With this slave’s offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain! (II.ii.575-77)

For this response, Hamlet also chides himself. This language is not performative and

does not have the power to “amaze indeed.” Here, there is a contrast between public and private speech. Not only does this language not compare to that of the player’s in its ability to elicit emotional response that might “make mad the guilty,” but it is uttered in private, where it is not even addressed to the “general ear” and therefore cannot have an effect. No wonder Hamlet reacts to his own cursing of Claudius by saying:

This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murder’d,
Prompted to revenge by heaven and hell,
Must like a whore unpack my heart with words
And fall a-cursing like a very drab... (II.ii.579-83)

In contrast to the player’s words, which have performative and emotive power, Hamlet’s curses are ineffective. His inability to speak the proper words in the proper context renders him powerless. In this too we see the concern for private vengeance versus public justice, through which Hamlet may be considered the “scourge” or “minister” of heaven. By seeking public justice in bringing down the usurping king, Hamlet may be doing heaven’s will, but in privately seeking to avenge his father’s murder, he would be going against the proscription of heaven.

In this speech we also see that he continues to consider that his prompting to revenge may be celestial or infernal. Toward the end of the soliloquy, Hamlet most explicitly expresses the possibility that the ghost is trying to damn him:

The spirit that I have seen

May be a devil, and the devil hath power
 T'assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps,
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
 As he is very potent with such spirits,
 Abuses me to damn me. (II.ii.594-99)

For the first time Hamlet articulates what must have been a concern from the moment of the ghost's command. This consideration is also marked by a concern for the performative power of language. The ghost, if demonic, may be "abusing" Hamlet by telling a story, by using words. These words have their performative power in enticing Hamlet toward an act that will damn him. Hamlet seems to consider that the ghost may be the devil putting on "a pleasing shape," but he fails to consider that the devil can also use truth for an evil end. In choosing to gauge the ghost's "honesty" he focuses only on whether the story he has told is true. He will use "The Mousetrap" to assure himself only that the ghost has told the truth.

Here Hamlet partakes of a performative epistemology. To assure himself that the ghost is "honest," that is, to "know" that his uncle is truly his father's murderer, Hamlet will rely on the speech acts of the play-within-the-play to do something ("catch the conscience of the king"). The stratagem's effectiveness in revealing Claudius's guilt and thereby the ghost's honesty reveals the efficacy of this epistemological system. Even this effective use of performative speech is co-mingled with a commemorative epistemology. The "sequel"—that is, in Austinian terms, the result that a performative speech act will

have for the listener—here functions only through remembrance. Hamlet expects that Claudius will react to the resemblance between the action represented in the play and his actions as described by the ghost. Hamlet relies on the king's memory (and presumed guilt) of his crime. In a certain sense, the play-within-the-play is a commemoration of that crime, a commemoration, which Hamlet uses performatively to determine the truth of the ghost's account.

At the point of his sworn oath to the ghost, Hamlet uses a performative speech act, which, at least for a time, will become infelicitous. Hamlet does not in point of fact swear revenge. At the moment the ghost reveals that he was murdered, Hamlet responds with metaphoric language that might imply a promise of revenge, but taken literally the words are not precisely those of a promised oath; "Haste me to know't, that I with wings as swift/ As meditation or the thoughts of love/ May sweep to my revenge" (I.v.29-31). This speech act relies on his previously stated vow to listen to the ghost and the ghost's extension of that promise. The "may" of this sentence can be taken in at least two ways. It can fulfill the second part of a conditional statement; if the ghost recounts the circumstances of his murder, the knowledge of these circumstances will become the impetus that allows Hamlet to "sweep to [his] revenge. Or, it is possible that the "may" is itself a conditional; that is, if Hamlet knows of it, he *may* do something, but he *may* not. The context of the speech act indicates that Hamlet is most likely using the former sense of the word "may." However, this does not quite signify a contracted promise. There are some critical conditions to be fulfilled before the second part of the conditional statement

can be put in force.

Hamlet's statement indicates that he is prepared to avenge his father's murder, but the ignorance is all that impedes his progress. While he seems to believe the ghost, he is not yet convinced that he *knows* the real circumstances of the murder. Rather than "sweeping to revenge," Hamlet delays in order to make doubly sure that his revenge is merited. In fully ascertaining the truth, through by means of the stratagem of "The Mousetrap," however, Hamlet reveals himself to the king. However ineffective his ruse of madness has been in causing the king's guilt to be discovered or concealing Hamlet's knowledge, the effectiveness of the play-within-the-play cuts both ways. Hamlet must now struggle with a villain who knows that Hamlet knows his secret. Claudius, who like Hamlet had been held at bay while the murder was still a secret, immediately moves to counterplot against Hamlet. The ostensibly innocent plan to send Hamlet to England, resolved after the Ophelia interview, is now turned into a murderous plot against Hamlet.

"The Mousetrap" has another effect on Claudius. After leaving the play and making preparations for Hamlet's voyage to England, the king begins to contemplate his crime:

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;

It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,

A brother's murder. Pray can I not,

Though inclination be as sharp as will,

The stronger guilt defeats my strong intent (III.iii.36-40)

This speech, which will end with the prayer scene which Hamlet will come upon, reveals to us that Claudius is not the cold-blooded murderer Hamlet has imagined, a “remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain.” Unlike Richard III, for whom “Sin must pluck on sin,” Claudius is a villain with a conscience.

This pang of conscience effected by the commemoration of his crime in the play-within-the-play shows us a Claudius who earnestly seeks repentance like a good Christian. However, he finds that he cannot repent from his mortal sin because despite his remorse, he cannot let go “Of those effects for which [he] did the murder” (III.iii.54). Claudius is well aware of the Catholic formula for penance; and while he is prepared to “Try what repentance can” (III.iii.65), he finds that he cannot completely do so.

Hamlet’s first chance to act after he has ascertained the king’s guilt is during the prayer scene. However, he rejects this opportunity because he reads Claudius’s actions in prayer as redemptive. When Hamlet happens upon the kneeling Claudius, he is prepared to follow through on his resolution to make his thoughts bloody. Now, at the “witching hour,” he is prepared to “drink hot blood,” “Now might I do it pat, now a is a-praying/ And now I’ll do’t. *{Draws his sword}*” (73-74). However, the sight of Claudius on his knees causes him to pause, with drawn sword, to consider whether killing Claudius at this moment would be true revenge:

And so a goes to heaven;

And so am I reveng’d. That would be scann’d:

A villain kills my father, and for that
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven. (III.iii.75-8)

In this consideration, Hamlet scans inaccurately. As Claudius himself states, the repentance of the crime cannot be effective. Repentance can be considered a performative speech act, since its words have the performative effect of redemption under Catholic dogma, but it is one that requires three steps, confession, contrition and satisfaction. While Claudius is prepared and in fact fulfills the first, he cannot, or feels he cannot, be absolutely contrite or provide satisfaction. His words fly up, but his thoughts remain below. This cannot be a full penitence under a Catholic or a Protestant definition, since Claudius continues to be bound to earthly desire.

Hamlet misreads the effectiveness of this performative speech act and determines to wait for an opportunity when he will be able not only to kill Claudius, but to do so at a time when his soul will warrant damnation. Claudius shows that he well understands the precepts of the old religion, and here again there is a conflation of two epistemological modes. For Claudius, the system of sacramentality depends upon a properly executed formula and a strong intent to fulfill the precepts of this formula. However, his “strong intent” for atonement is not enough to override his material desires. His words of prayer have no power and no authority because they lack the proper context to make them redemptive and sufficient intent to perform satisfaction. In misreading the circumstances of Claudius’s repentance, Hamlet displays a willingness to accept the performative

function language within the old sacramental system. If he were to “scan” the situation thoroughly, he would realize that Claudius’ redemption depends upon his willingness to return all of the gains effected by his mortal sin, in other words, to perform an act of true contrition and satisfaction.

A moment of true contrition is possible—stepping outside the Catholic formula for penitence—without the benefit of shriving. For example, in Dante’s *Purgatorio*, Buonconte, whose “last word sped/ Forth in the name of Mary,” (Canto V, 100-101) is thereby saved. However, the Catholic Church has taught since the Council of Trent that the proper form of the sacrament is made up of three parts, as mentioned above. The priest’s words of absolution are, of course, performative—in Austin’s terms this is a “verdictive” speech act—but in order for this speech act to have a “felicitous sequel,” some conditions must be met. The penitent must make a full and honest confession; s/he must do so with good intent and true contrition and at the very least want to carry out penance fully; the priest must be authorized by the church to hear confession and grant absolution, a power given by Christ to his apostles and priests, as their successors. It should, however, remain clear that in this doctrine God, not the priest, grants absolution. The power of the priest’s words depends on the grace of God and Christ’s promise.

Buonconte’s condition as well as those of the other souls Dante meets in this area of purgatory is consistent with this doctrine. The spirits of the unshriven occupy the second terrace of purgatory, only one level above that of the excommunicated and outside the gate of purgatory itself. In his ultimate act (of true contrition) Buonconte has saved

himself from damnation, but he must do his shriving before he is admitted through the gate into purgatory proper, where his sins will be purged. King Hamlet's soul, if it is indeed in purgatory, is in this same area.

Hamlet's decision to wait until Claudius's soul is in greater danger of damnation has shocked critics as far back as Samuel Johnson, but Prosser enumerates 23 cases where an Elizabethan stage revenger seeks "the ultimate vengeance." According to Prosser this was a clear doctrine of the revenge tragedy, however, in seeking this level of revenge, she suggests, the revenger is himself damned. In this context, the problem with Hamlet is that he is generally read as a sympathetic character. Critics who want to continue to see Hamlet as a sympathetic hero, however, must make some justification. Hamlet would not remain sympathetic if he were to kill a kneeling, guilt-ridden, defenseless Claudius.

Bowers insists that Hamlet becomes sympathetic only when he entrusts his fate to God's providence in Act IV (90-101) and that the climax of the play occurs at the moment Hamlet kills Polonius behind the arras, mistaking him for the king. From this moment on, Bowers argues, Hamlet is doomed to die in expiation for the killing of the nosy, yet innocent courtier, but his soul, while in jeopardy, is not yet lost. Only in allowing providence to arrange the manner of Claudius's death is Hamlet ultimately redeemed.

Hamlet's considerations in the "prayer scene" reveal another important fact about the ghost's provenance. In determining that he should wait until the king is "unseason'd"

for his passage Hamlet says:

Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge.

A took my father grossly, full of bread,

With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May

And how his audit stands who knows save heaven? (III.iii.79-82)

Hamlet here considers the condition of his father's soul. Since he has been killed in his sleep, without the benefit of shrift and with his "crimes broad blown," King Hamlet's soul may still be in danger of damnation. In this consideration, Hamlet gives credence to the performative effect of shriving.

The salvation promised to medieval Christians was dependent upon this final act, the form of which was that of confession, absolution and one last communion. Therefore, Hamlet's concern about the state of his father's soul reverberates with a Catholic anxiety, which ultimately depends upon a set of performative speech acts. In these "last things" there is within a Catholic context the intimation of one last Mass in which the dying believer participates. The wafer placed in the dying person's mouth is consecrated in the usual way and carries with it all of the symbolism of the Mass itself. This last communion ties the individual to the Christian community, the church and to his/her God. As elsewhere in the play, however, Hamlet's reaction is conflicted; he does not know how his father's accounts stand.

In describing the condition of his father at his death, Hamlet chooses and interesting metaphor for worldliness. The phrase he uses is "full of bread," and of course

the implication is that it cannot be consecrated bread. If Hamlet is thinking like a Catholic then the emphasis of the bread's substantive quality is on its lack of ritual transformation and therefore on performative language. It is the bread of a sinful life, the bread experience and not of the lamb that washes away sins of the world. If, however, Hamlet is thinking like a Protestant, equating sinfulness with the primary accident of the Host may signal a contemptuous treatment and reversal of Catholic symbolism. For a Protestant perspective the important matter is not whether King Hamlet died having had "last rites," but whether he had been fully repentant and had complete faith in the grace of God. The point here is precisely that both of these possibilities are operant in Hamlet's thoughts; either or both systems could be at work, and therefore in conflict.

From the prayerful Claudius, Hamlet moves directly to the interview in his mother's closet, where he proposes to speak daggers yet use none. Hamlet engages in an exchange with his mother that is filled with wordplay in the same vein as his previous exchanges with Guildenstern and Polonius. Before forcibly sitting his mother down to show her her "inmost part," Hamlet swears by the rood that she is her "husband's brother's wife," continuing a tendency of characters in the play to use elements of Catholic ritual for casual oaths. Polonius has similarly sworn by the Mass in response to Hamlet's suggestion on the shape of a cloud. These oaths show a connection of some of the characters to the old religion and thereby its sacramental and epistemological systems. The connection of these characters to the old religion, as with other religious elements of

the play, is ambiguous. On the one hand, the oaths sworn by Hamlet and Polonius, related to Catholic sacramentality and more specifically to the Mass, can be taken as sacrilegious. On the other hand, the fact that they swear by these elements at all shows the play's possible Catholic context. The more serious oath forced by Hamlet on Horatio and Marcellus also shows a relationship to Catholic iconography. Swearing on the cross produced by the hilt of a sword is an old medieval commonplace. In this particular context, Hamlet insists on the efficacy of this formula, which has clear Catholic resonance. Reformist iconoclasm eliminates the efficacy of the formula and renders any use of it as idolatrous. In using sacred symbols of Catholicism to make trivial even malicious oaths the characters align themselves with this iconoclastic mode, but it remains inconsistent. At times characters place great stress on the verbal efficacy of such formulas and at others they trivialize and profane them.

The dead Polonius seems to distract Hamlet only slightly from his mission to wring his mother's heart. Immediately after discovering Polonius dead by his sword, Hamlet very clearly spells out the crime of which he accuses his mother: "A bloody deed. Almost as bad, good mother, / As kill a king and marry with his brother" (III.iv.28-9). Gertrude responds with surprise at the charge,⁵⁰ but as Hamlet settles into a discourse upon her sins he will forget the specificity of this first accusation and, rather than focus on the dead king, emphasizes the contrast between the two brothers. It is again the image

⁵⁰ As Jenkins points out, "Nothing said by the ghost has accused the Queen of complicity in the murder. Her reaction manifests her innocence..." (N. LN 29).

first presented by the ghost that provides Hamlet the ammunition with which to accost his mother. This line of admonition brings the queen to introspection: "Thou turn'st my eyes into my very soul,/ And there I see such black and grained spots/ As will not leave their tinct" (III.iv.89-91). But, since she has expressed shock at the accusation of murder, what is the nature of these "black and grained spots?" Is it simply the sin of incest in marrying her dead husband's brother? Or has she been unfaithful to King Hamlet during his lifetime? In either case, the crime of which he first accuses her is not a part of the guilt she seems to express. Hamlet's words, however, are having an effect, and the queen confirms the success of his proposed plan of speaking "daggers" in saying, "These words like daggers enter in my ears" (III.iv.95). Through Hamlet's performative speech, the queen is on the verge of repentance. As in "The Mousetrap," the performative effect of Hamlet's words is combined with a commemorative one. In order to cause the queen to repent, he will rely on her memory of the sins she has committed. Like Claudius, this commingled function of language will bring the queen near confession. In effect, Hamlet is about to complete the ghost's commands regarding the queen when the ghost appears.

Gertrude expresses the theory that the ghost is a hallucination when he appears to Hamlet; she responds, "Alas, he's mad" (III.iv.106). And later when the ghost is exiting, she says, "This is the very coinage of your brain./ This bodiless creation ecstasy/ Is very cunning" (III.iv.139-141). While his mother cannot see the ghost, to Hamlet this explanation is clearly not satisfactory since others can attest to its existence.

Critics offer various explanations for Gertrude's inability to see the ghost. A. C.

Bradley observes that in Shakespeare's day, was believed to be able—with sufficient reason— “to confine its manifestation to a single person in a company; and here the sufficient reason, that of sparing the Queen, is obvious” (117). In contrast, Dover Wilson contends that Gertrude is not “worthy” to see the ghost because she is complicit in the crime (Jenkins LN iii.iv.133). This view is made explicit in *Der bestrafte Brudermord*,⁵¹ where Hamlet's reply to the queen's avowal of seeing nothing is “I can readily believe that you see nothing, for you are no longer worthy to look on his form” (Jenkins 520). Harold Jenkins suggests that the requirements of the plot are partly responsible for her unawareness, considering “the consequence to the play's plot if she had” seen the ghost. Jenkins reiterates the Renaissance view that God determines who might or might not see such things. “As the god of his own play, the dramatist permits a symbolic characterization of Gertrude as one who, believing she sees ‘all,’ sees ‘nothing’” (520). Jenkins dismisses the view suggested by other critics that this appearance of the ghost, unlike his earlier apparitions, is, as the queen asserts, the “coinage” of Hamlet's brain. Bradley also insists that, “It is a moment when the state of Hamlet's mind is such that we cannot suppose the Ghost to be meant for an hallucination; and it is of great importance here that the spectator or reader should not suppose any such thing” (117). The reader or spectator may suppose that Hamlet's actions immediately before this appearance of the ghost may give Gertrude reason to doubt his sanity, but since both in the preceding speeches and in what follows Hamlet has been sensible enough to wring the queen's heart

⁵¹ See M. Blakemore Evans, “*Der bestrafte Brudermord* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*” for a discussion of the relationship between *Hamlet* and this German text, thought to be an eighteenth century version of the play.

sufficiently to bring her almost to repentance.

For Prosser, Gertrude's unawareness of the ghost, along with the ghost's request that Hamlet "step between her and her fighting soul" (III.iv.113), offer further evidence of the ghost's malevolent provenance and intent. Since Prosser sees the ghost as demonic, she has no problem explaining the appearance of the ghost at this importunate moment. At this moment, Prosser suggests, "we sense that if Hamlet would but pause to heed her, if she had but a moment of calm, [the queen] might speak her first words of true repentance" (197). If the ghost comes to prevent Gertrude's potential repentance, the implication of leaving Gertrude to heaven could be the "almost blunted purpose" to which the ghost refers. If the ghost is demonic, the intent of his previous speech act "Leave her to heaven,/ And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge/ To prick and sting her" (I.v.86-88), is not to leave her to the mercy of heaven, but to let her remain unrepentant so that heaven may punish her with damnation.

In any case, the ghost's appearance allows Gertrude, whose soul is indeed in conflict and who is on the verge of repentance, a way out of her introspective struggle. This renders Hamlet's performative speech act, which was working until that moment, ineffective. The queen is able to deflect her guilt unto what she perceives as Hamlet's madness. Hamlet's words in the rest of the interview do not have the same power to wring her heart. While Hamlet insists on his sanity and specifically warns his mother, "Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,/ That not your trespass by my madness speaks" (III.iv.147-8), Gertrude proves loyal to Claudius and never again comes close to

repentance, although she says that Hamlet has “cleft [her] heart in twain” (III.iv.158).

Coupled with the concern over the ambiguous nature of the ghost Gertrude’s ultimate unrepentant condition illuminates one of the greatest anxieties for Renaissance Christians.

If the reformists were right that the sacramental system ensuring the salvation of the medieval Christian community was in doubt, then they would have to worry about the fates of their dead, who had gone to their graves believing their good works, intercessory prayers and Masses would rescue them from eternal damnation. If the reformers were wrong, however, their own souls were in imminent danger.

The queen again makes reference to her soul’s conflict immediately before the mad Ophelia appears for the first time:

To my sick soul, as sin’s true nature is,
 Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss.
 So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
 It spills itself in fearing to be spilt. (IV.v.16-20)

But while she describes herself as guilty, in these lines there is only a suggestion of the difficulty of covering that guilt rather than the expiation or repentance previously implied in the closet scene. The guilt implied here, as in the closet scene, is undefined; we do not know if she refers only to the incest resulting from her marriage to Claudius or the vague notion that she may have had an extramarital relationship with Claudius before the death of King Hamlet. The idea that Gertrude is complicit in the death of her first husband, dropped by Hamlet in the wringing of her heart and objected to by the queen, are absent

from the queen's struggles with her soul in this scene. When Shakespeare wants to show this kind of guilt, as he does with Claudius in the prayer scene, he is explicit. Unlike Claudius, Gertrude expresses an unspecified guilt, and therefore, shows herself innocent in the killing of the elder Hamlet.

If she is innocent of the killing, her worst crime is the possible infidelity and the ensuing incestuous marriage to Claudius. Within Catholic doctrine, this is a severe enough sin. Like Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine, a Catholic perspective would see this union as cursed. Like Claudius, however, she seems incapable of penance. Gertrude and Claudius remain unified even after he has sent Hamlet to England. Gertrude may be unaware of the murderous plot Claudius has devised for her son there, yet when Laertes demands vengeance for his father's death, the queen seems ready to protect Claudius. Knowing that the enraged Laertes is bent on revenge and that this revenge will fall upon her son, the queen stands by Claudius. When Laertes demands, "Where is my father?" (IV.v.126), and Claudius responds, "Dead," the queen quickly interjects: "But not by him" (IV.v.128). The implication here is that at this point Gertrude is willing to give up her son to protect Claudius.

In expressing his rage for his father's death, Laertes shows himself dedicated to revenge beyond all control. This action reveals a companion plot to Hamlet's own pursuit of revenge, as does Fortinbras's warring against the Danes. Unlike Hamlet, in swearing vengeance Laertes goes beyond all Christian scope from the start. While Hamlet is willing to delay in order to assure that the demanded revenge is merited,

Laertes shows no patience in declaring:

To hell, allegiance! Vows to the blackest devil!

Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!

I dare damnation. To this point I stand,

That both the worlds I give to negligence,

Let come what comes, only I'll be reveng'd

Most thoroughly for my father. (IV.v.131-6)

Where Hamlet has been forthright in accepting the ghost's command yet ambiguous in delaying to determine the nature of the ghost, Laertes here is willing to give up both "conscience and grace" to obtain revenge for his father's death. Laertes echoes Hamlet in his use of the word "conscience." For Hamlet, "conscience does make cowards of all"; for Laertes, "conscience" is something he must renounce to fortify his quest for revenge.

Hamlet, Claudius and the Player King have all stated that conscience robs the impetus from action. The impulsive Laertes is prepared at once to damn conscience and grace to the deepest pit in order to act. While this action is in contrasts Hamlet's, the ultimate outcome will be the same. The King calms Laertes, lest he "swoopstake," "draw both friend and foe" (IV.v.142). As the king seems to be bringing Laertes to his way of thinking, the mad Ophelia enters for a second time.

Ophelia's entrance along with the song she begins to sing, as Jenkins notes, serves a purpose similar to the ghost's appearance in the closet scene. The connection is further emphasized by the flowers she distributes, the first of which is, "rosemary, that's for

remembrance" (IV.v.173), presumably given to Laertes. Laertes sees the emblematic meaning of the language of flowers, as the contemporary audience would also be aware of their meaning. That Ophelia gives Laertes, rosemary for remembrance and pansies for thoughts, and the king and queen fennel, columbines and rue indicates two points. On the one hand, it points to method in madness, which has already been exemplified by Hamlet's pretended madness and Polonius' comment on it. On the other hand, it reasserts the notion of remembrance as connected to the duty of revenge. Laertes reads this correctly both in his comment on the song Ophelia sings: "Hadst thou thy wit and didst persuade revenge,/ It could not move thus" (IV.v.167-8) and on the appropriateness of the flowers: "A document in madness: thoughts and remembrance fitted" (IV.v.179). Here, again there is a conflation between commemoration and performativity. Laertes's sworn oath of revenge, which is a performative speech act, is dependent upon the commemoration of his father's death. In each case, for both Hamlet and Laertes, this manner of commemoration dissolves from a passionately made oath to "couple hell" and loses impetus with time.

Laertes shows his concern for the commemoration of his father's death in requesting an account of Polonius's "hugger-mugger" funeral:

His means of death, his obscure funeral—
 No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
 No noble rite, nor formal ostentation—
 Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,

That I must call't in question. (IV.vi.210-214)

At this point Laertes, who has been considerably calmed by the king, is as concerned with the funeral rites of commemoration as he is with his father's death, as he will be in the graveyard scene, when he asks the priest, "What ceremony else?" (V.i.218). This concern for ritual commemoration shows a markedly Catholic anxiety, as does the concern for "shriving-time" which is in Hamlet's thoughts both as injured party and impending avenger.

Once Claudius and Laertes begin to conspire against Hamlet, the king will once again caution Laertes that passion for duty must be observed while the iron is hot, so to speak. The king first carefully introduces a different sense for "conscience" in saying, "Now must your conscience my acquittance seal" (IV.vii.1). The king, who later advises passion, here commends rationality, as long as it will excuse him from Laertes's wrath. Laertes responds by asking a very significant explanation:

But tell me
Why you proceeded not against these feats,
So crimeful and so capital in nature,
As by your safety, wisdom, all things else
You mainly were stirr'd up. (IV.vii.5-8).

This is an important question because the king does have the power to bring Hamlet to public justice rather than devising a private revenge through the murderous plot of sending him to England. From Laertes's perspective there should be nothing to prevent

the king from having sought such justice. The king has authority, circumstance, and power to solve the problem of Hamlet with one speech act. The reasons the king gives Laertes are not untrue, but they ignore the main, the possible revelation of his fratricide.

In recounting the reasons for not going to public justice, however, the king reiterates what he has said in his speech of Act I. He refers to Gertrude as being so “conjunctive to my life and soul,/ That, as the star moves not but in his sphere, I could not but by her” (IV.vii.14-6). In Act I, he has called her as “Th’imperial jointress to this warlike state” (I.ii.9). There is more meaning in these phrases than Laertes can guess, for it is through the marriage to Gertrude by which Claudius reinforces his claim on the throne. These two statements may also shed some light on the queen’s complicity in the initial crime. Claudius, who usually acts calculatingly, would not have committed the crime without some certainty or assurance that the queen would provide the “jointure” to which he refers. The queen, if not complicit in the murder, must have given Claudius sufficient assurance that she would marry him after the death of her first husband. Claudius has shown throughout the play that he is neither ruled by passion, nor does the lack of it prevent him from action. He acts in a calculated manner at all times. Therefore, it is improbable that he would have killed his brother in the hope of later winning his queen; and more likely he had already won Gertrude before committing the murder.

Laertes insists that his “revenge will come,” and the king suggests that he has already taken care of the situation and advises Laertes to “Break not your sleeps for that” (IV.vii.30). Ironically, since the messenger will soon enter carrying Hamlet’s letter, he

says, "You shortly shall hear more" (IV.vii.33). The king obviously expects that word will soon come that Hamlet is dead in England. He expects that England will act on the demand of his letter.

Once they read Hamlet's letter, the king changes tack. He is now determined to re-incense Laertes toward revenge. He asks Laertes what he would be willing to do "[t]o show yourself in deed your father's son/More than in words" (IV.vii.123-4). Claudius is drawing a clear distinction between action and word. Throughout the play Claudius has proven himself adept at manipulating speech to both hide his own actions and incite desired actions in others, and he now puts Laertes's promise of revenge to a direct test. Laertes shows himself willing to prove in deed what he has promised in words. He answers the king's question with the brutal and sacrilegious comment, "To cut his throat i'th' church" (IV.vii.124). The king, ironically, responds, "No place indeed should murder sanctuarize;/ Revenge should have no bounds" (125-26).

In the end, the text of the play, which has been ambivalent in terms of its reliance on performative and commemorative epistemology, turns more purposively toward commemoration. Hamlet's last concern is not about what will be done through words, but what will be remembered through them. He insists that Horatio, "Report [him] and [his] cause aright/ To the unsatisfied (V.ii.344-5). His concern for the memory of his name is clear in his saying "O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,/ Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me" (V.ii.349-50). Finally, in this connection Hamlet

begs one last vow of Horatio, and it is an oath to commemoration. He asks:

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story. (V.ii.351-55)

Hamlet had been so concerned with shriving regarding his father's death and those of Guildenstern, Rosencrantz and Claudius, but, before dying, he gives no thought to his own repentance and salvation, and instead spends his last moments concerned with what his memory on earth will be.

Bowers and other critics argue that, in finally killing Claudius, Hamlet succeeds in revenging his and his mother's, not his father's death. Since this action occurs in the heat of the moment and in the public sphere, he is excused, in both a legal and metaphysical context. This action signifies not private revenge but public justice, and so, rather than constituting a damning act, the killing restores balance to the state and is therefore salvific. For Bowers, the salvific element of this action depends upon Hamlet's submission to the providence of heaven, which is expressed by Hamlet to Horatio. After the proposed duel, which Horatio believes Hamlet cannot possibly win, Hamlet says:

Our indiscretion sometime serves us well
When our deep plots do pall; and that should learn us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will— (V.ii.8-11)

According to Bowers and many other critics, in submitting to the “divinity that shapes our ends” Hamlet accepts the will of heaven rather than his own and this submission ultimately obtains him salvation. He must die in expiation for the murder of Polonius, but his soul is ultimately saved by this submission. This line of argument is an attempt to recover a sympathetic Hamlet from inevitable damnation. According to it, Hamlet’s role has transformed from “scourge” of hell to “minister” of heaven.

The play contends through much of its plot with the notion of inappropriate last rites. Ophelia’s meager Christian burial, Polonius’s “hugger-mugger” funeral and finally Hamlet’s soldierly “rite of war” as ordered by Fortinbras. In this concern for last rites, we can discern in the play, as McCoy has recently argued, an ambiguous attitude toward the devotions old religion for the dead. Queen Elizabeth’s compromise allowed for some rituals for the dead to retain elements of the Catholic intercessory system, and in this context the performative epistemology of the traditional religion creeps back in.

In the play’s last dialogue, Horatio and Fortinbras once again conflate the principal terms of the shift we have been tracing. Hamlet has provided, with his dying voice, his vote for the election of Fortinbras. Fortinbras announces, Amleth-like, that he has “some rights of memory in this kingdom” (V.ii.394). Fortinbras’s claim is a performative speech act, which requires the context of commemoration and Hamlet’s own performative speech for its authority. To this claim Horatio responds:

Of that I shall have also cause to speak,

And from that mouth whose voice will draw on more.

But let this same be presently *perform* 'd

Even while men's minds are wild... (V.ii.396-9) [emphasis added]

Horatio indicates that the “call [to] the noblest to the audience” should be performed at once, while the memory of recent events is still fresh, lest more mischance may occur.

This action of bringing together an audience of the noblest persons to hear the Frothinbras claim and Hamlet's vote sets the context, authority and formulation for the performative speech act by which Frothinbras will ultimately obtain the Danish throne.

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare gives us a representation of the controversies that were current in his time. The importance of language as a means to knowledge is emphasized from the start and throughout the play. In its conflation of both Catholic and Protestant ideologies, the play reveals a hybrid epistemological systems that has some elements of the old medieval system, but begins to turn toward the new. Shakespeare chooses not to take either position in the debate, but to depict characters who themselves are torn by a dichotomous epistemological system. Hamlet, whose father may have become a ghost come from Catholic purgatory, does not show an undiluted affinity with that religious system, and Horatio, who like Hamlet was a student at Wittenberg, similarly does not strictly abide by the precepts of Protestantism. When dealing with questions of devotion, ritual or religion, the play, like the characters, remains ambivalent.

Chapter IV

Consecrating the Word: Performative Use of Mass Elements in *Ulysses*

When the young man became the artist his relationship with Catholicism entered its final and most significant stage. Its God was now raw material for his art and he proceeded to sacrifice Him to what was now a higher purpose.

—Frederick Lang

Asperges me

I have been tracing an epistemological shift in the function of language within English literature and culture, which I have argued takes place primarily due to the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism within that culture during the Reformation. Some words of explanation are therefore in order before moving on to James Joyce, who is justly mistaken for an Irish Catholic writer. There are reasons why, despite these circumstances, Joyce still fits into this study.

By the early part of the 20th century, artistic and literary movements and influences had become much less nationally localized and much more global. For example, American authors, such as Henry James, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and others, who became as representative of a European aesthetic as an American one, had already established residence in Europe. At this point in the history of ideas and in the shift I have been tracing, epistemology, because of the development of the scientific method and a more rapid exchange of ideas across national borders, had also become much more global and less localized. Language continues to function commemoratively in relation to knowledge, but it works to describe the universe in concert with modern scientific

thought, which by this time was paradigmatic in most of the Western world, in contradistinction to the direct relationship between both the universe and language and religion and the natural world.

Joyce's personal circumstances also allow his work a part in this discussion. That he was born and raised into the Catholic faith and in Ireland is inarguable; that he was an "Irish Catholic writer" is a more problematic assertion. By the time he began writing *Ulysses*, Joyce had abandoned the faith into which he had been born. This event is already fictionalized in both *Portrait of the Artist as Young Man* and its forerunner *Stephen Hero*. Also by this time, Joyce had begun the self-styled and self-imposed exile from Ireland that was to last for the rest of his life. His adult attitude toward his homeland and religion negate the circumstances of his birth and admit a view of Joyce as an "anti-Catholic anti-Irish writer." The theme of his refusals to "serve" either Ireland or Catholicism is explored thoroughly in his work.

It is, however, interesting that while Joyce abandoned both God and country, his works are completely taken up with them. In "*Ulysses*" on the Liffey, Richard Ellman argues that, "[Joyce's] faith was not Christian, or in any way institutional, but it had its own rigorousness. In some manner his books were conceived as creating and measuring social value" (xii). He attempts to do this, however, from the outside, attacking what he sees as the "paralytic" forces that keep Ireland and its poets oppressed. In creating these works, Joyce uses and derides the chief elements of his old faith to create the tenets of his new artistic religion. This new poetic faith transcends both nationalist and Christian

ideology to establish the ideal of an Aristotelian “republic,” where the poet-priest rather than the Platonic philosopher rules. As Frederick Lang states,

Catholicism claims that its priest takes common matter and changes it into Christ’s body, blood, soul and divinity. The “priest of the eternal imagination” seeks to transmute remembered images into esthetic ones. They meet at the Eucharist, which the first priest regards as bread in appearance only and which the other considers just more “daily bread of experience” (18).

In transmuting his lived experience into the esthetic images that will become his art, Joyce positions himself as both the artist/priest and creator/God of his artistic production and thus becomes both the celebrant and the object of this esthetic consecration. In Lang’s equation, both Bloom and Stephen appear as Christ-like reincarnations of the god of the text, Joyce himself.

Already in *Portrait*, Joyce envisions his fictional alter ego, Stephen Dedalus, going forth to “forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated consciousness of [his] race” (253). Both Stephen and Joyce give their faith to this creative spirit. *Ulysses* begins about a year and a half after this bold declaration from the artist as a young man. In the first chapter, according to Ellman, “Faustian Stephen refuses to serve the British empire or the Roman Catholic Church. These take on the symbolical aspect of body and soul. His conduct is marked chiefly by refusals” (Liffey 11). Thus Joyce, through his chief biographical character, declares his independence from the national and ecclesiastic forces that attempt to dominate his art; however, even in writing against these forces

Joyce's texts continue to be dominated by them. His early life as a Catholic and as an Irishman certainly influences Joyce's work; however, this work is done in direct reaction to those influences and fully within the secular/scientific paradigm that organizes knowledge in the twentieth century.

In this chapter I will argue that Joyce, because of his apostasy and his intended project, represents both a reversal and microcosm of the epistemological shift I have been tracing. In leaving the church in favor of a more abstract notion of the universe, Joyce mirrors the paradigmatic movement of the English Church in the Reformation. In turning its symbols against the Catholic Church, he attempts to recuperate a certain kind of power for language. This power, which shows a resemblance with the performative elements I have outlined in the Mass, is used, however, toward a strictly artistic objective while it continues to submit to commemorative epistemology now defined within a scientific paradigm. Joyce, who had lost faith in the power of the Mass to change the physical substance of its species, claims he is changing his own substance into the word of his text. This must be taken as an abstract idea and not as a literal intention to become his book.

I will also argue that Joyce reverses the power of the Mass through a use of its central elements primarily as a structuring device, but also through unifying the major themes of the book with its function. The structure of *Ulysses* does not represent a one-to-one relationship with the Catholic Mass. However, its stated intent and the use of many of its elements are co-opted to create scenes, provide intertextual connections, and

thematic resemblances. This process recuperates the performative power of language, I have argued as existing in the medieval England, and within the text language functions to create a certain kind of reality. This reality is a kind of textual reality that connects Joyce's artistic project to a metaphysical system, which while no longer functioning paradigmatically continues to exert a nostalgic presence in the culture.

Introibo ad altare dei

At first glance, the text of *Ulysses* seems chaotic, a condition which prompts Carl Jung to declare, in 1932, that in it, "somewhere there may be a secret order or parallelism in the chapters—authoritative voices have been raised to this effect—but in any case it is so well concealed that at first I noticed nothing of the kind" (Benstock 12). These "authoritative voices" have shown that rather than being a chaotic text, *Ulysses* is highly structured and organized. To bring his artistic vision to light, Joyce employs an elaborate system of structural elements. He ties his modern day Odysseus to his Homeric predecessor through a series of subtle correspondences that might elude even a reader as assiduous as Jung. Along with the Homeric parallels, Joyce weaves a web of intertextual connections, which encompasses most of the Western literary canon, along with a keen awareness of contemporary scientific thought and intellectualized theological concepts, and binds all of these elements to real people and events of Dublin, 1904. *Ulysses* could be described as architecturally over-designed and structurally overbuilt. In trying to forge the "uncreated consciousness" of his race, Joyce intends to build strong.

One of the most consistent of these architectural elements is the Catholic liturgy, for within his discarded faith Joyce found a system that could be transmuted in the service of his own artistic transformation. In *Ulysses*, Joyce attempts nothing short of an aesthetic miracle, an authorial transcendence. The “mystery” at the center of his book, as Jung intimates, is Joyce himself, embodied by the precise recounting of real events, “the daily bread of experience.” According to Lang, “he creates a world and enters it in another form” (23). In order to create this “miracle,” some meta-physical system was necessary. For this, he relies on the system he had come to know so well from his Jesuit education.

From Buck Mulligan’s *introit* in “Telemachus” to Molly Bloom’s confession in “Penelope,” Joyce infuses *Ulysses* with elements of the Catholic liturgy. According to Lang, there is what he calls, a “Bloomsday Mass simulacrum” which displaces and appropriates the liturgy for its own purposes. My argument here will be not that Joyce took the structure of the Mass and forced *Ulysses*’s eighteen chapters to conform to that structure (for Joyce, this would have been too simplistic an approach), but rather that he structurally employs the contents and language of the Mass, and ultimately that he uses the vestigial performative power in the Mass to achieve an artistic and aesthetic end, a “transaccidentation,” where his essential substance remains intact, but the accident of his body is transformed into words. There need not be an elaborate scheme to link the structure of the Mass to the structure of *Ulysses*. It is, therefore, unnecessary to establish

the order of the Mass and then note how closely it relates to the order of *Ulysses*, as some commentators have done.⁵² I will focus instead on specific Mass references to allow a general overview of how these references are used and how Joyce attempts to co-opt the power of language within the Catholic rite and turn it on itself for his own artistic consecration.

The main structural service provided by the Mass is in unifying themes, symbols and surfaces as well as other structural elements. As with other structuring devices, Joyce uses the Mass for multiple purposes. Its occurrence is prevalent. There is no chapter which does not in some way allude to, or contain a part of a regular, requiem, or special Mass, or other liturgical elements. As with the Homeric correspondences, these allusions are sometimes subordinate to other structures that appear in the episodes. As Marilyn French indicates,

The Homeric correspondences and continuing allusions to such themes as Hamlet or the Ireland-Israel parallel are also structuring devices. But because there are so many of these, and no one appears to comprehend them all, it seems arbitrary to designate any one as the structuring principle of the novel. (2)

The difficulty alluded to by French lies in trying to assign a single “structuring principle” to the text because the structure is always multiple and layered. I will not argue that the Mass represents the only or even the main structural device employed in the text, and

⁵² A number of critics on either side of the Mass/structure theory attempt to compare the structure of *Ulysses* to the structure of the Catholic Mass. See the discussion of these approaches below and Ruth M. Walsh's, “In the Name of the Father” (321-27) and Michael O'Shea, “The Catholic Liturgy in Joyce's *Ulysses* (123-35).

thereby ignore French's warning against the arbitrary assignment of one principle as overriding all others. I suggest that there are at least three principal structural devices in the text, the Mass, *The Odyssey*, and the real life events that Joyce employs as the "daily bread of experience." These structural devices are fluid. At any time a different one may rise to the fore for a while until it is subdued by another structuring device. This fluid motion among structural elements that organize the text gives *Ulysses* its sense of chaos and complexity.

Quis enim cognovit sensum Domini?

When "[s]tately plump, Buck Mulligan" ascends the stairs of the Martello Tower, which he is sharing with Stephen, he begins a mock Catholic Mass that reverberates throughout *Ulysses*. Joyce criticism diverges widely on the function and importance of these liturgical elements. Michael J. O'Shea adamantly argues against attempts by other critics to see Joyce's use of the Mass to structure or sub-structure the text. He exclaims that critics who try to tie the liturgy to the structure of *Ulysses* are "like Catholics who in the Nicene Creed affirm belief in 'all things visible and invisible' little knowing that the latter category encompasses much that is simply not there" (123). He goes on to say that "[t]here is no question that the evidence to support these claims exists; unfortunately, this does not mean that the claims are true" (123). Here O'Shea paradoxically denies a claim for which he himself finds support in the text. If there is "evidence to support these claims," then how are the claims not true?

Paul L. Briand, however, has no difficulty in asserting, “just as James Joyce uses the myth and episodic framework of Homer’s *Odyssey* to help him ‘forge upon the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race’—*Ulysses*, so does he use the Catholic Mass as another structure for the same purpose” (327). Patrick A. McCarthy agrees, more or less, with Briand. He, however, veers away from averring such a generalized conclusion.

The main question is whether or not the Mass is used for structure in *Ulysses*, and critics seem to have an “all or nothing” approach to this question. That is, either the Mass has an overall, thoroughgoing, structural correspondence to *Ulysses* or there is no structural correlation between the two. Michael O’Shea states that the main problem with Briand’s Mass/structure argument is “that the parts of the liturgy [in *Ulysses*] do not follow the correct order of the mass; the Agnus Dei precedes the Eucharistic consecration when it should follow it; the Gloria (chanted by Mulligan) follows what Briand calls Stephen’s Credo...” (128). If we accept O’Shea’s argument and insist on parallel order, then we must also discount all exterior structuring devices, which are normally attributed to *Ulysses*. We can no longer positively state that the use of the Homeric epic has structural purpose, since we know that there are numerous problems of this sort in making this statement. We know that there is no “Wandering Rocks” episode in the *Odyssey*, there is also no “Penelope” chapter, there are episodes in the Homeric epic that are not included in *Ulysses* and, lastly, the order of the episodes does not correspond to those found in Homer’s work. In fact, if we accept O’Shea’s argument, we can deny the

most basic and obvious structuring element in *Ulysses*, the passage of time during June 16, 1904. After all, there are two 8, 10, and 11 a.m.'s; there is no 9 a.m., 6, 7, and 9 p.m.'s; and the events that occur at 5 p.m. in Kiernan's tavern, though they appear in the book at the correct time, are related sometime later by the "unnamed narrator." In trying to categorically deny the existence of a structural link between the Mass and *Ulysses*, O'Shea inserts this argument, which would by necessity have to deny structural elements no one can doubt.

Briand's argument that Joyce purposely reverses the order of the Mass to signal the coming of a Black Mass in the "Circe" episode (316) bears almost as little significance as O'Shea's, as does McCarthy's explanation of the difference in the order of the Mass and *Ulysses*: "[w]hen it became necessary to either change the order of the novel or the order of the mass, he chose to change the mass, for the fulfillment of his artistic aims was more important to Joyce than adherence to a rigid schema" (136). These vehement arguments for and against correspondence between the Mass and the structure of the novel are doomed to fail because this is not the way the Mass, if it does offer structural support, as I will argue, functions in *Ulysses*. Like the Homeric correspondences, the Mass is part of a complex system of structural devices that would not have a straightforward lockstep parallelism with its sources. This kind of structure would have been too simple, too direct and too unsubtle for Joyce's aesthetic vision.

Lang puts forward a much more complex configuration of the Mass/structure link. His book proposes that,

Ulysses, which begins with a parody of transubstantiation, Catholicism's central rite, thereby begins to transubstantiate much of Catholicism. As the novel proceeds, it continues to appropriate the Church's symbolism, ritual and doctrine. It engages in, and justifies, taking from religion and giving to art and humanity.

(11)

Joyce borrows from the rituals and doctrines of Catholicism in order to achieve this, but as Lang suggests, there is no one-to-one relationship between the liturgy and the text. His view of the arrangement reveals instead a multiplicitous layering, which comprises multiple relationships and multiple, at times simultaneous, Masses and liturgical allusions. Lang ultimately proposes a series of liturgical events that begin and stop at a particular service or section of a Mass, not a single Mass that can be seen running the length of the novel, which could then be compared in overall structure to its original. Ruth M. Walsh's article "In the Name of the Father and of the Son..." is perhaps the most thorough and coherent attempt to refute the Mass/structure link. Walsh asserts that critics who favor a "parallel Mass structure in *Ulysses*," commit an "aesthetic fallacy by ignoring differences between creative art (Homer's *Odyssey*) and religious ritual (the Catholic Mass)" (321). She argues further that the use of the Mass or liturgical elements in *Ulysses* is limited to symbol, theme and character development. She observes that:

First of all, Joyce's use of the Mass in the first chapter of *Ulysses* provides a link with *Portrait* by introducing, once again, the three preoccupations which dominated Stephen's thinking in the earlier novel.... Second, the suggestion of a

Mass in the first chapter of *Ulysses* is, again, Joyce's emphasis on the realistic detail of Dublin life. Religion in Dublin is pervasive, and the Mass is central to that pervasive religion. Third, Joyce's use of the Mass in the opening chapter of *Ulysses* foreshadows, by parallel, the theme of the search of the father for the son, and the son for the father (328).

These are all valid observations and clearly enumerate some of the uses of the Mass and the liturgy in *Ulysses*. However, do they by necessity deny the "Mass/ structure link?"

No. The fact that Joyce put the Catholic liturgy to all these uses does not preclude him from using it also as a structuring force. Nor is her strictly semiotic interpretation all there is to the uses of the Mass she illustrates. For example, she states that "religion in Dublin is pervasive, and the Mass is central to that pervasive religion." However, had Joyce only wanted to present the pervasiveness of this religion in Dublin, he need not have bothered. The religiosity of Dublin in particular and Ireland in general is a well-established axiom. Still, had Joyce wanted to state the obvious, he would not have seen it as necessary to infuse his work with so many Catholic elements. Some of these, as Willis E. McNelly points out, are "[i]ncorporated into *Ulysses* often with absolute accuracy, the devices [the Catholic elements] reveal an intellectualized familiarity with the *Missal* and the *Ritual* that an average Catholic would not normally attain" (Deviations 291). By its frequency and intellectualization, this use of the Mass elements proves to be of much wider scope than Walsh suggests. McNelly also states, that "this integration of liturgical devices provides a complementary texture to the Homeric and Dublin themes in the

novel” (*Deviations* 291). Not only does it complement these themes but it unifies them as well. The liturgical elements act as a bonding agent between the Homeric and the Dublin themes.

To show how other elements may be used in the manner proscribed by Walsh, I would like to use an element, the structuring power of which must be agreed upon—that is, the events of 16 June 1904, Dublin. We know that many of the events of this day are based on real events and many of the characters are based on real people. According to Walsh’s argument, in order to admit that these events serve a structuring role for the narrative line, we must commit an “aesthetic fallacy” by ignoring the differences between an artistic work and real life occurrences.

Real life events and people, as suggested by Robert Martin Adams in *Surface and Symbol*, serve as “Pilings, scaffolds, and adornments” (50). Joyce knots these pilings together to make the framework upon which he will erect his work. He applies layers and layers of different materials onto this basic structure. These outer layers themselves also serve a structural end. The *Odyssey* may allow Joyce’s work to achieve an epic proportion, but the book is deeply grounded by these real life, human pilings. These real life events and people are, in one way or another, contorted by Joyce and given a definite shape, the shape of Dublin, 16 June 1904 as presented by Joyce. This shape, including thoughts and ideas that tie this day to the past, is in essence *Ulysses*. “His own life for Joyce had been the base metals from which he alchemically made gold, and fashioned that gold into artifacts that at first gave the illusion of realistic portraiture but later took on

complex and exotic shapes” (Benstock, *Essays* 8).

These “pilings” can be shown to perform some of the functions Walsh attributes to the Mass. First, many of the characters that appear in *Ulysses* have appeared in either *Dubliners* or *Portrait*, providing the same sort of intertextual connection that she sees Mulligan’s *introit* providing. Certainly, there could not be a better backdrop of Dublin life and its prevailing attitudes than that life itself as represented by people that really lived there.

Joyce uses these real life people and events to explore characters or character types. One of the best examples of a character type may be the “Citizen” of the “Cyclops” chapter. The Citizen represents the kind of jingoistic nationalism and religiosity that was anathema to Joyce. It is a curious fact that the Citizen and Carr, the book’s only two agents of violence, both blaspheme at precisely the point at which they are prepared to strike in defense of the concept they blaspheme. For the Citizen it is Catholicism, “by Jesus, I’ll crucify him so I will” (*U* 342). For Private Carr, it is British royalty, “I’ll wring the neck of any bugger says a word about my fucking king” (*U* 595). These are precisely the two masters that Stephen has identified, in the “Telemachus,” chapter, as oppressing him and his art. In making these oaths, the offenders use a performative speech act to create a certain kind of reality and in doing so call attention both to this function of language and the irony inherent in their blaspheming the concept they claim to defend.

Private Carr is certainly based on a real person. The Citizen, although he is

modeled after Michael Cusack, an advocate for the Irish Revival movement and the founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association (Ellman 61), is also probably a conglomerate of parts attributable to his type. Henry Carr, of course, is the dapper young Englishman with thespian ambitions that Joyce had so much trouble with in Zurich, the story of which Tom Stoppard adapts in his play *Travesties*. Unlike his usual technique for adapting real people for fictional use, Joyce presents Henry Carr, name and all, exactly as he must have seen him. In each case, the character is much more brutish than his real life counterpart.

Credo

Homer's text might be considered the more important structural device, in the sense that the episodes narrated in the text are made parallel to their Odyssean precursors and the events to some extent are forced into a comparable shape by them. Just as with the Mass, however, these parallels are not organized so as to conform to the general shape of Homer's text, but rather show resemblances in a variety of techniques within individual episodes. For example, in "Proteus," the Homeric parallels take various forms. Not only do the framing and action parallel those of the Homeric epic, but the structure and prose style do as well.

As the chapter begins, Stephen moves along Sandymount strand, coming from his interview with Mr. Deasy, his boss at a Dalkey private school. Mr. Deasy represents the parallel of Nestor, from whom Telemachus seeks wisdom in book two of the *Odyssey*. Mr. Deasy's version of Nestor's wisdom is in giving Stephen some unsolicited advice

about holding on to his money. Once on Sandycove, Stephen looks out onto Dublin Bay and contemplates his situation. He has left the Martello Tower he is sharing with Mulligan, vowing not to return. He has gone to his teaching job and has had the interview with the hawkish Ulsterite schoolmaster, who, according to Elmann, “offers to Stephen, as worldly wisdom, [an] archaic conservatism in politics, and conserved wealth in finance—kingdoms of the past and of the future” (21). These episodes emphasize the sense of betrayal and isolation that Stephen, as the representative of art, experiences in his own country. According to Stanley Sultan, “Quite characteristically, Stephen tries to determine his condition by a controlled formal procedure. And quite characteristically, his thoughts are almost wholly direct or indirect expressions of his various preoccupations—the central facts of that condition” (53). His ruminations in the “Proteus” chapter focus on this condition and on the changeable nature of the world.

The episode begins with him considering the “ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signature of all things I am here to read” (*U* 37). He is here on the strand to gain wisdom about the world around him. As a literary artist, he must “read” not only contemporary events, but also the traces remaining from events occurring in the distant past. As he lets his mind wander through a multitude of impressions, Elmann notes, “Stephen’s long monologue appears at first to be totally improvisatory in organization, but it has an underlying structure. At the beginning Stephen abstracts the categories of space and time from the universe, as to some extent Joyce has done, and tests them as if he were their first manufacturer” (23). Stephen’s

condition, as outlined by Elmann, represents that of the artist as creator of his fictive universe and mirrors Joyce's relationship to his text and to Stephen. If Stephen is Joyce as a young man, he now surveys the world he has created within his own text and tests the natural conditions of that created world through a scientific method.

The rapid associative changes in Stephen's thoughts give the chapter, and in some sense the whole book, the apparent quality of chaos. This is caused primarily by the wide-ranging topics that are exposed for consideration. "Stephen thinks," Sultan states, about many and apparently widely diverse things in this chapter, including abstract metaphysics, phylogeny, his maternal uncle, an exiled patriot of his acquaintance, ancient Dublin and its Viking attackers, his soul. By a nimble power of association that is itself part of Joyce's characterization of him, one thing leads to another in the course of the chapter until all that is vital to Stephen Dedalus is touched upon. (52)

These associations do not at first coalesce into a rational structure. It is only when we realize that they *do* "touch upon" those concerns of Stephen's that have already been alluded to in the first two chapters of the book that we can begin to see the developing shape of this protean episode. The chapter begins with apparent formlessness and the barrage of associative thoughts seems to intensify this condition. Ultimately, it is not exactly formless but shape shifting and variform. This very shiftiness is what in part organizes the "Proteus" chapter and represents the closest equivalence to its Homeric parallel. As well as making some of the content of the text accord with that of the

Odyssey, Joyce turns the prose style and structure of the chapter into an allusion.

The chapter is characterized by change, which exemplifies its connection to the Homeric text. In the fourth book of the *Odyssey*, to which this episode corresponds, Telemachus and Nestor's son, Pisistratus, go to see Menelaus to get information on the condition and whereabouts of Odysseus. Menelaus tells them the story of wrestling with Proteus, the ancient of the sea. It is with this story that the *Ulysses* episode has the most resemblance to its Homeric counterpart. Proteus's daughter tells Menelaus, who is stranded in Egypt,

If you could take him [Proteus] by surprise and hold him,

he'd give you course and distance for your sailing

homeward across the fish-cold sea.

And should you wish it, noble friend, he'd tell you

All that occurred at home, both good and evil. (IV.416-420)

To gain knowledge from Proteus, Menelaus must hold him through his many transformations “—for he can take the forms/ of all beasts, and water, and blinding fire” (IV.4446-447). Similarly, for Stephen to “read the signature of all things,” he must hold on to his protean thought through all of its shifting transformations and thereby gain “course and distance” for *his* sailing. Within Joyce's aesthetics, Stephen, as the artist/creator, must gain experience and turn that experience into “everliving life.” To do this he must unite with his spiritual father and creator.

Menelaus tells Telemachus the Proteus story as a prelude to revealing Odysseus's

fate and the source of this knowledge. By connecting the episode to this part of the *Odyssey*, Joyce highlights the search for the father, which is a major theme in the book. Telemachus (in *Ulysses* represented by Stephen) searches for his father in an attempt to reclaim his patrimony now being wasted by the usurping suitors. Obviously, Simon Dedalus is very much alive and very easy to find, and, therefore, Stephen quests for a spiritual father, not a physical one. Stephen searches not for his biological father,⁵³ as does Telemachus, but for his transubstantial father in the form of Bloom, whom, Lang suggests, "Joyce recognizes," in the "Lotus Eaters" episode, "as [his] Sabellian or transubstantial son with the words that transubstantiate the bread, 'this is my body'" (21). The major movement in the plot of *Ulysses* gestures toward a union between Bloom and Stephen, who for Lang represent different aspects of Joyce's soul and are consubstantial with each other. Because of the association with the author as the "father" of both Bloom and Stephen, this union becomes a Trinitarian one.

The correspondence between Telemachus's search for his father and Stephen's for his spiritual father/creator is brought into focus by the consubstantial relationship between God and Son in the Trinity. The Mass in its structural position clearly unites these themes and also represents the means through which a transmutation from author to creation is performed. Stephen and Bloom become consubstantial with their creator in the same process that transforms the memory of lived experience to artistic work. This work becomes the transaccidental "soul" of artist and reveals a function of language that

⁵³ In fact, Stephen avoids his natural father all day. In the "Hades" chapter, Bloom "recognizes" Stephen from inside the carriage, but Simon Dedalus does not see him.

reflects and inverts the power of the Mass. According to Umberto Eco, “Joyce abandons the faith but not religious obsession. The presence of an orthodox past reemerges constantly in all of his work under the form of a personal mythology and with a blasphemous fury that reveals its affective permanence” (3). For Joyce, the influence of this “orthodox past” represents both an impulse he must adjure against and a source of material for his art. In this context, Frank Budgen suggests that, “writing was to him a religion, and the word a sacred material” (346). The process then becomes a transmutation of the “daily bread of experience” to the sacred material of the word. Stephen sees a number of native Irish pressures that contribute to the oppression of this consecrated word of the artist.

Already in the first two chapters of *Ulysses*, Stephen has met with three suitors to his patrimony, Mulligan, who he has identified as “usurper” and “Ireland’s gay betrayer,” Deasy, who puts his faith in conservative politics and British financial prudence, and Haines, who seems to be literally buying Irish culture by paying for folk poems. These usurpers are associated with the suitors of the *Odyssey*, but also represent the forces that oppress the artist. Mulligan, with his mocking of the liturgy, represents the corrupt Catholic Church, Haines represents the British Empire, and Deasy the conservative politics that keep Ireland tied to its oppressors.

The architecture of the “Proteus” chapter emphasizes these connections and also shows the connection between the Shakespearean parallels and the Homeric. Hamlet is also, in a sense, in search of his “spiritual” father. Stephen’s theory of Hamlet

emphasizes the condition of the characters in relation to the artist. He suggests that King Hamlet is Shakespeare himself and Hamlet is his son. In “Telemachus,” Mulligan has alluded to this theory by telling Haines,

—He proves by algebra that Hamlet’s grandson is Shakespeare’s father and that he himself is the ghost of his own father

—What? Haines said, beginning to point at Stephen. He himself. (18)

The equivocation between he (Shakespeare) and he (Stephen) is left uncorrected by both Stephen and Mulligan and indicates the relationship between Stephen and Joyce, as his spiritual father. As the god of his artistic creation, Joyce gives life to Stephen, who stands in the same relation to his creator as God, the son, does to God, the father. Since Stephen is an earlier version of Joyce himself, they are consubstantial, so that “he himself is the ghost of his own father.” This is the same relationship that Stephen’s theory proposes between King Hamlet and Shakespeare.

Later, in the “Scylla and Charybdis” episode, Stephen will give a much better explanation of the theory, in which he shows that Shakespeare’s method of composition was akin to Joyce’s. His theory is a biographical one, in which the characters in *Hamlet* become representative of the Shakespeare family. He argues that King Hamlet is Shakespeare, Gertrude is Anne Hathaway, and Claudius is Shakespeare’s brother. He says of King Hamlet,

But those who are done to death in sleep cannot know the manner of their quell unless their Creator endow their souls with that knowledge in the life to come.

The poisoning and the beast with two backs that urged it king Hamlet's ghost could not know of were he not endowed with knowledge by his creator. (*U* 196-97)

The implication is that King Hamlet's knowledge comes from a close association with his creator, Shakespeare. Joyce emphasizes that this second creator is not God by not capitalizing the *c*. In the first sentence, where he refers to anyone who dies sleeping, the *c* is capitalized, but when Stephen refers specifically to King Hamlet it is not. Stephen argues that King Hamlet's ghost is Shakespeare asking for revenge on his brother for sleeping with his wife. A few lines later he says, "he passes on towards eternity in undiminished personality, untaught by the wisdom he has written or by the laws he has revealed" and describes Shakespeare as "a ghost, a shadow... a voice heard only in the heart of him who is the substance of his shadow, the son consubstantial with the father" (197). Stephen's theory views the character as the "shadow" or a "ghost" of the author who has created him. As Stephen winds up this description of Shakespeare, Mulligan enters the library saying "Amen," giving the whole theory and description a theosophical tenor.

Once again, Stephen will think of heresies, as he does in "Telemachus." There, he lists the heresiarchs as Photius, Mulligan, Arius, Valentine, and subtle Sabellus. In "Telemachus," this list is preceded by words from the Nicene creed, "et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam"⁵⁴ (*U* 20). Here, the list is changed to Photius,

⁵⁴ From the Nicene Creed: "and in one holy catholic and apostolic church."

Pseudo Malichi, and Johann Most⁵⁵ and is followed by a parody of Apostles Creed, based on Most's pamphlet, "The Deistic Pestilence":

He Who Himself begot, middler the Holy Ghost, and Himself sent himself,
 Agenbuyer, between Himself and others, Who put upon by His fiends, stripped
 and whipped, was nailed like bat to barndoor, starved on crosstree, Who let Him
 bury, stood up, harrowed hell. fared into heaven and there these nineteen hundred
 years sitteth on the right hand of His Own Self but yet shall come in the latter day
 to doom the quick and the dead when all the quick shall be dead already. (U 197-
 98)

Lang identifies this as the main Creed associated with the "Bloomsday Mass Simulacrum." Immediately after this creed, there is a visual representation of the Gloria, complete with musical annotation. Lang suggests that the Gloria, which normally precedes the Credo, here follows it because "this way Stephen chants his mock praise to God in the highest only after he has noted the Ascension, which is His return to 'His Own Self' (159). The return to "His Own Self" is an expression of Stephen's condition as the Christlike consubstantial son of the author in the process of becoming himself.

This organization both mocks the traditional Catholic Mass and uses its effective power to create Joyce's "real presence" in his own text as the incorporeal "shadow" of the artist. Immediately after the Gloria, there is a mock elevation, "He lifts his hands, veils fall. O, flowers! Bells with bells with bells acquiring" (198). This elevation and ringing

⁵⁵ Gifford and Seidman identify Most as "a German-American bookbinder and anarchist whose newspaper *Die Freiheit* (Freedom) accompanied him from Berlin to London to New York. (224)

of the sacring bells three times, signaled after the Gloria, seem to indicate that a consecration has taken place. In this instance, the elevation celebrates the full expression of Stephen's theory, which informs the purpose of the Bloomsday Mass simulacrum.

This theory reveals Joyce's own literary project, to create a consubstantial/transaccidented self through his text. According to Lang, "In Joyce's esthetic theory the Virgin Mother's womb is analogous to images retained by the imagination, and the divine essence is analogous to the human intellect or rational soul" (177). This theory concurs with Stephen's, where the artist, in creating his art, transmutes the memory of experience into "everliving life." The commemorative aspects of this theory should be obvious. What Joyce transmutes is the memory of experience, and, ultimately, "everliving life" resides in memory as well. This process is an abstraction of the objective of the Mass. Language no longer has the power to effect change in the real world; Joyce uses the memory of that power to create a change within the human mind.

The "Proteus" chapter highlights the artist's metamorphosis into his text through an examination of protean memory. The metamorphic power of Proteus is highlighted in the chapter in several ways. The text makes many associations by allusion and coincidence, but more prominently the text itself becomes the closest connection to the story. "Proteus" is composed primarily of Stephen's interior monologue as he walks along the strand. The Linati and Gilbert schemas, prepared by Joyce to help elucidate his text,⁵⁶ identify the technique of this episode as "soliloquy" and "monologue" respectively.

⁵⁶ In a letter to Carlo Linati dated September 21, 1920, Joyce enclosed the "schema." "My intention," he writes to Linati, "is to transpose the myth *sub specie tempporis nostri*. Each adventure (that is, every hour,

The protean associative prose of stream of consciousness changes focus and shifts in content at a rapid pace. While Stephen represents Telemachus in search of his father, his mind resembles Menelaus in wrestling with protean thoughts. Although in the Gilbert schema Joyce identifies Kevin Egan⁵⁷ as correspondent with Menelaus, his presence in the chapter occurs, like most other things, only in Stephen's mind.

The prose style of the chapter resembles Menelaus's story of Proteus and his changeable nature; however, the episode makes connections with its precursor in other ways. In book II of *The Odyssey*, Nestor remarks how similar Telemachus and Odysseus' voices are, and when Helen first sees Telemachus in book IV, she says of him,

Never, anywhere, have I seen so great a likeness

in man or woman—but it is truly strange!

This boy must be the son of Odysseus,

Telemakhos, the child he left at home. (IV.152-155)

In "Proteus," Stephen considers Irish liberation and his time in Paris; he remembers Kevin Egan saying, "You're your father's son. I know the voice" (*U* 43). This allusion is characteristic of Joyce's technique throughout the text. In the previous line, Stephen imagines that Egan is trying to "yoke me as his yokefellow, our crimes our common cause" (*U* 43). On the one hand, Egan's recognition of Stephen as his father's son recalls Menelaus and Helen's and Nestor's recognition of Telemachus as the son of Odysseus.

every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelated in the structural scheme of the whole) should not only condition but even create its own technique. (Gilbert 146-47)

⁵⁷ Egan's original was Joseph Casey a Fenian "dynamitard" who met Joyce in Paris in 1903, after having escaped from Ireland (Elmann 125-126).

The allusion, however, also puts a number of other thematic resemblances in play. The theme of the son's search for the father has already been established in the "Telemachus" chapter through Mulligan's suggestion of Stephen's theory about Hamlet, which Haines interprets "theologically" as "The Father and Son idea. The Son striving to be atoned with the Father" (*U* 18). The recognition of both Stephen and Telemachus as their fathers' sons connects with Haines's interpretation of Stephen's *Hamlet* theory, which of course reconnects it to the God/Christ to artist/creation structure. In "Scylla and Charybdis," as Mulligan thinks of Bloom in this context, he says to Stephen, "He knows you. He knows your old fellow. O, I fear me, he is Grecker than the Greeks" (201). Mulligan hints at the words of recognition and connects Stephen to Bloom for the first time in the text. Gifford and Seidman suggest that the expression "Grecker than the Greeks" intimates that Bloom indulges in pederasty (228), but it might have a deeper meaning. Earlier in the episode, Mulligan refers to Simon Dedalus as Stephen's "unsubstantial father" (199). In each of these cases, mocking Mulligan makes a crude joke with dual meaning. Simon Dedalus is "unsubstantial" because he lacks monetary substance, but he is also not Stephen's "consubstantial" father. Having "unsubstantiated" Simon Dedalus, the allusion to Greeks in reference to Bloom affirms Joyce/Bloom as Stephen's consubstantial father, given Stephen's "absurdly" Greek last name. Mulligan suggests that Bloom is more kin to Stephen than is his natural father.

Infra Actionem

The Homeric and liturgical themes serve parallel structural roles in *Ulysses*. The Mass and its elements play an internal structural role while the *Odyssey* plays an external one. By unifying these themes into a structure that connects other major themes of the novel together, Joyce achieves the aesthetic vision expressed by Stephen in *Portrait*, by “transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of ever-living life” (221).

This notion is even more clearly connected in his mind to the service of the Mass in the very next line, “The radiant image of the eucharist united again in an instant his bitter and despairing thoughts, their cries arising unbroken in a hymn of thanksgiving” (221).

Stephen’s bitterness comes from feeling slighted by his idealized beloved, E.C. in favor of a young priest, to whom “she would unveil her soul’s shy nakedness, to one who was but schooled in the discharging of a formal rite, rather than to him, the priest of the eternal imagination” (*P* 221). According to Stanley Sultan, “by the end of the book [*Portrait*], Stephen has associated E.C. with his ideal woman, with the Church, with Ireland, and even with his own soul” (85). His bitterness is in response to a sense of betrayal he apprehends from her, not as a real person, but in her idealized and symbolic form. Stephen sees himself as the poet-prophet of Ireland who is betrayed by her.

Stephen will once again refer to this theme in the first chapter of *Ulysses*, where, according to Sultan, “all her [E.C.’s] symbolic functions are taken over by Stephen’s dead mother” (85). The symbolic functions represented by E.C. in the earlier novel and by Stephen’s mother in *Ulysses* are also associated with the milkwoman who appears at the

door with the Sandycove milk Mulligan wants for his tea.

—Are you a medical student, sir? the old woman asked.

—I am, ma'am, Buck Mulligan answered.

Stephen listened in scornful silence. She bows her old head to a voice that speaks to her loudly; her bonesetter, her medicineman; me she slights. (*U* 14)

Again, Stephen feels himself slighted by someone who is presented as symbol of Ireland. In each case (E.C., his dead mother, the milkwoman), are feminized symbols of Ireland, who disregard and slight her poet/prophet in favor of serving a betrayer. The milkwoman reveals her deference for Mulligan, "Ireland's gay betrayer," and for Haines, the representative of British colonialism and oppression. Her correlation with Ireland is deepened in Stephen's interior monologue, as she enters,

Silk of the kine and poor old woman, names given her in old times. A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer, their common cuckquean, a messenger from the secret morning. (*U* 14)

Gifford and Seidman identify the phrases "silk of the kine" and "poor old woman" as "two traditional epithets for Ireland" (21), which very clearly equate the milkwoman with Ireland and with all the associative and symbolic weight Stephen has attributed to E.C. and his mother.

Throughout the text Stephen will be thinking of his mother's recent death and to the guilt he feels for not having knelt and prayed for her in her last hour. Mulligan mocks Stephen's guilt and chides him for not having acquiesced to his mother's dying wish.

“You could have knelt down, damn it, Kinch, when your dying mother asked you,” (*U* 5) Mulligan tells him, and almost in the same breath, “He kills his mother but he can’t wear grey trousers” (*U* 6) referring to a pair of hand-me-downs Stephen refuses to accept from him. And later, in an echo of Antinous, the chief suitor in the *Odyssey*, he says “give up the moody brooding” (*U* 9). Mulligan’s mocking also recalls Gertrude’s admonition to Hamlet in the court scene. Already associated with the Catholic theme, in playing the jocose priest his correspondence with Antinous connects him with the Homeric parallel and in this last quote ties him also to the Shakespearean themes. In this configuration Mulligan represents most of the preoccupations that will haunt Stephen’s mind all day long.

Toward the end of *Portrait*, Stephen has resolved not to heed the various forces that attempt to press him into service. He tells Cranly,

I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile and cunning. (*P* 247)

Stephen has already rejected the priesthood and the church in favor of artistic life. These thoughts of renouncing religion, king and country reverberate through the first three chapters of *Ulysses*. In “Telemachus,” Stephen tells Haines that he is, “the servant of two masters... an English and an Italian” and “a third who... wants me for odd jobs” (20). Stephen refers to the “imperial British state” and the “Roman catholic and apostolic

church.” The third master is his homeland already associated with his dead mother, for whom he refused to kneel and pray as she lay dying. The theme of servitude to these three masters is brought into focus again in the last sentence of the “Proteus” chapter, where Stephen looks back and sees, “moving through the air high spars of a threemaster, her sails brailed up on the crosstrees, homing, upstream, silently moving, a silent ship” (*U* 51). The ship is later identified as the English schooner, *Rosevean*, coming from Bridgewater. Calling the ship a “threemaster” recalls Stephen’s earlier declaration of serving three masters. The crosstrees denuded by the brailed sails, as Gifford and Seidman note, “recall Calvary Hill, where Jesus was crucified” (66). This image reemphasizes the Catholic theme and Stephen’s refusals to serve.

In the “Circe” episode, Stephen will finally rid himself of the guilt he feels for his mother’s death, as he “lifts his ashplant high with both hands and smashes the chandelier” (583). Many critics have commented that a black Mass take place in the episode. This black Mass begins, according to McNelly, with a misnaming of the proper liturgical prayer. As Stephen enters the scene accompanied by Lynch, the “stage directions” read, “(*Stephen, flourishing the ashplant in his left hand, chants with joy the introit for paschal time*)” (*U* 431). McNelly observes that what Stephen subsequently chants, “*Vidi aquam engredientem de templo a latere dextro. Alleluia*⁵⁸” is not in fact an *introit*, but part of the asperges antiphon of Paschal time. He suggests that

the change in nomenclature from Asperges to Introit could be explained by

⁵⁸ “I saw a stream of water welling forth from the right side of the temple. Alleluia.” (Gifford and Seidman)

maintaining that the Circe chapter assumes the structure of a mass, that the Introit is the opening prayer of the mass, and that Joyce is simply allowing himself artistic elasticity as he opens a mass-structured chapter. (294)

The Mass structure of this chapter is most often seen as a black Mass and not as an ordinary one. I will suggest that this black Mass is itself an altered one, whose intent differs from the usual black Mass. In the typical black Mass, the purpose is usually the opposite of the traditional Mass, to desecrate rather than consecrate the Host. In this version of the rite the object is also the opposite, but it is best interpreted as attempting to deconsecrate the body. As the celebrant of this Mass, Stephen will exorcise himself of his mother's ghost and all she represents. When, toward the end of the episode, Stephen cries out "*non serviam*," echoing Satan's exclamation, his mother's ghost, who becomes more and more pitiable as the episode proceeds, finally dissipates.

Sancti Nominis invocationem

Different structuring devices can control the narrative at any given time in the book. Joyce inextricably intertwines all of these structures through intratextual connections, (e.g. symbols and themes). However, at a given point in the text, one or more of these structuring techniques dominates the narrative and becomes the primary directive force for a time. These structures are always present, even when they do not occupy the primary structural position. In certain cases, a single symbol can represent any or all of these structures simultaneously.

We can use Mulligan's *introit* as an example. One critic states that Mulligan's first spoken words in the book are "introibo ad altare Dei" (O'Shea 127). He is only half right. These are the first words spoken by *anyone* in the book. The obvious (though Walsh would call it naive (321)) question would be; if the Mass is not structuring the narrative at this point, what is it doing here? Walsh answers resoundingly that it is there as a link between *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. I would ask, again perhaps naively, what then is structuring the novel at this point, where no other possible structural device has been introduced?

The *introit* occurs here for several reasons. I would agree with Walsh (325) that it serves as a bridge for Stephen between *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. I would also agree with McNelly that it establishes Mulligan's character as "the jocund blasphemer" (Deviations 20). I would also say that the coincidence of the *introit* being the first part of the Mass and its occurrence as the first spoken words in the novel forecasts the wide use of liturgical elements to be found in the book. It serves yet another purpose, one that connects the Mass and the Homeric parallels. I suggest that it serves as an invocation to the muse, a necessary part of any epic. In unifying these forces, through their symbols, Joyce provides more authority to his speech act. In connecting the central symbol of Christianity to one of the founding works of Western literary tradition, he provides a bridge to create his new aesthetic religion, wherein the artist and not the philosopher or theologian will lead the flock.

As evidence for this theory I would introduce several issues. Mulligan "raises

aloft” symbols that will later be associated with art, although at first they can be only associated with the Mass. The cracked glass Mulligan raises up is identified as a representation of Irish art. Since he intones rather than speaks the phrase, we can see it both as parody of the Mass and as an invocation. The translation of the phrase is “I will go onto the altar of God.” If we combine this translation with Stephen’s aesthetics (i.e. “the priest of the imagination”), then this God is the god of art or the imagination. Joyce has a propensity for indirection, so that if he were to include an invocation, he would do it indirectly. For all these reasons, I believe that the *introit*, positioned as it is at the beginning of the book, serves the purpose of the invocation to the muse necessary for the epic form the book will imitate. If it does serve this purpose, then it is clear in Mulligan’s mockery that this particular epic will be a comic one.

Having made this assertion, connecting the *introit* to the epic form, I would like to state that the *introit* serves yet another purpose. It is the starting point from which all structural elements will flow. Mulligan’s next words are, “Come up, Kinch. Come up you fearful Jesuit” (*U* 3). As Edmund Epstein suggests, these words may be derived from *Romeo and Juliet* (qtd. in Thornton 11). Friar Laurence says to Romeo, “Romeo, come forth, come forth, thou fearful man.” The use of the hidden allusion to Shakespeare introduces the theme of Hamlet, which will be associatively connected to the theme of the Father’s search for the Son and the son’s for the father. This theme, in turn, signals the Odyssean parallel. Since the text begins with a Mass, “the Father and Son idea” raises the idea of the consubstantiation of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost alluded to directly by

Stephen. Here, all structural devices are bound together. Soon they will be separated and assume primary or secondary structural positions. Their paths will crisscross again throughout the text, as one assumes a position of dominance while another subsides into the position of substructure.

Kyrie eleison

Joyce's use of the Homeric Epic has often been described as a scaffold on which, or rather from which, he built his work. I would like to extend and problematize that metaphor. If the Homeric Epic is a scaffold then, like a scaffold, it surrounds the work but is in a sense separate from it. Unlike a frame, a scaffold does not support the structure. It is used instead to bring the "builder" within working distance of the work. Once a building is standing, all scaffolding material is dismantled and removed. The ultimate occupant of the building (i.e. the reader) does not see this scaffold. She can only envision it when she wonders how the builder worked. She herself has no further use for it.

The Homeric "scaffold" should operate in very much the same way. Although Joyce has left us clues that lead us to the use of the scaffolding, it serves little purpose except to determine how Joyce got from point A to point B. The reader need not use the Homeric epic, since *Ulysses* is now a freestanding "structure." Note that allusions to the *Odyssey* are always indirect. In contrast, allusions to the liturgy are usually stated directly. The connections with the Homeric epic are deeply imbedded or hidden in the

narrative while connections to the Mass are always overt.

The structural role of the Mass does not operate like a scaffold, but rather like an interior “load-bearing” wall. A viewer cannot immediately discern the purpose of such a wall, but without it the “structure” would collapse. It would also be impossible for the user of a building to distinguish a “load-bearing” wall from a dividing wall. The occupant or viewer, however, can readily see such a wall. The reader can clearly see the Mass elements since they are not hidden, but cannot determine at a glance that its primary purpose is structural. Continuing this analogy, we can see that nothing precludes the artist or architect from using a “load-bearing” wall for decorative or ornamental purposes. Such a wall can be painted, wallpapered, panelled or wainscotted with any manner of symbol, theme, or character development without reducing any of its structural capabilities.

Joyce’s structural use of the *Odyssey* is never questioned. However, one wonders if we were not given Joyce’s schemas (including the Homeric chapter headings) and the title of the work, would we be able to determine that the *Odyssey* is a primary structuring device? I would argue against a principal organizational device so tenuously tied to the narrative and at times so deeply imbedded that it requires years of scholarship to dig them out. Nevertheless, the fact that we have been given the schemas, the titles, and several studies, authorized and unauthorized by Joyce, presents an almost incontrovertible argument for the Homeric structure. It is also quite clear from Joyce’s statements to Budgen, Gilbert and a number of others that his intention was to connect his text to the

Odyssey.

Still, had Joyce only managed to tie his present day story to the structure of the *Odyssey*, it would have been a comparatively minor achievement. The *Odyssey* is a relatively simple text when compared with *Ulysses*. It employs no variant narrative techniques, no sudden shifts in narrative style and few allusions to past works. The story too is relatively simple. How then does Joyce knit together his own simple story to this simple structure and emerge with such a complex text? The answer, I believe, is in the knitting together of not only symbols and surfaces, but other structures as well to form a complex whole.

There are several elements that must be admitted to exert a structural force on the novel. We must first admit that the trajectory of the plot or storyline exerts some structural influence on the text. Joyce does not dispense with the use of plot, but rather extends while simultaneously simplifying it. There are no surprising twists of fate or strange coincidences in the plot that allow one character to conquer evil or a villain to be punished. Straightforward as the plot may be, it must inevitably occupy a structural position. That is, the characters must be moved from place to place within the novel, not by a superimposed structure but by an internal organization of events, with its own self-contained logic, firmly based on the fictionalized events of Dublin, June 16, 1904. This interior structure, as with a more traditional novel, must be accepted as one of the primary organizational device in the novel. These events are used to structure all other structural devices, including the Homeric parallels and the Mass.

For example, when Buck Mulligan begins his parody of the Mass, he is sharing the Martello tower—which he later refers to as an *omphalos*—with Stephen and Haines. At this point the narrative begins to be shaped, and the movements of these characters control this shape. The references to both the liturgy and Homer must have a secondary position although they also begin to shape the text. As Lang and many others have recognized, the events in the first three chapters—the Telemachiad—are simultaneous to the second three—the Bloomiad. These six chapters have an overlaid effect primarily because they are occurring at the same time.

Gloria in excelsis Joyceo

Joyce often introduces elements or leitmotifs that, at first reading, seem to have little or no meaning. Once an element has been established, he then adds shades of meaning by associating it with other elements. By repetition and further associations with new elements, he expands the significance of that element. Finally, it becomes a kind of shorthand for all of the elements with which it has been associated. For example, the term “metempsychosis” is introduced in the “Calypso” episode. At first, it seems to carry no more meaning than its dictionary definition Bloom gives to his wife. At this point, however, it may also serve to demonstrate Bloom’s attempt at erudition and his wife’s apparent lack of it. Also, it may help to portray Molly’s earthiness, one of her chief attributes in the book. “O, rocks! she said. Tell us in plain words” (*U* 64). A careful reading yields further meaning to the early use of this term, which will be prevalent in the

rest of the book.

At the end of “Proteus” Stephen is also thinking about “metempsychosis,” although he does not use the term. He thinks, “God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain” (*U* 50). Stuart Gilbert has identified this passage as “a variant of the cabalistic axiom of metempsychosis (as well as an allusion to the protean ebb and flow of living matter): ‘a stone becomes a plant, becomes an animal, an animal a man, a man a spirit, and a spirit a god’” (128). Gifford and Seidman find yet another connection:

Stephen’s sequence also has an internal logic of its own: “God becomes man” (as God in one of the three persons of the Trinity became man as Jesus Christ); “man becomes fish” (as the fish in an iconographic symbol for Christ in the early Christian church); “fish becomes barnacle goose” (after the medieval belief that barnacle geese were not born from eggs but from barnacles, “at first gummy excrescences from pine beams floating in the waters, and then enclosed in shells to secure a free growth.... Being in process of time well covered with feathers, ... they take their flight in the free air... barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain” (as goose feathers are used to make featherbeds, and Featherbed Mountain is in the Dublin Mountains south of Dublin) (65).

As with Joyce elsewhere, here the concept is defined but not named. Later, the term will be named and defined more strictly by Bloom, and when the concept is reintroduced Joyce will add, by an associative method, meaning that the term would not ordinarily

have.

It is important to note that in Stephen's demonstration of how the process works, he first connects it to the concept of consubstantiation and then trivializes it by virtue of God's permutation into "barnacle goose" and "featherbed mountain." Here, Stephen is mocking one of the major tenets of the Catholic Church. Unlike Mulligan's mockery, this cannot be said to be blasphemous, since in his mockery Stephen is really only tying God to the natural world.

Stephen's contemplation of the natural order of things links the concept of metempsychosis to consubstantiation. Through his interpretation, a link can also be established between consubstantiation and transubstantiation. These terms are further connected in that consubstantiation has been defined as the "[the doctrine] according to which, after the Consecration of the Mass, the substance of the bread and wine remain together with the newly present substance of Christ's body and blood" (McNelly, Diss. 105). The Catholic Church condemned this teaching as heretical at the Council of Trent. The Church teaches instead the doctrine of transubstantiation, defined as:

The wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the Bread into the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood, the species of bread and wine alone remaining. (*Catholic Encyclopedia*)

The Church retains the term consubstantial only as it refers to the identity of substance of the three entities of the Trinity. This link will have vital importance throughout the book

for both Stephen and Bloom, and more significantly for Joyce.

In nomine Patris et Filii

The use of the Mass elements can be linked to some of the major themes of *Ulysses*. The theme of search or quest associated with the *Odyssey* can also be seen from a liturgical perspective. The search of the father for a son and of the son for a spiritual father can be seen as a form of consubstantiation already associated with the Mass. William York Tindall identifies the beginning of this search as early as the “Telemachus” episode (136). This chapter also introduces the Shakespearean connection. Joyce links this theme with the Greek and the Christian. He also connects it with Shakespeare. The Hamlet theory is here connected with the father and son theme with theological overtones, as Haines states. Haines’s statement leads Tindall to assert, “Atonement, we recall, means becoming at one with. Finding his father, Stephen-Telemachus-Hamlet will become his father” (136). This concept of the son’s search for the father in order to become one with the father sounds suspiciously like consubstantiation and refers to the connection between artist and creation.

As Tindall asserts, “establishing this central theme, the chapter introduces several symbolic motifs and archetypes that are to bind the episodes together” (136). It is precisely in this manner that the Mass can be linked to structure in *Ulysses*. Symbolic motifs, recurring themes and archetypes are linked to one structural device then another, until the structure is built as a complex, multi-level whole.

Hoc est enim corpus meum

The main purpose of the Catholic Mass is the consecration of the host. That is the transubstantiation of the body and the blood of Christ into the symbols or accidents of the wine and the wafer. In Catholic dogma the bread and the wine, as we have seen, are not simply symbols of the body and blood of Christ, but rather, by the mystery of transubstantiation, are transformed literally into the blood and body of Christ. In the similar concept of consubstantiation, God becomes Christ and Christ becomes the Holy Ghost. All three exist separately and yet are one. These two terms become interconnected in the text with the Greek or Cabalistic term, “metempsychosis.” This kind of indirect linkage between the Greek, the Christian and the Cabalistic are just the kind of coincidences Joyce is apt to manipulate into more expansive meaning.

At the time when Molly asks her husband for the definition of the word, we do not hear her make the faux pas “Met-him-pike-hoses.” At this point, all we read is Mr. Bloom’s response, “Met him what?” It is not until much later, in the “Lestrygonians” episode, that we hear that Molly has made this mistake. Bloom remembers, while standing in front of the ballast office, “Met him pikehoses she called it til I told her about the transmigration. O rocks!” (*U* 154). This particular mispronunciation of the word gives it yet another associative meaning. By having Molly make this mistake, Joyce associates the word “metempsychosis” with Blazes Boylan, who Bloom knows will be coming to visit his wife. Here the associative meaning of the term has “snowballed.”

The term has not only been associated with the structural devices of the Mass and the Homeric parallels but it has surface meaning as well.

Although this phrase is never heard when uttered by Molly, the fact that it was said can be proved by Bloom's remembrance of it and by his response to what must have been her question, "Met him what?" It is also worthwhile to note here that the fact that this utterance has gone unreported in the "Calypso" chapter shows generally that other statements can go unreported. We can specifically infer, for example, that Molly has told Bloom the exact time that Boylan will arrive "with the programme." We know that he must have been told this because of his later preoccupation with the time at the Ormonde Hotel in the "Sirens" episode.

The word or the concept of metempsychosis will appear many more times during the course of the book and each time its meaning will be expanded to include other associations. The final use of the word itself occurs in the "Ithaca" chapter, where Bloom uses it to refer Molly's lack of mental acuity.

The way these leitmotifs work is very similar to the way the Mass can be tied to the structure of *Ulysses*. As McCarthy states, Joyce uses "individual prayers and rituals to point up the thematic significance of individual events within the novel" (136). As with the leitmotifs, specific Mass or liturgical references are tied directly to the surface events of the novel and are expanded outward into a wider range of meaning. Ultimately, the process will reveal the real presence of the author within his text through an accretion and precision of detail.

Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas

Joyce manipulates structuring devices from the secondary to the primary structural role; the “Nausicaa” episode is an appropriate example. At the beginning of the chapter, the narrative is being shaped by a parody of the “namby-pamby jammy marmalady drawersy (alto la!) style” (Ellman 473) of a romance novel of the period. Very soon, however, this style is intertwined, fugue-like, with a catty snippy language, which we could assume is the language of Gerty MacDowell’s adolescent fantasies based on the reading of these novels:

The summer evening had begun to fold the world in its mysterious embrace. Far away in the west the sun was setting and the last glow of all too fleeting day lingered lovingly on sea and strand, ... (*U* 346)

Compare this flowing, overwrought language to this passage on the same page:

Cissy Caffrey cuddled the wee chap for she was awfully fond of children, so patient and Tommy Caffrey could never be got to take his castor oil unless it was Cissy Caffrey that held his nose and promised him the scatty heel of the loaf of brown bread with golden syrup on it. (*U* 346)

In this second passage Joyce uses missing commas and short, choppy words of no more than two syllables to convey the scattered thoughts of the pubescent Gerty. Here, Joyce presents several narrative forms which are struggling for dominance; at first the narrative style is a parody of a typical “teen” magazine or romance novel of the period, then, the

narrow, yet scattered point of view of Gerty herself is presented in a new narrative voice. Imbedded in this stylistic fugue is the description of Gerty herself, the Caffrey children, the Boardmans, the scene itself and numerous other points of reference presented to us by a narrative voice unheard before and never to be repeated. This particular stylistic mix, however, continues roughly through half the chapter.

It is then replaced by a different set of clashing styles, themes and/or devices. Here, the Catholic liturgical language comes once again to dominance, momentarily, in the form of the Benediction ceremony, taking place at the Mary Star of the Sea church. This is a good example because it disputes the assessment made by Walsh that the Mass exists only as symbol and theme in the novel. Here, the liturgical elements are not used to create a link to an earlier work or to show it as backdrop of the consciousness of Dublin life.

Why does Joyce juxtapose these different styles and forms in this chapter and, more generally, in the rest of the book? The answer may be that by this method he is able to present several themes simultaneously, a task that would be impossible using a static narrative line. The idea is to present thoughts and ideas in the way that a visual artist can. The concepts of *nebeneinander* and *nacheinander* have been introduced in "Proteus." By using this associative method Joyce will attempt to show action as occurring *nebeneinander*, that is, one next to the other rather than one after the other, as a literary artist working within a straight narrative line is forced to do. This interweaving of artforms is one of the precepts of the Modernist artist, not only in the literary arts but in

other arts as well.

This argument, however, does not answer why Joyce chose the Mass specifically as one of the many structuring devices of the book. We can begin to answer this question by determining why he used Homer's *Odyssey* as a structural device for the book.

Perhaps a simplistic yet reasonable answer is that Joyce wanted to write a modern epic and chose as his model the most well-known, most recognizable epic in western culture. Similarly, he uses the Mass/structure link to present two ideas. First, he depicts the artistic development of Stephen as his earlier self-transforming into the "priest of eternal imagination." Second, the work itself is the transformation from "the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life."

Benedicamus Domino

In the "Nausicaa" chapter the Benediction ceremony in the Star of the Sea Church is used in conjunction with the rockets that are going off overhead and the bat flitting about in the air to establish a connection between Bloom's act and the miracle of the annunciation. Joyce masterfully orchestrates the scene to mock while simultaneously representing the iconography of the Annunciation. The Virgin Mary in a kneeling position, her hands clasped under her chin and the Archangel Gabriel at some distance away, while above them a white dove circles about, usually represents the annunciation in iconographic art.⁵⁹ Mary is usually imbued in a white light that seems to come from on

⁵⁹ Artists throughout the Renaissance and into the modern period, including DaVinci, Botticelli, Andrea Del Sarto and many others, generally depict this scene.

high. With careful review of the scene on Sandymount Cove, we can see that Joyce employs similar imagery here. Gerty leans on a rock in a trance-like state, exploring the recesses of her own imagination. Mr. Bloom stands at some distance away involved in an act that can and does produce “seed.” Meanwhile, at the Mary Star of the Sea Church,

Father Canon O’Hanlon was up on the altar with the veil that Father Conroy put round him round his shoulders giving the benediction with the blessed Sacrament in his hands.

How moving the scene there in the gathering twilight, the last glimpse of Erin, the touching chime of those evening bells and at the same time a bat flew forth from the ivied belfry through the dusk, hither, thither, with a tiny lost cry. (*U* 363).

The benediction service, the sacring bell, the bat that flits above the scene all contribute to a commingling of Bloom’s moment of ecstasy and the consecration. In this juxtapositioning of sacred and profane, Joyce denigrates the sacrament while simultaneously investing Bloom’s act with incarnational power. Figured in this convolution of images and linguistic styles are the consecration, the Annunciation and as Lang observes the consubstantiation of Bloom and Stephen.

At the moment of climax there is, in fact, a light produced by the bazaar fireworks that are going off, and just at that moment a small bat flits around observing the scene. This image is fortified by the fact that during the whole encounter there is a Benediction ceremony being performed. The Bloom/ Stephen connection is also emphasized here, by

two coincidences. The first is geographic; Bloom now stands on Sandymount Strand, and it is quite easy to imagine that he leans on the same rock as Stephen did some twelve hours earlier. Stephen arrives at the shore with the intention of reading the “signature of all things,” and leaves having written a short poem, “He comes, pale vampire, through storm his eyes, his bat sails bloodying the sea, mouth to her mouth’s kiss” (*U* 48). The image of the bat here will be repeated in “Scylla and Charybdis” in the parody of the Apostles’ creed, where Jesus is referred to as “nailed like bat to barndoor, starved on crosstree” (*U* 197). The image of the bat flitting about in “Nausicaa” replaces the iconographic imagery of the Holy Ghost figured as a dove; in Stephen’s poem, the “bat sails bloodying the sea” symbolizes a commingling of two persons of the Trinity; the incarnate form of the Trinity is represented in Stephen’s Credo. All of these commutations emphasize the idea that Bloom’s action on Sandymount produces, not just vain seed, but the incarnate body of the artist within his own text. This whole process comes to fruition in the next chapter, “Oxen of the Sun,” where Mrs. Purefoy is having her baby. Lang and others have suggested that until this point, Stephen does not bear a body, figuratively. His “incarnation” depends upon the onanistic consummation taking place on Sandymount Cove.

In order for this kind of connection to take place, the Catholic liturgy must shape the narrative. At this point, the Catholic element is brought to the primary position as an organizational tool, although it does not occupy that position at the beginning of the episode. If the “namby pamby, etc.” style that structures the narrative at the beginning of

the episode were allowed to continue throughout the chapter, it would have a very different shape. Many of the connections that Joyce makes in this chapter would simply not take place. It is by virtue of the “structural shift” that Joyce is able to insert all of the different elements he uses.

Apostolicam Ecclesiam

By the time he writes *Ulysses*, Joyce had discarded his belief in the Catholic Church. However, he had not discarded the use of its symbols. In his aesthetic system he, the artist, must become the “priest of the imagination” in order to weave out of “the daily bread of experience” the “body of everliving life” (*P* 221). If Joyce is to accomplish this task, there must be a transubstantiation of experience into “everliving life.” That is, there must be a consecration of the bread of life, making it into “everliving life.” There then must be an “artistic Mass” celebrated in *Ulysses* that consecrates the bread of daily life, and Stephen, the fictional representation of early Joyce, must become the “priest of the imagination” in order to be the celebrant of this Mass. In *Portrait*, Stephen has renounced his belief in the Catholic Church and has taken instead the vows of an artistic order. He has yet, however, to become an initiated priest of this order. This development takes place in *Ulysses*, where there is a transubstantiation of daily bread and a consubstantiation of the artist and his hero.

In tying the Catholic liturgy to the structure of *Ulysses* some critics attempt to define Joyce as a Catholic writer. That Joyce was a Catholic writer in the sense that he

was reared within the teachings of that church is true enough. But this assertion is rendered meaningless, since he left the Church when he was 20 and never again accepted its communion. That he was a Catholic writer by virtue of the fact that he uses many of the symbols of that church is incorrect. Even if this were logically true, it would be just as pointless an assertion, due to the way in which he uses its symbols and themes. In every use of the liturgy and Catholic symbolism more generally, Joyce does his best to abase those rites and symbols while at the same time transmuting rather than negating their functionality.

Ite, missa est

The mass is alluded to in three specific ways. It is either verbally evoked mockingly, as Buck Mulligan does in the opening of the book, or small parts are alluded to within a character's interior monologue. Finally, it is introduced into a descriptive passage as part of the scene, as in the "Nausicaa" episode shown above. By using these techniques, Joyce is able to reintroduce Mass or liturgical elements often, tying them to the central themes and symbols of the book. Since the chief function of these recurring Mass and liturgical elements is to bind together these themes and symbols, they perform as connective tissue in the novel, a use that can be termed as structural. Again, this use of the Mass does not in any way imply that Joyce used the structure of the Mass directly to structure *Ulysses*.

The Mass and liturgical elements can be seen as structuring the book, not because

its structure was used as a model but because its elements were used to unify some of the major themes and symbols of the book. A multi-level approach to structure is necessary in *Ulysses* because of its encyclopedic scope. Though it may appear at first that the narrative of *Ulysses* is quite scattered, in reality it is a highly structured book, highly structured in the sense that many structural elements are tied into the unity of the text as well as tied to each other.

To argue that Joyce used the Mass as a point-by-point structural guide to write *Ulysses* would be wrong. But similarly, to argue that Joyce used the Homeric epic in this way would be just as wrong. As O'Shea points out, "one would be hard pressed to picture Joyce with his manuscript in one hand and the missal in another, biting his lip and fretting over what to do" (128). I argue that one would be just as hard pressed to picture Joyce holding Homer in one hand and the manuscript for *Ulysses* in the other under the same circumstances. Rather than this rigid view of the use of external and internal structure, Joyce took what he wanted and left the rest alone.

Ite in pace, et cum Espiritus Sancto

At this point of the early twentieth century, the epistemology was obviously no longer bound by a one-to-one relationship of language and nature. Apparent resemblances between signified and signifier, which were the basis of medieval language, have been overturned by modern linguistic theory and the scientific paradigm. The shift put forward by Keith Thomas from a magical to a more sophisticated religious system,

has been further advanced by modern scientific method. Joyce's iteration of the Catholic Mass in *Ulysses* creates its own "miracle," but it is an abstract one, a miracle of the word itself. If the incarnation of Christ represents a transubstantial transformation (figuratively the word made flesh), Joyce's miracle represents the flesh made word. This miracle takes place in abstraction and is the only kind available within a scientific epistemology that allows language to function only commemoratively.

If it is accepted that Joyce uses the Catholic Mass to help structure his book and that the purpose of this structuring is to give authority to his artistic transubstantiation, then Joyce is attempting to use a performative speech act on the same level of power as the medieval Mass. His aim is to create a new reality through words and so to found the religion of the imagination, where the artist is the priest. In doing so, he attempts to recapture the power of this old epistemological system and translate it from a religious to a literary context.

Epilogue

I have been following what I have called an epistemological shift. Through an analysis of the function of language before and after the English Reformation, I trace the changes over the course of four hundred years in the series of social relations that is created by a community of people with some shared ideas about the nature of the world. In order to examine this phenomenon, it has been necessary to use certain generalizations for the sake of convenience. It is understood that terms such as "the Middle Ages," while categorically useful, do not represent a concrete demarcation, or in any sense a uniformity of thought or belief. The shift takes place, then, as a movement in the officially sanctioned belief system that eventually trickles down to the popular culture. Once it is held widely enough in the culture, it becomes part of a social epistemology that determines what is valid knowledge in society. Within this epistemology there is always room for dissent. There will always be those who disagree with generally established ideas of their culture, and we must never assume that any given paradigm is universally accepted. But even given this fact, a paradigm exists because its system of belief is held widely enough to validate a worldview.

It would be an obvious mistake to imagine either homogeneous thought or belief existing among people living in a period we have conveniently labeled. The ideas that we have come to believe as representative of that time were not unquestioningly accepted by all of the members of its society, but those ideas represent a unified belief system to which, as in every age, there was both general acceptance and specific resistance. We can

assume that, much as in our time, there was a broad range of response to the orthodox belief system, although, the political power of the church guaranteed a certain level of uniformity. In the Middle Ages most people believed what their church told them occurred during consecration. The shift I have endeavored to trace resides specifically in that level of uniformity. In England, this process took longer and was more politically complicated than in the rest of Europe.

I envision this shift as a local phenomenon, and again, we must be careful of accepting generalities as representative of universal agreement. What occurred in most of Northern Europe between the medieval and early modern period is similar to but clearly different from what occurs in England. Because of its vacillation between reform and tradition, English social epistemology developed in an atypical manner from that of its neighbors.

What the language of the Mass does for orthodox believers within a medieval context, under which most English Christians lived, is de-centered and ultimately disappears during the English Reformation. While its residual effects continue to be felt today, belief in the transformative power of the Mass must be defended against a dominant scientific paradigm.

Language today functions in concert with scientific principles to describe the universe. Again, this is a generality, but the dominance of cultures where this is a widely held belief exerts political and societal pressure on those who do not subscribe to it and thus guarantees that beliefs outside of this system must be defended in the face of this

pressure. The old forms of belief are never quite discarded and retain a level of residual force that plays a part, albeit a smaller one, within the epistemological framework of cultures.

Language can no longer create its own reality because the belief in this power is no longer dominant in what is now a much more global society, but the residual effects of that power are still with us and continue, at a diminished level, to exert sociological force. What was once the generally accepted belief in the power of language has become the minority view, and thus can no longer wield sufficient power to determine the epistemological system.

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