# STREET SCENES:

# LATE MEDIEVAL ACTING AND CONCEPTS OF PERFORMANCE

by

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Abstract

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By

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In this dissertation I offer an aesthetic reading of the late fourteenth-century *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* and argue that this text demonstrates the existence of a late medieval theoretical discourse that was concerned with issues raised by the performance of holy characters and subjects. This performance discourse differentiated between the performative function of the actor and that of the character, and led to an acting style that explicitly emphasized this duality. This kind of aesthetic has two main manifestations that can be termed "epic acting" and "total acting." This terminology associates medieval acting with twentieth-century post-realist theories of acting such as those of Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud that also seek the explicit performative tension between actor and character. Accordingly I suggest that there are phenomenological similarities between late medieval concepts of performance and modern ones. An example of "epic acting" is when an actor not only wears a mask but also explicitly refers to the difference between her/himself as a performer and the character that the mask denotes. "Total acting" on the other hand occurs, for example, in scenes that demand extreme use of violence. In such cases one is overtaken by the phenomenology of performance, and

attention is drawn not only to the suffering character but also, or even more so, to the suffering body of the actor. The theatrical complexity of the English mystery cycles that this dissertation takes as its prime example demands both kinds of acting, and therefore I suggest that the tension between "epic" and "total" theatricality best typifies late medieval concepts of acting.

I argue that the methodological approach that best addresses this kind of theatre is the examination of actor/character dialectics in the different episodes of the mystery cycles. The characters' mythological and religious status demanded an acting style that maintained their fixedness and remoteness from the actors who performed them. Simultaneously the interest of the producers, performers, and spectators in their own contemporary lives created in this theatre space for the actors to display and negotiate their own questions of identity while representing the biblical episodes. Accordingly, I suggest that the actors in the mystery cycles purposefully functioned as mediators who enacted mythological characters and at the same time performed their own identities, maintaining a recognizable and dialectical tension between the two performing functions.

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# Chapter 1

## Actor/Character Dialectics: Theoretical Perspectives

In a York *House Book* dated 3 April, 1476, the year that these books of city council minutes begin to appear, a decision that players should not act in more than two plays of the Corpus Christi pageants is recorded:

> And þat no plaier þat shall plaie in þe saide Corpus ch*r*isti plaie be . co*n*ducte and Reteyned . to plaie . but twise [<.>] on þe day of þe saide playe And þat he or thay so plaing plaie . not . ou*er*e twise þe saide day vpon payne of xl s. to forfet vnto þe Chaumbre asoften tymes as he or þay shall be founden defautie in þe same.
> [And that no player that shall play in the said Corpus Christi play be hired and retained to play but twice on the day of the said play. And that he or they playing the play should not do so over twice the said day or else they will be fined 40 s. to have to pay unto the Chamber as often times as he or they shall be found failing in the same.][1]

In the same record, just before this decision is noted, a standard is set for the players themselves: "That is to saie þat yerely in þe tyme of lentyn, there shall be called afore the Maire for þe tyme beyng iiij of þe moste Con*n*yng discrete and able player*e*s within þis Citie. [That is to say that yearly in the time of Lent, four of the most skilled moral and able players within this city shall be called before the Mayor for the time being].[2] It is clear from this statement, which goes on to declare that "insufficiant p*er*sonnes either in Co*n*nyng voice or p*er*sonne" [insufficient people who either do not have a skilled voice or a pleasing person[ality]] should be discharged and avoided,[3] that much attention was

devoted to the performative skills of the players, that these lines are, in fact, records of auditions for the plays. This preparatory interest in the vocal and performative abilities of the players, revived annually, means, in other words, that much thought went into the performances themselves and into the acting conventions that were part of the annual tradition; it means that decisions such as the one that an actor must not perform in more than two plays were not taken arbitrarily. Although this decision might have originated in reasons as pragmatic as the physical and vocal effort demanded of most of the performers and the fear that they would not be able to successfully "perform" in more than two plays, or because of financial considerations of payments to the players, or even because of technicalities that would prevent players from doing so, this detail still tells us a lot about concepts of acting and performance in the late medieval religious theatre.

Perhaps the most significant consequence of such a rule is that different actors would play the same character in any performance of the cycle. Many characters appear in more than two plays, but seemingly most important is the figure of Christ, who appears as an adult in over twenty plays in the cycle. Following the rule cited above, a minimum of ten different actors would play this role, resulting in "Christ's" different voices and intonations, body shapes, heights and sizes, facial expressions, and so on. This very performative element, therefore, makes it clear that there was no intention of identifying an actor with the character he performed, or of creating a consistent image of that character throughout the cycle based on the individuality and personality of a certain player. The result was a recognizable gap between the two entities—actor and character.

Unlike an acting concept that seeks the unification and absorption of actor and character within each other as an ideal, I argue in this dissertation that the concepts of

performance that underlie acting in the late medieval religious theatre were not based on the idea of "getting into" or momentarily "becoming" a character, an idea that is quite central to conventional theatre theory. Rather, acting in this theatre was the outcome of a complex aesthetic attitude that for religious, social, and theatrical reasons preferred performative doubleness and maintained a recognizable difference between the actor and the role. Significantly, this "presentational" acting as it is sometimes termed, was not a result of a "naïve," "underdeveloped," or "unprofessional" style, but rather an artistic expression of the culture that bred it. The performative differentiation between actor and role has two main theatrical manifestations that coexist within a performance of a mystery cycle. At times acting in these plays deliberately emphasized the distance between performer and role, highlighting the doubleness of the stage persona that combines the unhidden identity of the actor as a community member *and* the identity of the sacred/mythological character. At other times (mainly because certain scenes were based on extreme physical or emotional intensity), performative emphasis on the actor's bodily presence and effort resulted in the dual stage persona, a conjoining once again of the phenomenal body of the actor at work and the image of the character being invoked. In both cases, the medieval audience was accustomed to watch what we could term double or dualistic stage personas in which the actor functions as a mediator (not a medium) who presents, or "demonstrates," the character.[4]

Although an actor/character dialectical dynamic is part of every theatre performance, I demonstrate throughout this dissertation that in the late medieval theatre this performative tension was purposefully used and highlighted rather than erased and nullified. If, by any means, the aesthetic intention of the creators of the mystery plays

would have been to have one actor whom the audience could identify as Christ throughout the cycle, for example, not only would they not have forbidden actors to play in more than two plays, but also they would have found techniques to enable this to happen. We must remember that although some characters such as God the Father or Satan were masked—supposedly enabling the evocation of a more consistent concept of such supernatural characters (still, however, maintaining the space between actor and character)—in the case of Christ there are scenes where he is presented in fleshly forms of nudity and injury,[5] and yet consecutively played by different actors. Therefore, I suggest that in order to understand and analyze the performativity and concepts of acting of the late medieval theatre, we should regard the double or simultaneous stage personas as an essential part of the aesthetic intentionality of the theatre creators, as a theoretical criterion through which to study late medieval acting. This stance can be termed as an examination of the *theatricality* of medieval theatre because it not only puts emphasis on the process of performance itself, but also because I claim that the conscious disposal of the theatrical mechanisms was at the basis of this theatre's aesthetics and functioned therefore as a central conveyer of meaning. In this sense theatricality is somewhat different from (yet still related to) "performance" in that it is rooted—as the term itself implies—in the artistic dimension of theatre and in theatre's aesthetic effect, whereas performance denotes a larger all-encompassing category. Like performance, however, at the basis of the concept of theatricality is the awareness of human agency that makes the theatre performance work—an idea that has special significance for the understanding of acting dialectics in late medieval theatre. Recognizing the deliberate actor/character co-existence as part of the theatricality of the medieval religious stage, is the key, for

example, to the understanding of the complex mixture of religious *and* secular themes and concerns (such as the guilds' civic status, so evident in the plays)[6] and for the comfortable inclusion of "high" and "low" cultural forms such as sacred themes and religious ideology along with playful enjoyment. The actor's body is the most concise and significant site in which the multiple voices that construct this theatre come together, precisely because he himself belongs to the community that produces the plays and he also inscribes on his body the signs of the character and the imagery of the biblical scenes being enacted. Therefore, it is highly important not to regard the actors merely as "live placards," who seemingly had a similar performative function to that of the banner-carriers at the beginning of the plays, because such an attitude does not take into account the liminal situation of performance itself, what Herbert Blau identifies as "the distinction between just doing and performing the doing."[7] Such an approach is implied for example by Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter who, in their discussion of the use of masks in the mystery plays, acknowledge the distance between performer and role and yet argue that

> [S]uch traditions do not encourage their audiences to recognize a tension between the mask and the actor. The concentration is on the character who is presented by the mask—often a god, mythical hero, or evil spirit—not on its relationship to the wearer. Once the mask is on, the actor as an individual *simply disappears* behind it: *only the character is left.*[8]

To support my disagreement with this categorical statement I suggest that we look at the non-illusionist acting conventions of the medieval theatre as a substantial instance in theatre history where, since the aesthetic ideal was not a merger between actor and

character, the space between the two entities evoked by the very act of performance acquired significance.

In addition, one of the main directions this dissertation takes is to suggest that this performative characteristic can be viewed as similar in many ways to twentieth-century avant-garde acting methods. One of the central paradigms that twentieth-century theatrical experimentation struggled with was the realistic trend that stressed "the ability to make character and self appear seamless,"[9] in favor of theory and practices that sought the purposeful display of both. Although looking on medieval acting concepts through the lens of modern theory seemingly brings together unrelated moments in theatre history, there is much to be gained from such a comparative methodology. Not only does the modern perspective enrich the terminological analysis of medieval theatre practices, but also it enables recognition of the aesthetic complexity that characterizes medieval theatre. To put it bluntly, the idea for example that an important element of medieval acting was that performers introduce themselves by addressing the audience directly sounds much less sophisticated that the use of the same deictic device in a Brechtian play. Accordingly, in my work I employ a comparative methodology and suggest that modern theories of acting, such as those of Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud who devalue conventional actor/character merger, offer one potential viewpoint through which to think and articulate late medieval concepts of performance. Although attention has been devoted to similarities and connections between medieval and contemporary dramatic forms,[10] as well as to academic reconstructions and festive revivals of medieval theatrical traditions,[11] I am not aware of an attempt to contextualize medieval concepts of acting and performance either in relation to contemporary theatre, or, even more

importantly, as a significant phase in acting history and theory—an issue I enlarge on in this chapter and to which I devote the second and third chapters of this dissertation.

My thesis raises another important methodological issue that is related in a different way to the comparison between late medieval and contemporary concepts of performance. The central focus of my work has to do with a *theoretical* aspect of theatre studies: the dialectics, dynamics, and flux of actor and character relations in performance. And yet the specific case I discuss—the late medieval religious vernacular theatre—is a study in acting and theatre *history*. My work, therefore, involves the delicate task of applying and contextualizing a theoretical concept within a given historical moment. As Michal Kobialka describes the problem:

> To use a metaphor, a historical document is spoken to, and forced to respond by speaking, a language that is not its own but that belongs to the voice that framed its reality as well as present reality. The language of intelligibility may force a document to "speak," but it also homogenizes the moment when the non homogenized event took place.[12]

In order to avoid such a homogenization that would tend to overlook the specific discourses of performance that characterize late medieval theatre and culture, I propose that we see actor/character dialectics as a theoretical paradigm, a continuum that is constantly subject to change, but that is *always* part of a theatrical performance. At one of its poles the aim is that actor and character are assimilated because of an aesthetic attitude that dominates a certain moment in theatre history (late nineteenth-century realism, for example, as well as earlier interest in "verisimilitude"), whereas at other times, because of different socio-aesthetic concepts, the other pole of the continuum is more dominant,

the pole at which actor and character are purposely meant to co-exist. Significantly, almost throughout theatre history one cannot find any example of an actor-character relationship at either pole of this suggested continuum, as almost always the dynamics are somewhere in the middle—both in theatre theory and even more in theatre practice. Thus, I do not regard the analyses I offer in this work as exclusive to either medieval or contemporary avant-garde theatre,[13] just as I do *not* suggest that modern theatre theory "went back to" or "revived" medieval aesthetics.[14] I do think, however, that these two periods are particularly good examples of moments where a dominant performance concept was that actor and character can and even *should* performatively co-exist and *not* merge.[15] In addition, analyzing the performative site of actor/character dialectics according to such a continuum not only deconstructs any binary that tends to prioritize a certain acting style, but also it enables us to approach any moment in theatre history with this concept of performance as a significant tool to examine acting theory and practice rather than regarding the history of acting as an evolutionary process from "naïve" to "sophisticated." In other words, just as students of theatre examine theatrical architecture or space, drama and dramatic conventions, actor/*audience* interactions, and so on, in order to analyze the dynamics of performance and acting in a given moment, an important criterion is the site of actor/character dialectics. The growth of performance studies and its influence on theatre studies during the past decades have created the space for the examination and consideration of the performative role and identity of the *actor* along with and in relation to that of the character in a given performance. In cases that highlight the performative tension between the actor and the character, as in late medieval theatre, this analytical tool is crucial for examining theatrical effect and

aesthetic. Very briefly, in addition to the religious significance of the character and the need to maintain its remoteness, this acting aesthetic made explicit space for exploration and negotiation of the identity of the performer. In direct correlation, the entire concept of "dramatic character" was very different from that of the classical, Elizabethan, or later paradigms.

Although in theatrical practice a complete merger between actor and character is and was almost never possible, in theatre theory and ideology this has been a dominating idea long before late nineteenth-century realism. Accordingly, after I discuss some theoretical aspects of the idea of "character" and of performative actor/character relations, I then examine how, when, and why the idea that they should be merged became so dominant—suggesting Hamlet's instructions to the players as an obvious yet defining moment. The rest of the dissertation is devoted to an analysis of late medieval performance theory and religious theatre, examining the cycle plays and their theatrical conventions in light of the contemporary theoretical and theatrical category of "performance." In the two chapters that follow this introductory discussion I examine in detail medieval aesthetics and concepts of performance, offering some reasons that I believe led to the acting conventions that purposely differentiated between the actor and the role. In these two chapters I focus my analysis on the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*,[16] and offer what I believe to be the first in-depth analysis of the aesthetic ideas that this text contains. In other words, my work on the *ToMP* helps to establish not only the existence of a late medieval performance theory discourse, but also I elicit from the text four concepts of performance that are central to late medieval theatre practice. In chapter 2, "Games, Theatre, and Performance: The *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* in Context," I offer

a critique of Lawrence Clopper's reading of the *ToMP* in light of his recent argument that the text is not related at all to the civic mystery plays but is rather concerned with unruly games and pagan ritualistic survivals that form what he considers the performance genre of "miracula." I demonstrate in this chapter that it is impossible to unequivocally deny any connection between the *ToMP* and the civic vernacular religious theatre, but moreover that Clopper's historical assessment of the text and his conviction that the *ToMP* is primarily addressed at unruly games is in fact helpful for the study and analysis of the performance theory that underlies the plays. This is because Clopper's contextualization of the *ToMP* helps to establish how significant a source such games and pagan survivals were for the growth and aesthetics of plays such as the mystery cycles. In other words, although I disagree with Clopper's dichotomy between performative energies that characterize "games" or "miracula" and those that typify "devotional drama," I believe his work on the *ToMP* to be of great significance for the understanding of the sources of the religious theatre that are other than its liturgical roots. Following the second chapter and my analysis in it of the complex meanings of late medieval words such as "miracle," "game," and "representation" that helps me to determine the *ToMP*'s relevance to the analysis of religious vernacular theatre, in Chapter 3, "Concepts of Performance in the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*," I articulate and discuss four concepts of performance on which the rhetoric of the *ToMP* is based and which are central to late medieval theatre aesthetics: "contrariety and simultaneity," "performance and signification," "emotionality," and "communality." These concepts demonstrate the existence of a theatre aesthetic discourse and moreover they also all testify that the idea of acting in late medieval religious theatre was indeed based on a purposeful

differentiation of actor and role. The analysis I offer of the *ToMP* in this chapter unpacks its dense rhetoric and argumentation, and turns it, I hope, into a much more accessible and readable text, necessary for any student of medieval theatre. Finally, in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, "Late Medieval Street Scenes: Performance between Epic and Total Acting," having established the existence of a late medieval performance theory that was interested in emphasizing the duality of actor/character dialectics, I examine examples from the York cycle that demonstrate how acting was indeed based on this dialectical nature, and how it existed within the seemingly contradictory categories of "epic" and "total" theatre. In this chapter I enlarge on these terms in their modern context as well as in their relation to the late medieval stage. Briefly, the stylistic variety, multitude, and breadth of the cycles allowed them to incorporate acting methods based on gestural and symbolic demonstration (such as God the Father "creating the world"—"epic acting") and ones in which an actor performed Jesus' suffering on and off the cross ("total acting"). In both cases, I argue, the concept of performance was not to convince that the actor is/becomes the "character." And, in any case, as I already noted, there was almost always a definable double stage persona that combined actor as performer and as community member with character as image or idea. This is not to say that the audience took part in some kind of "alienation effect" process, or that the medieval theatre creators had a sense of performative self-consciousness like that in the modern theatre—not at all. But from the perspective of the fusion of actor and character as the purpose of performance, the medieval conventions were an expression of a different kind of theatrical coherence and unity.

I focus on the English theatre not only because of the great amount of evidence available but also because of two textual anchors from the English theatre that frame this work. The first is the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, dated around 1380-1425—the period from when we first have evidence of the York and Coventry cycles; and the second is Shakespeare's oeuvre—his theatre and drama being the ultimate symbol of the English Renaissance—which were conceived not long after the suppression of the religious mystery plays in the second half of the sixteenth century. The importance of this research goes beyond discussing medieval acting, which itself is an area in much need of theoretical attention.[17] The performance theory perspective employed here paves the way to acknowledge and include medieval concepts and practices of performance in histories of acting and acting theory that by and large have tended to exclude them. And, most importantly, I believe that by discussing the phenomenon of overtly and purposely dualistic stage personas in their historical context, and by looking at the theatre that preceded Western's society early-modern and modern era, this dissertation potentially has real implications for the understanding of contemporary theatre practices, acting concepts, and performance.

**Actor/Character Dialectics: Theoretical Paradigms and Post-Medieval Attitudes**

Playing God the Father as opposed to Jesus Christ as in the brief example mentioned above attests to the existence of two quite different types of performance that characterize the medieval "mediating" kind of acting. In both cases acting involves evoking holy characters, but whereas the supernatural qualities and the authoritative

presence of God the Father dictate one kind of presentation the humanity of Christ and his bodily sufferings demands another.[18] The range of characters in the mystery plays is much more varied and complicated than the two deities that dominate the narrative, but for the purposes of articulating acting concepts that govern the cycle drama it is useful to consider these two examples as paradigmatic. In the first case, (which I refer to as "epic acting"), the actor/performer does not try to convince the audience that s/he becomes the character. Here the spectator views a kind of a double, simultaneous entity, as the performer "demonstrates" the character or a few of its characteristics and easily jumps in and out "of character." On a more general level, any performance in which an actor *deliberately*, as part of the aesthetic concept, wears only a partial costume, or a mask, or who talks about the character s/he portrays in the third person, or who refers to herself (as the performer), or who intervenes with the audience by turning to it in the first person, or who does not play a human character but an object, an animal, or a supernatural figure, etc., creates this double entity.[19] A straightforward contemporary example of this performance concept is in Disney's Broadway musical *The Lion King*, directed and designed by Julie Taymor. Here not only do the performers play animals, but also, the dominating convention of the performance is that the mask that designates the animal's face is in each case worn by the actor on top of her/his head, thus creating a double, simultaneous image of the actor's face *and* the animal's (Fig. 1). One is always watching the actor at work as separated from the image of the character s/he evokes.

In the second case (which I refer to as "total acting"), the performer's body is involved so totally in the act of performance that the attention of the audience member, overtaken by the phenomenology of performance itself, becomes focused on the

sweating, stretching, suffering, striving, and performing body of the actor. Here too, a double or dualistic stage persona is evoked, as the image and idea of the "real" character is brought to mind while the corporeal physicality of the performer acquires strong

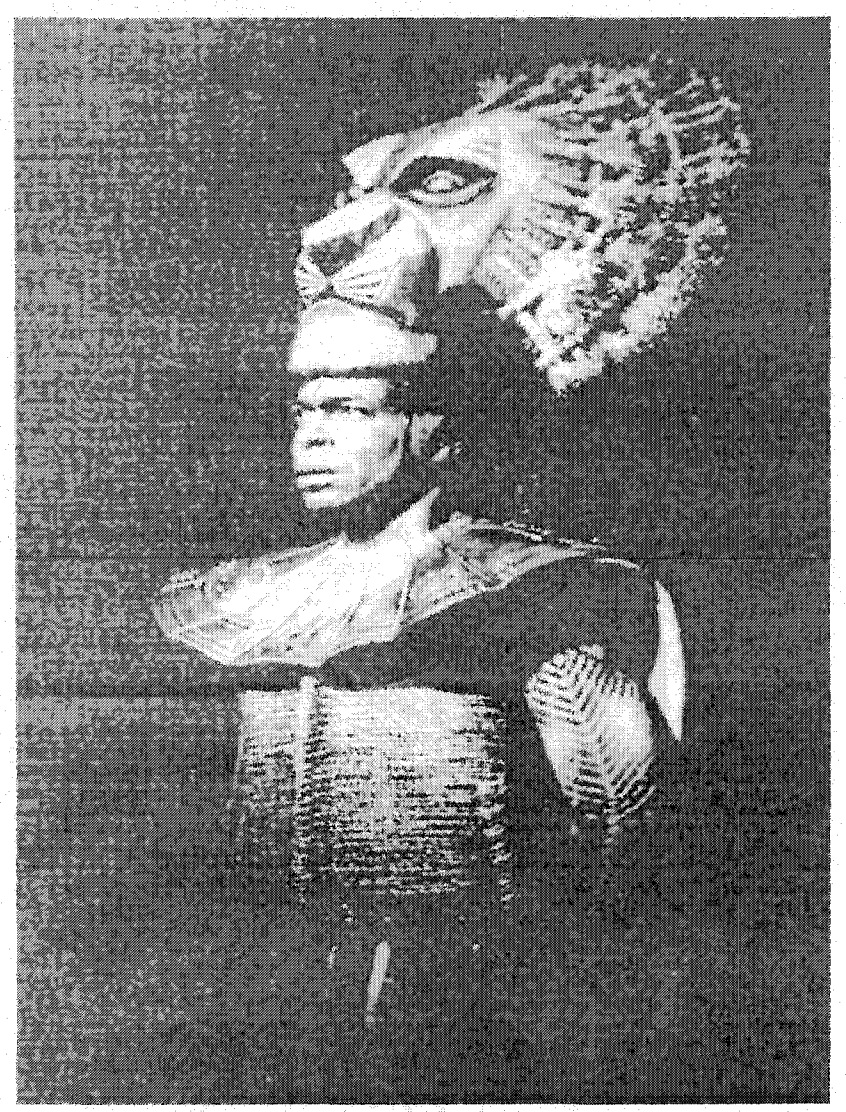


Fig. 1. Alton Fitzgerald White in the role of Mufasa, *The Lion King*, Directed by Julie Taymor, New Amsterdam Theatre, New York[20]

presence as well—sometimes to the extent of literally risking the performer. Thus the actor emphasizes the intangibility or "fictionality" of the character and simultaneously

establishes her own presence.[21] Think for example of the couple in love in Pina Bausch's *Café Müller*, who run and fall until the image of the loving couple is simultaneously reinforced and subverted as gradually the two performers can hardly breathe because of their physical effort. Almost any example of performance art exists on the threshold of the semiotic and the phenomenological, as the performers evoke a (fictional) image and yet display to the extent of real risk their own bodies.

Significantly, "God the Father," "Jesus Christ," the "Lion King," a "couple in love," are all characters that are either non-human or that exemplify some symbolic, mythological, or transcendent qualities, and are thus in need of an acting concept and style that is not based on psychologically oriented individualism. But even "regular" human characters in the mystery plays such as Adam, Eve, Noah, or Joseph represent mythological types, characters whose actions and events are a-priori completed and who therefore also demand an acting style that brings out their typical characteristics and that maintains their iconographic and mythological recognizability.[22] In other words, as we shall see in the following chapters, part of the reason for the medieval acting aesthetic I argue for is related to the kind of identity that typifies the religious/mythological *characters* themselves. In order to theatrically evoke such characters through human agents, the very meditative process of acting must be emphasized, either by "epic" means or by "total" ones, or even by using both simultaneously. These two performance concepts do not exclude each other, and do not necessarily contradict each other. I mention them separately however because they represent different performative attitudes that characterize the tension between what we would call today a more self-conscious performance style as opposed to a more "total," "ritualistic" style.[23] From the perspective

taken here—actor/character dialectics—in both cases, however, the purpose and the intention is not to convince the audience even for a moment that the actors become the characters, that the performer on stage is a unified *fictional* subject. Rather, the artistic coherence of the performance is achieved precisely by this dualistic kind of acting, the simultaneous image created on stage bearing ideological and aesthetic meanings. Still, it should be noted that these effects might be part of a completely "realistic" performance as well, one in which the aesthetic ideal *is* to merge actor and character: even a trivial example of an actor playing Willy Loman in a language other than English might focus spectators' attention on the actor himself rather than on the character he is playing. The question in such cases, though, is what is the governing aesthetic principle that underlies the performance, i.e., whether the actors are aiming to eliminate *their* selves in order to create a unified stage persona and to convince us momentarily that they "are" the characters.[24] If so, usually all the other mechanisms of the performance (play/dramatic plot, space, scenery, lighting, darkening of the house, music, costumes, intonations, etc.) are accordingly recruited to create on stage a fictional world, detached for two hours or so from the reality of the spectators, just as in the cinema or a TV drama.

The issue I am examining here is, however, not whether meta-theatrical and performative self-conscious moments occur in theatre in general—of course they do, almost always—just as moments that magically make us forget we are in the theatre take place in performances that aim to create "alienation effects." Rather I wish to identify the concepts of performance governing actor/character relationships in a given performance, theatre genre, or moment in theatre history that would lead to a deliberate interest in the co-existence of performer and role. In which cases are the two entities conceptually

manifestly split and displayed simultaneously? And what aesthetic and ideological implications do such performance concepts have? In order to start examining these questions in relation to late medieval religious theatre it is important that we first look at existing attitudes towards medieval acting and theatre. I believe that there are two main venues through which our concepts of medieval performance and performance theory are mostly shaped. The first is contemporary theatre history scholarship that tends to ignore the existence and importance of a late medieval theatre theory, and the second venue is composed of Renaissance writings on theatre that have quite dramatically influenced general assumptions regarding their predecessors. In the following pages I will examine both venues to demonstrate the necessity of the work that this dissertation offers.

Meredith Anne Skura opens her book *Shakespeare the Actor* with the assertion that "one fundamental assumption shared by actors, theater people, and psychologists is that there are two aspects of acting, although these are not always separated. The first is mimesis or role playing; the second is performance, establishing a 'real' relation to an audience."[25] Although this might be the case, the question I am raising here is narrower and has to do specifically with the not-sufficiently-problematized space between the actor and the character, whether in "mimesis" or in "performance," or in cases such as the late medieval stage, which, I argue, combined both. Although in a different place Skura acknowledges the dualistic performative nature of actor/character dialectics, her emphasis is more on actor/*audience* relations, whereas mine is on actor/character relations. She writes: "playing, now as in Shakespeare's time, isolates the actor before a crowd of watchers as mimesis *transforms him into another being*; but no matter how complex, alienated, or self-conscious the relation between actor and role, there is always an actor as

well as a character, both engaging the audience and alienating them from it."[26] Whereas Skura so defines the basic nature of theatrical performance, *any* performance, I believe that the relation between the two entities, actor and role, does matter especially because of the way it reflects, as Elinor Fuchs terms it, the "idea of self"[27] in different places and times. Significantly, the "idea of self" as that of an actor in relation to a character does not necessarily mean that the performers' "individuality" is prioritized in relation to that of the character; indeed it can be the precise opposite, or any kind of dialectical relationship.

In spite of its centrality, this aspect of theatrical performance has been overlooked, given the general assumption that the purpose of theatre has almost always been merging actor and character, seemingly just using different conventions at different places and times. In particular this question has been almost completely neglected regarding medieval theatre, for many reasons, among them lack of medieval performance theory that addresses this topic directly. Thus for example, under the five-page-long entry "character" in Patrice Pavis's *Dictionary of the Theatre*, the opening general definition states that "through the use of *person* in grammar, the *persona* gradually acquired the meaning of an animate being and a person, and the character took on the illusion of being a human person."[28] As Pavis continues his discussion there is a significant omission: the concept of "character" in the Middle Ages is not mentioned. Under the subtitle "Character and Person" Pavis says that in the Greek theatre "the actor is clearly detached from the character as its executor rather than its embodiment, to the point of separating gesture and word in acting."[29] This, as we shall see, is similar in principle to what I argue about the idea of actor/character dialectics on the medieval stage (even though for

different reasons and carried out in utterly different ways). Then Pavis goes on to trace the "history of an itinerary,"[30] explaining:

> The evolution of Western theatre is marked by a reversal of this perspective: the character is identified more and more with the actor and becomes a psychological and moral entity similar to other human beings, entrusted with producing an effect of identification on the spectator. ... [T]his development began to emerge with the beginnings of the bourgeois individualism, *in the Renaissance* and the classical period, (Boccaccio, Cervantes, Shakespeare), and peaked from 1750 until the end of the nineteenth century, when bourgeois dramaturgy saw in this rich individuality the typical representative of its aspirations for recognition of its central role in the production of goods and ideas.[31]

Although dictionaries naturally tend towards generalizations and the idea of "evolution" is itself questionable, and given that Pavis's point of tracing how and when the actor and the character started to get closer to each other is clear and valid, I am concerned that the medieval theatre is not even mentioned in this "itinerary." Whereas the Greek and the Renaissance theatre are specifically included by name, the medieval theatre is not. I assume that this is partly because of the tendency to relate the idea of "character" more to drama than to performance, and also because the moral and ethical aspects of the concept "character" denote not just a stage fictional persona but as in each human being's "character."[32] Although medieval religious drama is very different from classical and Renaissance tragedies, poetics, and structures, it is full of characters and roles. Moreover, when he speaks of the Greek classical drama, Pavis is concerned with performance and performative actor/character dialectics.

Two other important books (not dictionaries), devoted to acting from a historical perspective but that omit medieval concepts are William B. Worthen's *The Idea of the Actor* and Joseph Roach's *The Player's Passion*. Although neither author explicitly explains, I assume neither includes medieval theatre because it is considered to be amateur rather than professional—which it was in comparison to the institutionalized theatres and profession of acting established in the Renaissance. Still, as both offer analyses from different perspectives of the art and social function of acting based on large cultural sets of performance concepts, "professional" or not, medieval acting should not ignored because of the limiting binary of *theatre* professionalism and non-professionalism. In other words, questions of cultural and performance theory such as concepts of enactment, impersonation, presentation, and acting, all of which involve human performance and agency, should be addressed regarding medieval theatre as well. Worthen acknowledges and discusses the significance of the performer/character double stage personas in the three epochs he addresses (Renaissance Acting; the Sentimental Theatre; and Modern Acting). At the outset he states that "onstage, the actor both is and is not there for us. He is present as an actor, strutting his stagey stuff; but he is also absent, negated by the dramatic illusion he creates."[33] Although Worthen's focus is on the relations between the ethical aspects of the drama and its characters (hence his methodology is based on play analysis) and the actor's status, identity, gender, and the ways these constitute his/her performance, the underlying assumption of the book is that the actor's purpose is to momentarily become the character. Significantly, this assumption does not contradict "artificial" acting or even "gestural" acting; indeed, Worthen discusses eighteenth-century theatre as a "suitably conventional, and highly

generalized form of expression, the language of gesture."[34] As Joseph Roach warns: "before we label an acting style artificial, we should have at least made an effort to understand what its practitioners meant by *natural*."[35] Obviously, such issues and concerns are more than relevant to theories, conventions, and practices of the medieval theatre as well.[36]

In his *Character: Acting and Being on the Pre-Modern Stage* Edward Burns's second chapter "Rhetorical Character: History and Allegory" comes closest to discussing the idea of actor and character in the medieval theatre. However, his prime example that precedes the Tudor allegorical drama is Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, which is not a dramatic text. The mystery cycles are not even mentioned, and although the analysis of Prudentius's text is revealing about the medieval concept of the body as a metaphorical site of moral struggle, it does not help in understanding medieval actor/character dialectics.[37] As opposed to these surveys, Lesley Wade Soule's ideas come close to those that I set forth here. In her book *Actor as Anti Character: Dionysus, the Devil, and the Boy Rosalind*, she coins the term "anti-character," discusses the simultaneous presence of the performer as opposed to the character, and explicitly states at the opening:

> A recurring element in early popular theatre was the refusal by a certain kind of performer to remain within the bounds of dramatic illusion. Despite the increasing emphasis in theatrical performance on textual mimesis and the requirements of character impersonation, such performers, while playing the character, simultaneously asserted their own non-mimetic presence against it. They were actors functioning as anti-characters.[38]

Although Soule correctly observes the dialectical duality of actor and character on the pre-modern stage, her main thesis differs from mine in two significant, interrelated aspects. First, she continuously sees "mimesis" as an ultimate ideal that the pre-modern theatre seemingly departed from in certain cases. Even in the paragraph cited above, which opens her book, Soule talks about a refusal to "remain in the bounds of dramatic illusion" as if such bounds already existed—an idea I seriously question.[39] Second, and more importantly, as is clear from the title of her book, Soule limits the phenomenon she analyzes to specific characters that have subversive potential when performed (against society as well as "against mimesis"), because of the anti-social essence already inscribed in their character ("character" in the sense of ethical nature). The roots of this argument are in her linkage between these characters and the festive customs of popular culture that have filtered into the theatre in each era. By focusing her analysis on the performativity of Dionysus, the devil, and Shakespeare's Rosalind, and by relating their dualistic stage personas to Bakhtinian carnivalesque and social subversiveness, Soule implies that the rest of the theatrical framework kept "mimesis" or unified actor/character dynamics intact. In other words, although her observations about such liminal characters in performance enlighten the social effect that theatre—even religious theatre—might have, she assumes that this kind of "anti-character" theatrical technique existed only when the idea was to be socially subversive within the more conventional theatre frame. Apart from her analysis of the devil as "anti-character" in the late medieval theatre, Soule asserts about the rest of the performance that "it was always necessary to preserve the basic integrity of the *mimetic illusion*, for to *challenge* what it represented would be to challenge biblical and Church authority."[40] My argument differs from Soule's in that I do

not see stage personas that are based on the double presence of actor and character as a necessarily subversive performative act, just as I do not see "mimesis" or "mimetic illusion" as the most desirable and socially protective forms of theatre—then or now. On the contrary, as I discuss in the following chapters, the medieval theatrical *disinterest* in "mimetic illusion" was exactly the way to create theatre that was at once comic, playful, and "theatrical" in the social and cultural senses, *and* authoritative, didactic, and religious. Soule writes about the devil:

> Those performances in which devils were prominent, such as the *Adam* and the later mystery cycles, were events in which the Devil and devils participated in two different ways: first by intruding into the illusionistic representation of a dramatic text and deliberately violating the illusion established by the mimesis, and second, by acting as a chorus of anti-mimetic, anti-illusionist ritual performers, asserting their performative presence but refusing to be included in the mimesis.[41]

I agree with Soule's interpretations of the devil-performer's celebratory, carnivalesque, and even subversive potential.[42] However, I see the acting style she attributes to the performer of the Devil's character as part of a much larger aesthetic concept of acting. According to that concept, the performative presence of figures such as the Devil, or Herod for that matter, had social meanings in addition to the narrated religious ones. Soule's analyses are significant in that she points out at least some instances of the performance concept I am trying to locate here, but she is still tied to the preconception regarding mimesis and the unification of actor and character as central and essential to theatre performance.

In an illuminating essay on early English acting styles Peter Thompson poignantly identifies this general assumption that an actor ultimately aims to *become* a character. He writes about Renaissance drama in contemporary performance:

> Theatrical approaches to sixteenth-century drama are increasingly, but still sporadically, assimilating recent shifts in cultural and theoretical perspectives. Meanwhile, for most actors, as well as for the unreconstructed spectator, character as subjectivity remains paramount. Actors will readily argue over what sort of person Ophelia *is* on the unspoken assumption that what she *does* (or fails to do) is Shakespeare's cryptic clue to her essential being. Though the actor may never be Ophelia, rehearsals operate excitingly within the dynamic of becoming. We can be sure that it was quite otherwise for Shakespeare and the Lord Chamberlain's Men.[43]

Thompson's ideas about Renaissance acting styles and their relations to performative medieval forms as opposed to general notions of "character as subjectivity" form a significant link for the examination of English Renaissance theories of acting and theatre and their attitudes regarding medieval concepts of performance. I would like to turn now to what I have stated above, namely that merging actor and character had become an aesthetic ideal long before Stanislavsky, and even long before Diderot. Certainly Diderot's theorizing about the *Paradoxe sur le comédien* as well as the eighteenth-century discourse about acting in general are significant milestones in establishing this performance concept and in its becoming as dominant as it has. Yet while pre-eighteenth-century acting *practices* may have been less concerned with achieving this actor/character merger in ways based on individualistic behaviorist psychology that was to come, theoreticians of the theatre have constantly argued for this unification as an

aesthetic ideal most often titled verisimilitude. In at least two cases I now discuss, Shakespeare's metatheatrical dramatizations and Sir Philip Sidney's theory, both argue for a "correct" concept of theatre and acting, and both implicitly refer in their writings to the medieval conventions.[44]

A fascinating reference to the theoretical debate of actor/character dialectics is inscribed in one of the most transitional moments of theatre history—Shakespeare's drama and theatre.[45] Although all of his plays are full of theatricality, banquets, masques, performances, and metatheatrical elements, in *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there are not only real theatre performances but also famous semi-theoretical discussions of the medium. In both cases questions of acting and impersonating are addressed directly (from exactly opposite points of view) and in both there are references to the earlier theatrical genre of the mystery plays. Whereas Hamlet marks the search for a "natural" acting style by threatening to have an actor who acts "unnaturally" "whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; [since] It out-Herods Herod" (3.2.13-14), in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* we are offered a parody of the mechanicals' rehearsing and acting methods which most likely echo the medieval guilds' "unprofessional" theatre.[46] According to David Bevington's commentary, "Termagant" is "a supposed deity of the Mohammedans, not found in any English medieval play but elsewhere portrayed as violent and blustering."[47] Although the name "Termagant" itself does not occur in the mystery plays, Herod is often given the anachronistic degrading title Mohammed, a choice that expressed medieval post-Crusades imagination through the horrific nature of the biblical character.[48] Hamlet's immediately following words, quoted above, indeed refer directly to Herod—a significant character of the mystery plays, well known for being acted

monstrously and "exaggeratedly." Accordingly, Hamlet's famous lines to the players define "the purpose of playing" as imitating nature:

> Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of *nature*. For anything so o'erdone is from the *purpose of playing*, whose end both at first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. (3.2.17-24)

Obviously the meaning of these lines is not nineteenth-century "realism," but a more ethical, moral, and decorous idea of what "imitation" is and "should be." And yet the instructions continue to emphasize that "natural acting" means creating a believable, recognizable, "conventional" human being:

> O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having th' accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men and not made them well, *they imitated humanity so abominably*. (3.2.28-35)

On the word "abominably" Bevington comments: "Shakespeare's usual spelling, *abhominably*, suggests a literal though etymologically incorrect meaning, "*removed from human nature*."[49] These instructions, therefore, mark a significant point in which the idea that an actor should perform a character as humanly or as believably as possible becomes an aesthetic ideal. It might seem obvious, but one of the central ways to achieve this ideal is to narrow down as much as possible the gap between the actor and the character. Shakespeare's Hamlet, prefiguring one of Stanislavski's famous no no's—"over

acting"—criticizes an actor who reminds him of those playing Herod in the mystery plays as a shouting and roaring monster, and ridicules a non-sophisticated audience who laughs at such effects: "Now this *overdone* or come tardy off, though it makes the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve, the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others." (3.2.24-28)

A similar condescending approach toward actors (and spectators) who practice (and enjoy) such a non-"natural" acting style is recorded in the mechanicals' rehearsals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Whereas in *Hamlet* an actor is clearly advised to "imitate humanity," Hamlet himself being the paradigmatic epitome of a "human" human being, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* instances of manifestly splitting actor and character are introduced as parodies of unprofessional acting, and most probably of the mystery plays. Concerned how not to frighten the lady spectators Bottom comes up with the following idea:

> Not a whit. I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and for the more better assurance, *tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver*. This will put them out of fear. (3.1.15-20)[50]

The use of the prologue or other preliminary explanatory forms, very common in Shakespeare's drama, is, as we shall see, a dominant dramaturgical technique in the late medieval theatre. There, however, it is used in a way exactly opposite to that in the example just quoted. Here is the irony: Bottom suggests to declare that he "is Bottom," thus using the first person so that the audience will not "mistakenly" infer incorrectly from the performance that he "is" Pyramus. On the other hand, an actor presenting God

the father, for example, at the opening of the York plays would enter and turn directly to the audience deictically stating his identity in the first person:

> *I am* gracyus and grete, God withoutyn begynnyng,
> *I am* maker vnmade, all mighte es in me;
> *I am* lyfe and way vnto welth-wynnyng,
> *I am* formaste and fyrste, als I byd sall it be.
>
> [I am gracious and great, God without beginning,
> I am maker unmade, all might is in me;
> I am life and way unto wealth-winning,
> I am foremost and first, all I say shall be.][51]

Speaking in the first person, rather than having the audience infer from the action who is who, is quite like having the actor emphasize the act of showing or performing itself, basically saying something like "I am now playing God," or "I am Bottom." The actor dressed so as to be iconographically recognizable does not have to present himself as God in the first person; this can be inferred from the dialogue, and no spectator would in any case think he "really" is God or is trying to become him, or for that matter Noah, Abraham, Mary, or Christ. As I discuss in detail in Chapter 3, acting did not mean that the signifier really *is* or becomes the signified concept, as it does, for example in the doctrine of transubstantiation. Rather, as in one of the arguments that the *ToMP* mentions in support of the theatre (in order to contradict it), these were aesthetically distanced *images* of the biblical figures performed. According to the idea quoted by the *ToMP*, performing religious subjects are supposedly better than the painted images, because the latter "is a deed bok, the tother a quick" [(painting) is a dead book, the other (performing)

a quick (live)].[52] In spite of the difference between the two artistic methods, by the very comparison of one to the other the fixed imagery of the performed characters, their "being showedness," becomes clear. No one would assume that the painted figures are the "real thing" or that the purpose of the painters was to create an "identical" icon of the "real thing." But Shakespeare's parody goes even further than informative self-introducing prologues. Pyramus and his swords are apparently not as frightening as a lion is, and an even better idea comes up:

> SNOUT. Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.
> BOTTOM. Nay, you must name his name, *and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck*, and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect: 'Ladies,' or 'Fair Laidies'—I would wish you,' or 'I would request you,' or 'I would entreat you—not to fear, not to tremble. My life for yours: if you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life. *No I am no such thing. I am a man, as other men are*'—and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner. (3.1.31-42)

I do not know if these lines led Julie Taymor to design *Lion King* as she did, but this quote is an exceptional record of a simultaneous actor/character stage figure. Employing the same performative principle according to which "I" is manifestly *both* the performer and the character, the mechanicals decide that they can easily play the moon and the wall just as well:

> BOTTOM. Why, then, may you leave a casement of the Great Chamber window—where we play—open, and the moon may shine in at the casement.
> QUINCE. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and say he comes to *disfigure or to present* the person of Moonshine. (3.1.50-55)

To present is to "disfigure," or, one could say, to dis-figure. Robert Weimann offers a similar analysis of the mechanicals' play and asserts: "what is at issue is the depth of the gap that, unquestioningly, is taken for granted between what is to be represented and what and who is doing the (re)presenting."[53] According to Weimann:

> What Bottom and the players blithely ignore is the most hallowed demand in the Renaissance poetics of representation, *to narrow, if possible to eliminate, the gap between the object and the agency of representation*, between the imaginary world in the representation and the material tools and means of rendering it. In their [the mechanicals'] understanding there is no Marlovian 'glass,' no 'mirror' in which the image absorbs the image maker.[54]

As mentioned above, these acting techniques have a lot to do with those of the late medieval religious stage, as the wall, the moon, and the lion can be seen as equivalent to the supernatural, devilish, or non-human characters who are part of the medieval drama. That Shakespeare, however, has dominated our thought about such acting as ridiculous, "non-professional," and parodic, does not mean that this was indeed so. By comparing Shakespeare's/Hamlet's performance ideology (ca 1599-1601) with that expressed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ca 1598) we are offered a glance into the discourse about acting that marks a transitional moment in the *perception* of what "good" theatre is and is not. I think that we cannot underestimate the influence that Shakespeare's parody of the mechanicals or Hamlet's instructions to the players, as symbols of a period becoming more and more concerned with verisimilitude in the theatre and in general, had on concepts of performance for centuries to come. In any case, although many other factors have led theatre theory to seek "natural" acting and the

fusing of actor and character, and although, as Weimann notes, "such duplicitous uses of contrariety must have continued well into the seventeenth century,"[55] this indeed became the preferred dogma.

An even earlier reference to how and why these ideas about theatre and acting were coming into vogue, as opposed to the medieval conventions that at first were an essential part of Elizabethan drama and theatre, can be found in Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry*. Although Sidney scarcely discusses acting but rather focuses on dramaturgy in the comparatively short parts of his *Apology* he devotes to drama, it is clear to which kind of dramaturgy, theatre, and performance he objects. Influenced by Italian Renaissance theatre theory Sidney calls for unity, unities, and decorum in drama:

> Our Tragedies and Comedies (not without cause cried out against), observing rules neither of honest civility nor of skilful Poetry, excepting *Gorboduc* (again, I say, of those that I have *seen*), which notwithstanding, as is full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca's style, … yet in truth it is very *defectious* in the circumstances, which grieveth me, because it might not remain as an exact model of all tragedies. For it is faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporal actions. For where the stage should always represent but one place, and the uttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by Aristotle's precept and common reason, but one day, there is both many days, and many places, *inartificially imagined*.[56]

Although these lines are indeed linked more to drama than to performance, not only does Sidney mention the play he *saw* (rather than read), but also the unities of time and place, so central to dramatic decorum are very different from the dramaturgical conventions of the medieval mystery plays. Moreover, the paragraph that follows turns to performance.

What is criticized by Sidney as improbable and incorrect, is, in fact, quite an accurate depiction of the medieval conventions:

> But if it be so in *Gorboduc*, how much more in all the rest? Where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Afric on the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the player, when he cometh in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tail will not be conceived. Now ye shall have three ladies walk to gather flowers and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and by we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave. While in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not received it for a pitched field?[57]

Whether consciously or not, Sidney lays out dominant medieval stage conventions one by one. Focusing in this passage on the concept of spatial unity, without mentioning the term itself, he criticizes a stage that functions as a platea—a central empty space that signifies rapidly changing locations according to the text that explicates them or the direction from which the actors come. Just exchange "Asia" and "Afric" with "Heaven" and "Jerusalem," and you have exactly the same diversity of dramatic locations. Switch the "under-kingdoms" and the "hideous monster with fire and smoke" with their medieval parallels and you have the mansion of hell with its monstrous devils. Think of the player who has to begin with "telling where he is" and we're in Shakespeare's parody, or rather, in the medieval mystery plays. Although Sidney does not discuss actor/character relations explicitly, perhaps the most fascinating reference is the two armies "represented with four swords and bucklers," suggesting the use of a stage-synecdoche convention, or, in other

words, having performers differentiate between the emblem that designates their character and their performance or text deliverance. All these conventions are targets for theoretical criticism—theatrical practices that must change in order to give the correct form to the new kind of humanist drama being written. Sidney's text is a unique testimony of the transitional moment in theatre history in which one aesthetic code is gradually being replaced by another. Most importantly the dramaturgical and stage conventions Sidney objects to are not the outcome of an unprofessional, non-sophisticated, naive, or immature theatre practice, but rather the relics, or continuations of a deeply rooted non-illusionist aesthetic concept of performance, one aspect of which was the purposeful co-existence of actor and character. In terms of teaching theatre history, this theoretical text should be studied not only as part of the English Renaissance but as a late description of medieval stage conventions that at first characterized humanist drama.

Finally, in a theatrical analogy that Thomas More draws to describe the "performance" of Richard III's taking possession of the kingdom, we can find yet another reference to acting concepts and actor/character dialectics that seem to be related to medieval conventions being satirized in the context of royal behavioral conventions:

> [I]n a stage play all the people know right wel, that he that playeth the sowdayne [sultan] is percase a sowter [shoemaker]. Yet if one should can so lyttle good [be so ignorant], to shewe out of seasonne what acquaintance he hath with him, and calle him by his owne name whyle he standeth in his magestie, one of his tormentours might hap to breake his head, and worthy for marring of the play. And so they said these matters be Kynges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaied upon scafoldes. In which pore men be but the lokers on. And thei that wise be, wil medle no farther.[58]

More uses this analogy to ironically depict the artificiality of the performance Richard III puts on before he "agrees" to become king. This, like a stage play, is a situation in which all participants (players and spectators alike) are aware that it is a performance and yet all "suspend their disbelief." That More specifically differentiates between a performer who is playing a Sultan and his social identity as a shoemaker in addition to the depiction of the play being performed "upon scafoldes" evokes quite a literal reference to the late medieval biblical plays, produced and played by the members of the craft guilds on scaffolds.[59] That the recognizable distance between the performer and the role stands out as a characteristic of the medieval theatre, and that the performer's identity as a "shoemaker" is emphasized, as well as the implication that "ignorant" spectators would interfere with the course of the performance suggests, as in the two examples mentioned above, both evidence about medieval performance aesthetic *and* a skeptical and even ironic attitude regarding the quality of these performances.

Unlike later humanist and secularized concepts of performance that preferred verisimilitude and unity of presenter and presented, Lawrence Clopper looks at early medieval religious drama and explains: "It is difficult for us, perhaps, to understand the difference between 'represent' and 'impersonate,' but it seems clear that the clerical participant does not understand himself to *become* Rachel or Herod but to be a sign for, a figure of, that personage. His gestures are not histrionic but symbolic."[60] Taking this point even further, in her analysis of the phenomenon of cross-dressing and gender roles in the medieval theatre, Pamela Sheingorn argues that cross-dressing might have had significance beyond mere conventionality. She questions: "if there was no suspension of disbelief, were the identities of all actors retained? Were all seen simultaneously as

characters in biblical myth and citizens of late medieval England? As male and female?"[61] The reasons for and implications of such a liminal concept of performing on the later religious theatre in the vernacular are the questions this dissertation examines.

Centering specifically on the genre of the mystery plays is therefore highly significant. Since the mystery plays perform biblical episodes, "from creation to doom," the idea of "character" in them is very different from the Shakespearean heroes, for example. As Elinor Fuchs writes "Shakespeare's characters seem to the reader/spectator to exist not only within but outside the dramatic narrative that gives them life. It is possible to imagine a Hamlet apart from his tragic circumstance."[62] The biblical characters on the contrary are mythological types. These characters, to use Fuchs's formulation, exist in our minds only in the specific contexts narrated by the Scriptures. Having their role in the sacred history pre-conceived is in fact what gives theatrical adaptations of their stories the potential to be anachronistically relevant, to include the past in the present and vice versa, a significant element characteristic of the mystery plays. As such, the dramatic genre of the mystery plays dictates an acting style that has no reason to search for a way to individualize the actor/character relationship, or to create a situation in which spectators would not be constantly aware that they are watching a performance. The essence of portraying such characters—especially since the general motivation of the performance was religious and didactic—was to maintain their stereotypical characteristics and ideological function. On the other hand, this aesthetic enabled a comfortable performative emphasis on the social and local identity of the performers. Notably, most of these actor/character performative concepts are relevant as well to the genre of the moralities and allegorical drama. John Watkins observes:

> The humanist hermeneutic that has dominated thinking about theatricality since the Renaissance encourages us to see the actor as someone who assumes a mask and dons a role. But on the fifteenth-century morality stage, the actor had to cast off a mask, the illusion of an autonomous existence, and reveal himself as the common human condition before it is shaped by historical circumstances.[63]

And yet, since the festive genre of the mystery plays was an official civic product and a dominant form of the late medieval theatre, it can be seen as representative of medieval performance aesthetics in general. Also, although not always recognized as such, it had great influence on the theatre to come.[64] In other words, I argue that the acting conventions of the late medieval religious theatre in the vernacular can serve as an example of a substantial instance in theatre history where the idea of acting was not to merge actor and character into one, but rather, as I term it, to mediate. I argue in this work that the tension between the two kinds of "performance acting" mentioned above—"gestural" and "total"—characterizes the concepts of performance of the late medieval religious stage in the vernacular. This is true about later forms of theatre as well, and is particularly the case in the contemporary theatre, but whereas in later periods the idea that actor and character *should* become one was and is valid and important, I believe that in the medieval theatre this was not so to begin with.

Robert Weimann writes that

> In modern Shakespeare criticism, the presentational moment on Elizabethan stages has largely been ignored or marginalized. ... As the evidence that we have about its genealogy and cultural functions is largely derivative, we are more often than is helpful thrown back on mere traces in a context where the purpose of

> presentation is not yet made integral to a Renaissance poetics of the mirror. Still to reconsider early modern performance practice beyond its ministerial function *vis-à-vis* the completed form of an extant text, demands that we relate the presentational mode to a concept of 'performance as itself a contested space where meanings and desires are generated, occluded, and of course multiply interpreted.'[65]

Although Shakespeare or the "Renaissance poetics of the mirror" are not the goal of this research, the genealogy of the "presentational mode" as a "concept of performance" that characterized the medieval stage for many different theological, social, cultural, and aesthetic reasons and that heavily influenced the Elizabethan stage is. I now turn to medieval performance theory.

**Notes**

[1] Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, ed., *York: Records of Early English Drama*, Vol. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 109. Hereafter referred to as *REED: York.*

[2] *REED: York*, 109.

[3] Ibid.

[4] I invoke at this stage the Brechtian concept of acting as "demonstration" even though in Bertolt Brecht's theatre ideology the point of "acting as demonstration" is that an actor consciously takes a critical and politically involved stance toward the character s/he presents, whereas in the medieval theatre this was obviously not the case. As Sarah Bryant-Bertail notes: "the dramaturgical principles of epic theater are often mistakenly reduced to a *style*, a set of familiar techniques: placards, direct addresses to the audience, songs out of character, and nonhistrionic acting." *Space and Time in Epic Theater: The Brechtian Legacy* (Rochester: Camden House, 2000), 18, original emphasis. However, as I discuss in detail in Chapter 4, the relations between Brechtian and medieval demonstrative acting can be analyzed *beyond* the stylistic similarities, specifically around the theme of performative didacticism. I also find the concept of demonstrative acting to be very useful for the discussion and analysis of late medieval acting techniques.

[5] For a detailed discussion of scenes in the mystery plays where characters' bodies were exposed and the theatrical solutions for these scenes, see Clifford Davidson's "Nudity, the Body, and Early English Drama," in *History, Religion, and Violence: Cultural Contexts for Medieval and Renaissance English Drama* ([1999] Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 149-79.

[6] I elaborate on the idea of the guilds' "trade symbolism" in the plays and the dramatic negotiation of local and social identities in the following chapters. But see James Simpson, "The Dramatic," in *Reform and Cultural Revolution: The Oxford English Literary History, Vol. 2, 1350-1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 502-57, for an illuminating argument of how the plays' *main* focus was *not* the devotional themes but rather social issues that had to do, for example, with contemporary evaluations of monarchic politics and the like.

[7] Herbert Blau, "Universals of Performance; or Amortizing Play," in *Eye of Prey: Subversions of the Postmodern* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 164.

[8] Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter, *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 197.

[9] Postlewait and Davis, "Theatricality: an Introduction," 19.

[10] See for example Elinor Fuchs, "Pattern over Character: The Modern Mysterium," in *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theatre after Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 36-51.

[11] See for example John Elliott, *Playing God: Medieval Mysteries on the Modern Stage* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); John Marshall, "Modern Productions of the Medieval English Plays," in *Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 290-311; and Sarah Beckwith, "The Present of Past Things: The York Corpus Christi Cycle as a Contemporary Theatre of Memory," in *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3-22.

In a paper entitled "Avant-Garde Mysteries: Performing the Bible on the Contemporary Stage" and that was presented at ATHE 2004, I delineate the differences between modern revivals and reconstructions of the medieval mystery genre and what I define as "avant-garde mysteries," which are deconstructionist, subversive, and political theatrical reworkings of the Bible and that share performative affinities with the medieval mystery plays. Some examples of such performances are: Oscar Panizza's celestial *The Council of Love*; Franz Werfel's *The Eternal Road* (directed by Max Reinhardt—as well as Reinhardt's other "religious" spectacles); Vladimir Mayakovsky's *Mystery Bouffe* (directed by Meyerhold); the Nazi *Thingspiels*; Jerzy Grotowski's *Akropolis* (based on Wyspianski's play); Jean Claude Van Itallie and Joseph Chaikin's *The Serpent*; Dario Fo's *Mistero Buffo*; George Tabori's *Goldberg's Variations*; Rina Yerushalmi's Israeli eight-hour long "Bible Project;" Katie Mitchell's *The Mysteries*; Paul Rudnick's 1998

*The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told*; The Yiimimangaliso South-African multicultural *The* Mysteries; the new West End *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, and there are many more.

[12] Michal Kobialka, *This is My Body: Representational Practices in the Early Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 19.

[13] Think for example of doubling conventions in the Elizabethan theatre where one actor played more than one role so that small troupes would be able to perform large-cast plays; or the continuous use of cross-dressing; or even what Marvin Carlson articulates as theatrical "ghosting," for example, in the case of eighteenth and nineteenth century stars who were "associated with a single role even when they appeared with success in many other parts." *The Haunted Stage* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 71.

[14] However, it is worth to note that modern theatre largely expresses interest in evoking theatrical "religious" or transcendental experiences just as there are many creators and theorists who are specifically interested in "medievalism," the late nineteenth-century symbolists are one example and there are many more.

[15] I do not discuss in this dissertation reasons for the phenomenological similarities of these two moments in theatre history, although I touch upon my assumptions for potential reasons in Chapter 4. At this point it is enough to suggest that theatre that grows in a predominantly religious culture and one that is the product of an ideologically secularized age might not be aesthetically as different as is automatically assumed.

[16] This text, as I discuss in detail, is treated by Lawrence Clopper as not related to the mystery cycles, which are the prime examples in this dissertation. As I discuss in chapters two and three, not only are some of Clopper's arguments contestable, but also the importance of the *ToMP* could not be dismissed in relation to late medieval English concepts of performance, even if it were to be proven that Clopper's conclusions are totally correct.

[17] I am not aware of a book that has as its main topic late medieval concepts of acting per se. Obviously much has been written about this subject, most notably Jody Enders's books: *Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); *The Medieval Theatre of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); and *Death by Drama and Other Medieval Urban Legends* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002). Other recent significant contributions to this topic include for example: Clifford Davidson, ed. *Gesture in Medieval Drama and Art* (Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001); and Sarah Beckwith's *Signifying God.* In addition, trying to argue for the sophistication of medieval theatre, many scholars continuously attempt to prove that medieval acting aimed for "realism"—an issue I doubt and elaborate on in the following chapters. See for example John R. Elliott Jr.'s "Medieval Acting," in *Contexts for Early English Drama*, ed. Marianne G. Briscoe and John C. Coldewey (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 238-52; and William

G. Marx's "The Problem with Mrs. Noah: The Search for Performance Credibility in the Chester *Noah's Flood* Play," in *From Page to Performance: Essays in Early English Drama*, ed. John A. Alford (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995), 109-26.

[18] From a theological point of view the characterizations of God the Father and Christ are more complex than my delineation of acting practices might seem to be suggesting, as for example Pamela Sheingorn demonstrates that in the period under discussion God the Father was depicted in art as a humanized figure. See her "The Maternal Behavior of God the Father: Divine Father as Fantasy Husband," *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), 77-99. Still, from a theatrical point of view and as the structure of the dramatic speeches demonstrate, there are differences between the depiction of Christ as human and God the father as supernatural and therefore more distanced and ceremonial.

[19] I would like to emphasize at this point that I do not limit any of these observations to late medieval or contemporary theatre and performance. They have existed throughout theatre history. My point is however, that in certain times they were much more dominant as an aesthetic concept than in others.

[20] Image is from: www.lionking.org/musical/images/Mufasa.jpg (16 Sept., 2004).

[21] Clearly these general descriptions evoke two kinds of major twentieth-century anti-realistic and avant-garde streams regardless of the ideological reasons of such concepts of performance. But see Philip Auslander's essay "'Just be Your Self': Logocentrism and Différance in Performance Theory," in *From Acting to Performance: Essays in Modernism and Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 28-38, for a view that Stanislavsky's system just like Brecht's or Grotowski's is based on the dualistic presence of actor and character in order to create the "stage persona."

[22] See Garrett P. J. Epp's "The Semiotics of Flatness: Characterization in Medieval Cycle Drama, *Scintilla* 2/3 (1985-86): 132-40.

[23] This tension, which I see as central to the discourse of theatre in general, can be found for example in the famous eighteenth-century dispute as to whether the actor should really feel the emotions s/he performs or be completely detached from them, just as it characterizes in a different way the differences between Brechtian and Artaudian concepts of theatre; the first coining the famous "alienation effect" and the latter visioning life as theatre's double.

[24] Obviously each actor evokes a different character according to the *actor's* individuality and interpretation of the role, but during the performance the audience is led to view a unified person on stage. See more on this in Philip Auslander's approach to Stanislavski in his "Just be Your Self" mentioned above. See also Marvin Carlson's *Theatre Semiotics: Signs of Life*, in which he discusses actors who have come to be associated

with certain roles: "In the course of theatre history men have played women and women men, youths played aged and the aged youths, physically unprepossessing actors have created dashing heroes, and magnificent physical specimens hidden their endowments as grotesques and clowns, but there is always a strong tendency pressing actor or actress toward certain roles for which they seem especially suited physically or emotionally" (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 17.

[25] Meredith Anne Skura, *Shakespeare the Actor and the Purposes of Playing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 9.

[26] Ibid., 29.

[27] Fuchs, *Death of Character*, 9.

[28] Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, trans. Christine Shantz, preface by Marvin Carlson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 47.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., emphasis added.

[32] See more on this philosophical and ethical aspect of the term and its relation to drama, tragedy, and theatre in Edward Burns, *Character: Acting and Being on the Pre-Modern Stage* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1990), 1-17.

[33] William B. Worthen, *The Idea of Actor: Drama and the Ethics of Performance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1.

[34] Ibid., 76.

[35] Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989), 15.

[36] There are exceptions. See for example Mark Franko and Annette Richards, ed., *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance Across the Disciplines* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), in which they observe that "what has remained relatively undeveloped in this field [performance studies] is the study of early-modern performance, that is, performance up until the eighteenth-century" (2), and in which, appropriately, they include Mary Carruthers's essay "Rhetorical *Ductus*, or Moving through a Composition" (99-117), which focuses on the early medieval concept of *ductus* (directed movement) in monastic contexts and its importance in medieval rhetoric. See also Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, ed., *Theatricality*, which is one of the first books to

inclusively discuss medieval and pre-modern theatre and performance as part of a contemporary theatre discourse. See in it Jody Enders's "Performing Miracles: The Mysterious Mimesis of Valenciennes (1547)," 40-64.

[37] Edward Burns, *Character: Acting and Being on the Pre-Modern Stage* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 39-89.

[38] Lesley Wade Soule, *Actor as Anti-Character: Dionysus, the Devil, and the Boy Rosalind* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000), 1.

[39] Obviously the terms "mimesis" and "dramatic illusion" are slippery, and can have a variety of meanings. Clearly Soule does not mean "*realism*" by this terminology but something more like "decorum" that certain characters subvert according to her thesis, and yet I think that these concepts are problematic in relation to pre-modern theatre in general because of the underlying assumption that the rest of the actor/character dialectics were based on assimilation and merger.

[40] Soule, *Actor as Anti-Character*, 67, emphasis added.

[41] Ibid., 77.

[42] See more on this idea in Gary Schmidt, *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell: Eighth Century Britain into the Fifteenth Century* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1995).

[43] Peter Thompson, "Rogues and Rhetoricians: Acting Styles in Early English Drama," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 322, original emphasis.

[44] On Shakespeare's having the opportunity to see the Coventry cycle see for example, Clifford Davidson, "'What hempen home-spuns have we swagg'ring here?' Amateur Actors in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Coventry Civic Plays and Pageants," *Shakespeare Studies* 19 (1987): 87-99. On Sidney Daniel Gerould writes that "his interest in theatre began at Shrewsbury School where the acting of comedies was part of the curriculum for older boys. Annual outdoor staging of *morality plays* took place in 'The Quarry,' a large natural arena seating 10,000." See Daniel Gerould, ed., *Theatre/Theory/Theatre: The Major Critical Texts from Aristotle and Zeami to Soyinka and Havel* (New York: Applause, 2000), 117.

[45] I say transitional because unlike most historical processes, which do not have clear-cut defining moments, the suppression of the mystery plays in the sixteenth century brought an end to the two-hundred-year theatrical tradition. See: Harold C. Gardiner, *Mysteries' End: An Investigation of the Last Days of the Medieval Religious Stage*, Yale Studies in English 103 ([1946] Repr. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1967). See however Lawrence Clopper's illuminating analysis of the *process* of the cycles' decline as

opposed to the concept that they were suppressed at once in his "English Drama: From Ungodly *ludi* to Sacred Play," *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 763-6.

[46] On this particular reference, see Davidson, "'What hempen home-spuns.'" See also Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), particularly Chapter 1 "The Reformation of Playing," 19-29, and Chapter 11 "Bottom's Dream," 179-205. Among other references to the mystery plays produced by the commercial guilds Montrose notes that "in the most material way, Bottom's name relates him to the practice of his craft—the 'bottom' was 'the core on which the weaver's skein of yarn was wound'" (180). It is well known that frequently there was a close connection between a guild's craft and the play it produced. See on this subject for example: Alan D. Justice, "Trade Symbolism in the York Cycle," *Theatre Journal* 31.1 (1979): 47-58.

[47] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. David Bevington (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), 69. Subsequent references to the play are from this edition.

[48] See for example the Girdlers' and Nailers' "The Slaughter of the Innocents," in *York Plays*, ed. Richard Beadle (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), where one of the messengers turns to Herod as Mohammed:

> NUNCIUS. *Mahounde* withouten pere,
> My lorde, you saue and see. (168, 73-74)

[49] *Hamlet*, 70.

[50] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Stanley Wells (New York: Penguin, 1995). Subsequent references to the play are from this edition.

[51] "The Fall of the Angels," *York Plays*, 49, lines 1-4.

[52] *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, ed. Clifford Davidson (Michigan: Kalamazoo, 1993), 98. I will return to this argument in Chapter 3, but see also Carol M. Meale, "'This is a deed bok, the tother a quick': Theatre and the Drama of Salvation in the *Book* of Margery Kempe," in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain. Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al., 49-67 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000); and Theodore K. Lerud, "Quick Images: Memory and English Corpus Christi Drama," in *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Wim Hüsken, 213-37 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001).

[53] Robert Weimann, *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 82.

[54] Ibid., 83; emphasis added.

[55] Ibid., 85.

[56] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), 133-4.

[57] Ibid., 134.

[58] Thomas More, *The History of King Richard III*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester, in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 80-1; quoted in James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 502.

[59] Simpson notes that More's use of "scafoldes" is a powerful pun "on the notion of the scaffold as both 'stage' and place of execution. Break the royal performance, the pun implies, and the scaffold of the stage becomes the scaffold of punishment." Ibid., 503.

[60] Clopper, "From Ungodly *ludi* to Sacred Play," 743, original emphasis.

[61] Pamela Sheingorn, "The Bodily Embrace or Embracing the Body: Gesture and Gender in Late Medieval Culture," in *The Stage as Mirror: Civic Theatre in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Alan E. Knight (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 84.

[62] Fuchs, *Death of Character*, 24.

[63] John Watkins, "The Allegorical Theatre: Moralities, Interludes, and Protestant Drama," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 768.

[64] On this subject see, for example, David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); particularly chapter 8 "The Origins of Popular Dramatic Structure," 114-27.

[65] Weimann, *Author's Pen*, 98-9; Weimann quotes at the end of the paragraph part of Elin Diamond's discussion on performance in her introduction to *Performance and Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1996), 4.

# Chapter 2

## Games, Theatre, and Performance: the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* in Context

Most scholarship dedicated to the analysis and interpretation of the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* is concerned with two central questions. First, who and what are the text's objects of study, that is, what exactly is/are "miraclis pleyinge," and who produced and performed them?[1] Second, what are the text's ethical and religious stances toward such performances and why does it take these stances?[2] In other words, most of the existing work on this text examines it primarily from historical, historiographic, etymological, and socio-religious points of view, rather than looking at it from the aesthetic perspectives of theatre history and performance studies.[3] Since this text is almost singular in its contents and length—its 749 lines devoted solely to the discussion of playing and performance[4]—it is rather surprising that the aesthetic lens has been overlooked and that there has not been a systematic and detailed attempt to find in it (in spite of its negative attitude) evidence about late medieval concepts of performance and aesthetic intentionality. Indeed, in his recent essay "Is the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* a Lollard Tract Against Devotional Drama?," Lawrence Clopper contends that

> despite its purported significance, the tract until recently has been more alluded to than discussed. Except for a sensitive textual—rather than historical—interpretation by David Mills, the only extended commentaries on the tract are Jonas Barish's in his survey of anti-theatrical polemic, Glending Olson's treatment of it within the ethical theory of recreation, my analysis of it as a tract

> against unruly games, and Nicholas Davis's and Ruth Nissé's readings of it as a Lollard text.[5]

Although it is hard to determine whether or not the author/s of the *ToMP* knew about or had in mind the developing civic religious vernacular drama (which the present work takes as its prime example) I believe that this text has great importance for the analysis of late medieval concepts of performance in general. Briefly, whereas most scholarship throughout the twentieth century read the *ToMP* as a Wycliffite/Lollard attack on religious vernacular drama,[6] Clopper argues in the three publications noted above that this text is not an objection to "devotional drama" because it is not concerned with such performances as the civic mystery plays in the first place. Rather, he suggests that "miraclis pleyinge" denotes a specific performative form—"miracula"—a genre of "ludi inhonesti," which are lascivious parodies and subversive adaptations of the scriptures, carried out by clerics, and to which the authorities had traditionally objected. He concludes his historical analysis of the *ToMP* stating that

> My reading of the document is that it is not anti-theatrical (=opposed to devotional dramatic representations of biblical events or the lives of the saints) but anti-ludic, as the ample canonical, synodal, and other kinds of legislation indicate.[7]

I agree with Clopper's historical assessment that the text is related primarily to ludic activities rather than associated directly with the fifteenth-century "devotional drama" of the vernacular cycle plays. In other words, I do not think that the writer/s of the *ToMP* necessarily witnessed a performance of the York or Coventry cycles and then sat down to write the treatise, although it cannot be unequivocally proved that they had

no idea of the Corpus Christi theatrical festivities. I differ from Clopper in that he creates a strict dichotomy between ludic performative events and the authorized religious vernacular drama, whereas I try to show in the following pages that the two phenomena are much closer to each other and much more interrelated than has previously been assumed. I suggest that both took part in a network of late medieval performative activity, and more specifically, that performative characteristics of ludic events such as the "miracula" did find their way into the vernacular "devotional drama" and even significantly influenced the aesthetics and conventions of the mystery cycles. Accordingly, I suggest drawing an equivalence between activities that have been categorized as "ludic," and therefore seemingly distinct and excluded from the "theatrical," and the more open category of "performance" which, in my view, appropriately characterizes late medieval religious theatre practices.[8] The relations and similarities between the "miracula" (as Clopper understands the term) and the civic religious vernacular drama are the key in my opinion to reading the *ToMP*'s ideas about playing, playing with, and representing holy themes, figures, and events in a wider context than Clopper allows. This, I think, is essentially what stands behind the somewhat intuitive motivation of scholars prior to Clopper who argued for a direct connection between the *ToMP* and the civic religious vernacular drama and theatre.

The objective of the earlier tendency to associate the *ToMP* with one of the central theatrical activities of the late medieval era is, however, understandable for reasons that go beyond the text's themes, ideology, and usage of the words "miraclis" and "pleyinge," which have been understood to denote religious drama in general.[9] The lack of a substantive body of medieval "performance theory" has perhaps led us to look at

what might have been a relatively marginal text in this context as if it had more direct relevance to the mystery cycles than in fact it did. And yet, the *ToMP* clearly took part in a larger discourse regarding questions of performance than we have access to. This assessment is evident from the text itself, which claims to have been written in reply to people who supported "miraclis pleyinge" and who gave no less than six specific reasons in favor of this activity. The writer/s of the *ToMP* cite and refute each of these reasons. Therefore, although the proportional place of the tract in regard to the wide range of late medieval performative activities (whether or not its writer/s were aware of the mystery plays) must be kept in mind, its very existence should raise theoretical questions about late medieval concepts of performance and aesthetics.[10]

We are accustomed to thinking about the thematic and formal influences that liturgical performance had on vernacular religious theatre, but there are also obvious connections between this drama and lay and clerical ritualistic games, festivities, carnivalesque activities, secular theatres, and so on. Janette Dillon discusses the relations and connections between Latin liturgical and vernacular drama (as opposed to earlier notions of their linear and evolutionary development one out of the other):

> Latin and vernacular plays are not two ends of a spectrum but two sides of a coin, two practices in dialogue with each other, each defined against the known and felt existence of the other. It is not uncommon for either mode to make space for explicit reference to the other, so that its own discourse is perceived against that other possible discourse.[11]

Just as liturgical and vernacular drama share textual and performative aspects of religiosity, non-liturgical religious drama is a very wide spectrum that includes different

degrees of comic, parodic, and potentially subversive elements, and one should assume influences and exchanges among the different genres.

By examining the *ToMP* from the perspective of theatre aesthetics and performance studies, my reading of the text leads me to suggest that it implies at least four concepts of performance that are characteristic of and significant to late medieval religious vernacular theatre: (1) **Contrariety and Simultaneity**: the dialectical co-existence of different ontological levels of performance, i.e., the deliberate simultaneous presence of the "performing" (an *actor* in a *town* in the *present*) alongside the "performed" (a *character* in a *mythical/fictional space* such as paradise or Jerusalem in the *mythical/religious past or future*). This principle echoes another form of "contrariety/simultaneity" that is also central to medieval theatre aesthetics—the simultaneous positioning of parallel or opposite *thematic* images[12]; (2) **Performance and Signification**: the consideration and awareness of the difference and the tension between performing as in playing, acting, imitating, or signifying and *performing* as in really doing something, practically carrying something out, for example, the difference between imitating suffering and really suffering, and also signifying as opposed to being efficacious; (3) **Emotionality**: the gestural, coded, and expressive performance of emotions by the players *as well as* by spectators, and the emotional identification of the audience with the content of the performance; and (4) **Communality**: the theatrical event depending on the interaction with and participation of the spectators who all belong to the same community. Accordingly, the significance of the performance is driven from the communal recognition of and identification with "private jokes," anachronisms, and

"local references." In addition, under the heading "communality" I discuss the performative relations between the plays and their material production, cost, and finances.

By identifying these concepts in the *ToMP* I aim to demonstrate the existence of a late medieval theoretical discourse concerned not only with ethics of performance but also with its aesthetics. Moreover, as my discussion of these four concepts will show, each one of them attests to the dialectical relationship and purposeful coexistence of performer and role as an aesthetic convention of the late medieval religious stage. Put differently, in performance these principles all evoke a range of theatrical/performative references that is much wider than the images, ideas, and stories of the sacred events that are being told and reenacted through performance. That is, I will show that late medieval religious theatre aesthetics emphasize text as well as context, fictionality along with reality, timelessness (past and future) side by side with presence in the present, and character simultaneously with actor.

Before I analyze the text of the *ToMP*, in this chapter I will examine Clopper's arguments regarding it. I will suggest that he cannot ultimately conclude that the writer/s of the text did not have in mind *at all* more conventional performative activities than the "miracula," and that in any case it is problematic to think about medieval performance categories as divided into distinct and disconnected genres. In the next chapter I turn to my own analysis of the *ToMP* and of the concepts of performance mentioned above, following which I suggest that "contrariety and simultaneity," "performance and signification," "emotionality," and "communality" are also reminiscent of twentieth-century post-realist theories of acting and performance.

## Critique of Lawrence M. Clopper's Reading of the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*

### Terminology: Are "Miraclis Pleyinge" *only* "Miracula"? On the Unfixed Meanings of Medieval Words: Miracles, Games, and Representations

Most of Clopper's analysis of the *ToMP* in his *Drama, Play, and Game* is devoted to the medieval etymology and meaning of the word "miraclis."[13] Throughout his analysis he sees the word "miraclis" as completely synonymous and interchangeable with "miracula"—which he defines as a performance genre—although he does not explain the relationship between the two words beyond their obvious similarity.[14] His main argument is that

> *miracula* were not vernacular religious dramas produced by lay people, towns, or guilds; nor were they saints' plays nor the kind of liturgical enactments best known in the editions of Karl Young. Rather, they are activities we have called "pagan survivals" or ones that parody the liturgy or make jest of sacred events.[15]

This statement is based on Clopper's assumption that the word "miraclis" in the *ToMP* is used in a single meaning, which is not "a wondrous event": "the usage is not idiosyncratic (that is, it does not have the sense of a wondrous event as opposed to or in addition to meaning a performance genre) but philologically, historically, and culturally fixed and determinable."[16] However, the word "miraclis" *is* used in the text to denote at least two meanings—miracle *and* "miracula" (if we accept Clopper's interpretation)—as is completely evident from the very opening of the *ToMP* as well as throughout the text.[17]

Although the word "miraclis" is coupled with the word "pleyinge" in the title of the text—a combination that linguistically could mean "the playing/gaming/performing

of the performance-genre of 'miracula,'" and although both words reappear coupled many times throughout the treatise, there are at least thirty instances where the word "miraclis" appears on its own, specifically and unequivocally meaning a "wondrous event."[18] Let us examine the first few appearances of the word "miraclis" in the opening paragraphs of the text, which set its tone, rhetoric, and logic:

> Miraclis, therfore, that Crist dude heere in erthe outher in himsilf outher in hise seintis weren so efectuel and in ernest done that to sinful men that erren they broughten forgivenesse of sinne, settinge hem in the weye of right bileve. [Miracles, therefore, that Christ did here on earth either himself or by his saints were so effectual and earnestly done that to sinful men that erred they brought forgiveness of sin, setting them in the way of right belief.] (93, 9-13)[19]

This description of "miraclis" at the outset of the *ToMP* is important. Not only does the author define the term specifically as something done directly by Christ or carried out by one of his saints rather than as a title of a dramatic or performance genre, but also, the essence of these deeds is that they really happened, or, one should say, were really *performed*, and accordingly had real effect. By the very stating of the reality of God's miracles—"so efectuel and in ernest done," the opening sentences of the *ToMP* emphasize not only the importance of the events, but they also mark the difference between an original *real* event and what is not. The writer defines God's miracles not only by their gravity and seriousness ("ernest") (and hence he objects to derisive and parodic performances of these events, which is the way that Clopper conceptualizes the "miracula") but also by their realness, which can be judged by their power and real *effect*.

I read the word "efectuel" as characterizing unnatural and wondrous events that miraculously happened for real and worked, and thus had the power to *affect* people. The *Middle English Dictionary* supports this interpretation and includes this quotation from the *ToMP* under the entry for "efectuel" as "efficacious, powerful in effect."[20] Because of the realness and seriousness of the original miracles, which had very practical goals—to show "doutouse men … the weye of God" [doubtful men … the way of God] (93, 15)—they are not to be "usen in bourde and pleye" [used in jest and play] (93, 24). As we shall see, this logic is part of the evidence in the text for the existence of one of the aesthetic principles that I argue characterize the aesthetic discourse of late medieval religious theatre and performance. I suggest that it is this concern about the tension between the original realness of miraculous and mystical events and the problematics of imitating and performing them (parodically or devotionally), which among other reasons, led medieval theatre to a style that deliberately differentiated between the image or story being performed and the actual act of performing it. The quotation above is indeed only the first of many where the word "miraclis" unequivocally means a wondrous event. Another example of the same use of the word immediately follows:

> Thanne, sithen miraclis *of Crist* and *of hise seintis* were thus efectuel, as by oure bileve we ben in certein, no man shulde *usen* in bourde and pleye the miraclis and werkis that Crist so ernystfully wroughte to oure helthe. [Then, since the miracles of Christ and of his saints were so effectual, as according to our belief we are certain, no man should use in jest and play the miracles and deeds that Christ so sincerely performed for our salvation.] (93, 22-5; emphasis added)

Here again, it is completely evident that "miraclis" are real events that had real existence and real effect, were carried out either by Christ or by his saints, and significantly, even without material proof of them the community *believes* in their realness. Although this definition does not rule out the option that the word "miraclis" was *also* used to denote a performance genre that supposedly ridiculed the miracles and "works" of Christ, it is essential to acknowledge that in the *ToMP* it first means "miracle" in the contemporary and conventional sense. Since this is the case, Clopper should at least have offered his analysis on the basis that the word had two meanings, and was used in the text in both ways. Although he does not deny the possibility that within the text the word "miraclis" sometimes means wondrous events, he does not discuss any of these instances but focuses his attention on describing the genre of "miracula" and its potential connections to the discussion in the *ToMP*.

The fact that the word "miraclis" appears in at least both meanings is, however, highly significant for several reasons. First, it definitely testifies that certain words were used in more than one meaning within the same text despite Clopper's contention that here the meaning of "miraclis" is fixed and determinable. Thus other words that are connected with the wide phenomenological range of performance (such as "game" or "play" which I discuss below) should also be grasped in their double and sometimes multiple potential of meanings. Second, if we accept Clopper's analysis that the word bears the meaning of a performance genre, since the author of the text transparently and freely uses it in both meanings without differentiating the two, we must question the relations between the genre of "miracula" and the miracles that Christ and his saints truly performed. In other words, one way to understand the text is to go back to definitions

such as those offered by E. K. Chambers, V. A. Kolve, and Rosemary Woolf who conceive of "miraclis" as an umbrella term that denotes a relatively wide scope of medieval performances that represent religious subjects. In this case, it should however be noted, that these researchers see the word "miraclis" as an umbrella term that includes mystery plays together with saint plays and other so-called "legitimate" religious theatre performances, whereas I suggest a bridge between such "theatre" and other performative phenomena that might include lay and clerical unruly games. Another option is to follow Clopper and contextualize the *ToMP* as a text that condemns a relatively limited kind of performances—"miracula." In such a case, however, we must examine the connections between the parodies and pagan survivals he refers to and the idea of using and performing God's miracles as the subjects of such performances, because the *ToMP* repeats again and again that one should not "use," "play," or "jest" with these very miracles and "works." If we assume that in the "miracula" the subjects of the performances were indeed the miracles, deeds, and events of the life and death of Christ, we must conclude that the *ToMP* deals with a performative genre that has at least one significant common denominator with the later authorized civic devotional drama: the performance (for parodic *or* devotional goals) of sacred events, holy personas, and miracles.

Moreover, one of Clopper's explanations for the irrelevance of the *ToMP* to the civic devotional drama is that it was written at a comparatively early stage (dated 1380-1425) whereas the evidence is that the mystery plays as a wide phenomenon appears a little later. Yet Clopper himself refuses to understand the growth of the mystery plays as an evolutionary process "out of" the liturgical drama; he understands it instead as a

performative phenomenon that developed parallel to other dramatic forms, influenced by liturgical drama but also by lay festive activities.[21] He also argues that the *ToMP* was written relatively remotely from places such as York or Coventry, but he includes Lincoln as a place close to the supposed origin of the text "because the proposed dialect area for the *Tretise* falls within the Lincoln diocese."[22] Although we do not have records for an annual mystery cycle performed in Lincoln there is evidence for a lot of religious vernacular dramatic or performance activity much earlier than the four extant cycles. In a detailed analysis of the use of the church as a theatrical space, John M. Wasson writes that

> laurels for the most plays in one church over the longest period of time, however, currently must go to Lincoln Cathedral. Between *1317-1318* and 1543-1544, records survive for no fewer than seventeen different plays performed there. The apparent favorite was *The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin*, presented over some ninety-five years, from 1399-1400 to 1543-1544. The second most popular was *The Assumption*, performed nineteen times from 1461-1462 to 1519. Considering that accounts are missing for the 66 of the 227 years 1318 to 1544 inclusive, the total number of performances would doubtless be higher had the other records survived.[23]

My point is not that the *ToMP* is referring specifically to these performances at Lincoln but that there is evidence for a good deal of religious vernacular drama and performative activity which was contemporary with the composition of the *ToMP*.[24] In addition, in York itself we know from the City Chamberlain's book that the preparations for the 1396 Corpus Christi festivities included setting "railings before the King,"[25] who came to the

plays and which means that already then the plays were a widely known and popular phenomenon.[26]

Therefore, since I have already established the thematic connections between such "miracula" and the later civic cycles as well as the geographic and historical relevance of the *ToMP* to them, wouldn't it be reasonable to assume performative and formal influences between ludic events and later theatrical forms that gradually became more and more authorized and controlled? In other words, I suggest that even if the *ToMP* is limited in its objections only to "miracula" in Clopper's understanding of the term we can still learn from its arguments in favor of and against playing such parodic games about the concepts of performance and aesthetics that filtered into later forms of religious vernacular theatre. As Clopper writes:

> Attempts to suppress or rechannel lay festive behavior opened a space for the establishment of biblical and moral drama in late medieval England; indeed, we might say that vernacular religious drama to some extent countered the clerical attempt to sequester and restrain lay festivity. ... Late medieval reforming clerics seem to have understood the principle that in order to extirpate *ludi inhonesti*, one had to allow licit recreation or find appropriate *ludi* to occupy the laity during the same season of the year in which the unholy *ludi* took place. We can see the promotion of the feast of Corpus Christi, especially of the Corpus Christ procession, then, as having two complementary objectives: giving the laity greater participation in the religious life and providing an appropriate form of festive expression.[27]

And yet Clopper insists on differentiating between lay and clerical "miracula" on the one hand and devotional drama on the other to the degree of dichotomizing the two performative phenomena. In a different place he challenges his readers:

> I would like someone to explain to me how the devotional representation of Abraham and Isaac 'bourdes' with the miracles of Christ and the saints. Or how the Noah plays do. Even when there is comedy in such plays, the emphasis is on God's rewarding those who are faithful to him. How can that be 'bourding'?[28]

Clopper asks many more seemingly rhetorical questions about the plays' transgressive or derogatory potential. The answer, however, seems to me much more complex than a clear-cut moralistic evaluation of the plays' agenda, which of course was explicitly didactic and, indeed, essentially devotional.

Clopper's questions seem to address mainly the textual (verbal) aspects of the performance such as the biblical stories that are the sources of the plays or structural dramatic elements such as the "happy ending" and moral message, without considering other performative aspects that might lead to a more liminal experience, with the potential of crossing boundaries during performance, even if order is eventually restored.[29] Analyzing the comic figure of Noah's wife as a sinning and lost soul who had to be converted in order to take the right decision and board the ark is only one level, in fact only the initial level of interpretation relevant to understanding the play in performance; (just as Christ's solemnity as opposed to the soldiers' farce in the *Crucifixion Play* or in other parts of the passion is only one level of interpretation of the plays in performance). Most likely a male player performed the character of Noah's wife, and although late medieval cross-dressing was accepted as a convention, such a comic and irreverent character certainly had the potential to evoke associations beyond the moralistic agenda of the play. I am not suggesting that the actor put on a parodic performance of the feminine gender, and yet the domestic violence between Noah and his

wife who refuses to board the ark (she even hits him), for example, definitely raises the option that restrained comedy could turn into exaggerated farce. Consider the possibility that "she" is physically larger than the actor playing Noah or that the scene even moves from the performing space into the audience (maybe they "accidentally" fall off the "ark" as they quarrel and then climb back in):

> Noe:
> Dame, þou holde me excused of itt
> It was God's will, without a doubt.
> Vxor:
> What, wenys þou so for to go qwitte?
> Nay, be my trouthe, *þou getis a clowte.*
> (85-5, 117-20)[30]

> [Noah:
> Woman, excuse me,
> It was doubtless God's will.
> Wife:
> What? Do you believe that you'll get away with that?
> No, I swear, you're getting a blow.]

If the focus of watching this play—indeed the annual highlight—was the clownish character of Noah's wife it makes sense that such a play could be considered by some as "bourding" with holy concepts. We know that scenes and characters such as Noah's wife are at the roots of plays such as Shakespeare's *Taming of a Shrew*, but what is the source of this kind of comedy within the representation of the biblical stories? Why would the devotional creators of the mystery plays insert such episodes? In the Old Testament

Noah's wife is hardly mentioned. Totally silenced, she functions passively as his female counterpart and there is no indication of her shrewish nature, yet here she becomes the center of the play. I believe that the Noah plays are one of the clearest examples that demonstrate how elements of performative popular culture filtered into "devotional drama" and came to have life of their own, perhaps, in some cases, even overshadowing the biblical events being represented. In both the Chester *Noah's Flood Play* and the York *Flood* the focus of the play—the drama—is indeed Noah's wife's shrewish character. Whereas the power of the scene is definitely driven from the comedy of domestic relations between Noah and his wife,[31] her disobedient refusal to board the ark along with her final decision to step into the boat can be seen as significant symbolic gestures, almost a Brechtian "gestus." And yet from the perspective of what the actor has to do in performance in order to resolve the tension, i.e., merely step from one platform onto another, this gesture is revealed to be an extremely simple, even ridiculous act, particularly following her comic refusal to perform it. An almost identical kind of gesture that has to do directly with women's disobedience to their husbands (or, more accurately, with a misogynist attitude) is recorded in a late medieval story told by a preacher as part of a sermon and entitled "The Obedience of Wives":

> It happened once that there were three merchants that went homeward from a fair, and as they fell to talking, riding along the way, one of them said, "It is a noble thing for a man to have a good wife that obeys him and does his bidding at all times." "By my truth," said the other, "my wife obeys me truly." "By God," said the last, "I believe that my wife obeys her husband best." Then the man who had begun to speak first said, "Let us lay a wager of a denier, that whoever's wife obeys the worst, let her husband pay the denier"; and thus the wager was laid.

And they decided among them what they should tell their wives. They decided that each man should bid his wife *leap into a basin that they would set before her*, and they swore that none of their wives would let them lose the wager; *all they had to say was "Look, wife, I order you to do it."*

Be that as it may, when one the men bade his wife leap into the basin that he had set before her on the ground, she answered by asking "Why?" So he said, "Because it is my desire and I want you to do it." "By God," said she, "I will first know *why you want me to leap into the basin*." And not for anything could her husband make her do it. So her husband *struck out with his fist and gave her two or three great blows*, and then the three men went to the second merchant's house. He commanded that whatever he gave orders for should be done, but it was not long after that, when he bade his wife leap into the basin that was before her on the floor, she asked "Why?" and said she would not do it for him. So then he took a staff and *beat her badly*, and then they all rode on to the third merchant's house.

At the third merchant's house they found dinner set in the table and that husband brought in his fellows and said, "After dinner I will test my wife and bid her leap into the basin." And so they sat down to dinner. And when they were seated, the good man said to his wife, "Whatever I command, see that it is done, no matter what." And as she loved him and feared him, she listened to what he said and took heed of those words, although she did not know what they meant. Now it happened that they had had some eggs at dinner, but the salt was missing from the table. So the good man said, "Wife, sele [salt] sus table" but the wife misunderstood her husband to say, "Wife, seyle [jump] sus table," which in French means, "Leap onto the table." And she, afraid to disobey, leapt upon the table and threw down the meat and drink and broke the glasses and spilled everything that was on the table. "What, wife!" said the good man, "don't you know any other form of amusing yourself?"

"By your leave, sir," said the wife, "I have to do your bidding, as much as is in my power, even if it brings injuries to both you and me, and I would rather the both of us came to harm than that I should disobey your command. For you

> said, "Seyle [jump] sus table." "Nay," said he, "I said 'sele [salt] sus table' that is to say, 'salt is needed at the table.'" "By my troth," said she, "I thought that you had ordered me to jump on the table," and there was much mirth and laughter at this. And the other two merchants said there was no need to order her to leap in the basin, for she had obeyed enough, and they agreed that her husband had won the wager and they had both lost. Afterwards she was greatly praised for her obedience to her husband and she was not beaten as were the other two wives that would not do their husbands' bidding.[32]

From the point of view of this story, leaping into the ark (or the basin) does not seem to be a heroic act but rather a ridiculous, insulting, and arbitrary one—just as the York Noah's wife claims it to be—and like the first two wives in the exemplum she wants to know why she has been asked to do this:

| Vxor: | Wife: |
|---|---|
| Now certis, I sall nouȝt sitte | Now surely I shall not rest |
| Or I se what he mene. | Until I see what he means. |
| (84, 69-70) | |

That the episode of the shrewish woman appears in many plays of the flood—in the Chester cycle the comedy and farce are even greater than in the York version—and that a similar version of it in the sermon story connects the plays with popular culture and folklore, with games and bets common among merchants, with domestic violence (the husbands hit the disobedient wives), and with scenes that are on the verge of chaos (the third "good" wife not only jumps onto the table but voluntarily and pathetically throws off all the food and spills everything she can) suggests to me that, in addition to serving devotional goals, the religious themes functioned as the authorized framework into which

were worked mundane and earthly concerns as well as lay performative forms and customs.[33] If we examine the structure of Flood plays this claim is evident. In both the York and the Chester plays the beginning and end of the episode are rigid, informative, and religiously ritualistic. It is in the middle of the play that an episode within an episode is inserted which has no origin in the Bible, but which has its sources in lay culture.

A very similar example of how a devotional play is performatively on the verge of blasphemy is in the York *Joseph's Trouble about Mary*. Just like Noah's wife Joseph is characterized degradingly, in his case as an old impotent man who has been betrayed by his wife. That he miraculously learns that God is who really got her pregnant and that she is bearing God's son toward the end of the play, thus teaching the audience never to doubt their belief in God, has almost nothing to do with the first two-thirds of the play in which Joseph in fact insults the Blessed Virgin herself. Although Mary never really argues with him—thus respectfully maintaining her holiness—Joseph, in the opening long monologue of the play that is written like a stand-up comedy skit calls her a bad bargain, characterizes her as one out of many similar women, and accuses her of beguiling him. Further in the play, when Mary's maid tells him that no man came to visit her "saue an aungell ilke a day anes; with bodily foode hir fedde has he" (120, 125-6) [except for an angel one day once; with bodily food he has fed her], Joseph doesn't miss an opportunity like this and ironically suggests that it was "som man in aungellis likness" (120, 136) [some man who looked like an angel]. Beyond the laughter such replicas had to evoke, especially because Joseph (as opposed to Mary) is designed reminiscently to the members of the audience who might have been occupied with adultery at least as much as with the sacred history, this episode seems to me a very clear example how such

devotional drama can "bourde" with the holy themes, or at least exist on the very threshold. The joke here is not only about a sacred theme and character such as Mary herself, but also, and more importantly, the event itself that is under attack—Mary's pregnancy—is perhaps one of the most enigmatic yet powerful and significant of the events that underlie the entire Christian belief system. As Theresa Coletti remarks: "the central Christian mystery that God had become man through a human mother who remained a virgin after his conception and birth furnished a dramatic situation that was theatrically complex, theologically sensitive, and socially resonant."[34] Clearly, therefore, the enactment of Mary was a loaded and provocative site. One would think that in the "devotional theatre" that Clopper characterizes extreme carefulness would be maintained. And yet, Joseph asks Mary and her maids no less that *eight* times in one short episode who is really the father of the child. If this is not "bourding" with the sacred, what is?

These performative elements definitely have subversive potential and therefore might shift the focus of the performers as well as that of the audience away from what they are supposed to consider as the most important parts and goals of the play. And this is exactly what the *ToMP* holds against "miraclis pleyinge," arguing that since they create and evoke enjoyment and fun they contradict what should be the appropriate atmosphere and goals:

> And sith miraclis pleynge reversen penaunce doying as they in greet liking ben done and to grete liking ben cast biforn, there as penaunce is in gret mourning of hert and to greet mourning is ordeinyd biforne." [And since *miraclis* playing reverses the doing of penance since it is done in great fun and it is planned in advance with great fun, [as opposed to] penance that is done in great mourning of heart and that is ordained in advance in great mourning.] (95, 72-5)

Also, the varying degrees of comedy and farce between different plays on the same subject is, I think, evidence of different degrees of authorial intervention and suppression of undesirable parodic performative elements.

Even in serious representations of the *Abraham and Isaac* episode there is potential space for uncontrollable factors to dominate the experience of the performance in ways that might stir the audience's attention away from attempts at rigidity. In the York *Abraham and Isaac* (as well as in most plays of this episode) and according to the Bible the journey of Abraham and Isaac to the place of the sacrifice is made on an ass:

| | |
|---|---|
| Isaac: | Isaac: |
| Childir, lede for the oure *asse* | Children, lead forth our *ass*, |
| With wode at we shall bryne. | With the wood that we will burn. |
| Euen as God ordand has, | Just as God has ordained, |
| To wyrke we will begynne. | We will begin to work. |
| (93, 109-12) | |

There are a few more references to the ass in the play, and although we do not know whether in this particular production a real ass was used, there is evidence that in other productions of this play there was a real donkey. Peter Meredith and John E. Tailby note that "live animals, especially donkeys, were used quite frequently in plays." One example they quote is from the 1583 production in Lucerne where the play-list includes: "A donkey. In the morning with Abraham. When Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem for Christmas he is to take the calf with it at once." Similarly, in a list for the 1597 production the record is "Firstly, a donkey for Abraham's scene."[35] Discussing "real

presences" in late medieval religious theatre Sarah Beckwith raises the tension and interdependence of semiotics and phenomenology in performance. Namely, she shows how a "sign" that has a specific denoted meaning might cross the elusive phenomenological border that characterizes performance and signify something utterly different than it is meant to:

> A friend of mine told me another story about an animal that refused to play its part. He had seen a production of a Corpus Christi pageant, staging the journey to Bethlehem in which a real donkey was used. Carrying the Virgin Mary, whose pure womb bears the very salvation of the world, the donkey strolls on with a massive erection. [Bert] States elegantly uses the dog, the real dog onstage, as I have more crudely used the donkey's triumphantly misplaced penis, as an emblem of "the cutting edge of theatre, the bite that it takes into actuality in order to sustain itself in the dynamic order of its ever-dying signs and images."[36]

Whether or not Clopper would agree that these examples indicate how devotional drama in performance might "bourde" with the sanctity of the biblical events as mentioned above, he certainly argues for influences of lay and clerical festivities on the later devotional drama. Let us examine therefore a description of a "somergame" from which we can consider such potential connections between earlier festive games and performances of misrule and the performance practices of the civic devotional drama. In a sermon exemplum from the late fourteenth century, discovered and translated into English by Siegfried Wenzel, which Clopper gives as an example "that may tell us what the lay equivalent of some clerical *miracula* may have been"[37] a game in which the players played and enacted (and mocked?) the crucifixion of Christ is described:

> I knew where there once was a play in summertime. One person was Christ, another Peter, another Andrew, some were the tormentors, and some the devils. Christ was stretched out, crucified, and beaten, mocked, and held a fool; he was hungry and thirsty and no one gave him anything but strokes and scorn. And whoever knew how to torment and scorn him best was reckoned to play the best. When the game was over, all the players talked among themselves and considered playing again; and one of them said, "*Who shall be Christ?*" The others said, "He who played today, since he played well." This player then said to them: "I was Christ and was crucified, beaten, mocked, held to be a fool; I was hungry and thirsty, and nobody gave me anything. I looked down below and saw tormentors and demons in great joy. For he who could make them drink and eat was well pleased. I looked on the right and saw Peter on the cross, and I looked on the left and saw Andrew on the cross, so that for me and my apostles everything was a pain, but for our tormentors and the demons everything was comfort. And therefore I tell you for sure that *if I must play again, I do not want to be Christ nor an apostle but a tormentor or a demon.*" One of his companions said to him: "I am astonished that you say so. Don't you know that it is the nature of our play that the stretched-out Christ and his apostles fare badly and suffer much while the play goes on, and the tormentors and demons are well off? Wait till the end of the play and you shall be well off!"[38]

This exemplum raises many issues regarding the performance of the crucifixion scene in general (which I address in the following chapters), and it obviously bears similarities to crucifixion plays we know form the civic cycles. For example, the dominance of the jokes and harsh action of the soldiers tormenting Christ as opposed to his passivity in the *York Crucifixion Play* are central to the tension and awe the play evokes but at the same time their function is clearly entertaining and amusing. Martha Bayless interprets the play:

> [T]he behavior of the soldiers encourages the audience to perceive and laugh at the folly of the abusive posturing of the soldiers; watching them from the perspective of those who are not involved, the audience can say, with Jesus, "What thei wirke wotte tjai noght" [They know not what they do] (line 261). The audience attains God's perspective on humankind. But ultimately the spectators are human and have been reminded constantly by Christian teaching that their sins made Christ's sacrifice necessary. By this route the audience must come to realize that, although they temporarily share the perspective of God, *their true counterparts are the soldiers who put Christ on the cross; that they inhabit the earthly realm of the human vice and folly displayed on stage.*[39]

From this perspective, if the audience is reflected not in Christ but in the tormentors, just as the player in the exemplum desires to be, side by side with the play's ideological criticism of them, performatively, the soldiers and their "work" become the center of the play. *The* Crucifixion is depicted from *their* viewpoint, and ultimately, even the ending of the play does not belong to Christ, who does not have the final words; rather the soldiers "play" one final game as they quarrel over Christ's coat, a game that the first soldier eventually wins:

| | |
|---|---|
| III Miles: | 3 Soldier: |
| 3aa, late hym hange here stille | Yes. Let him hang there still, |
| And make mowes on þe mone. | And pull faces at the moon. |
| IV Miles: | 4 Soldier: |
| Þanne may we wende at wille. | Then we should go on our way. |
| I Miles: | 1 Soldier: |
| Nay goode sirs, noght so sone, | No, good sirs, not so soon. |
| For certis vs nedis anoder note: | We have other business; |
| Þis kirtill wolde I of you craue. | I crave this garment. |

| | |
|---|---|
| II Miles: | 2 Soldier: |
| Nay, nay sir, we will loke be lotte | No, no sir; we will draw lots, |
| Whilke of vs foure fallis it to haue. | Which one of us four shall have it. |
| III Miles: | 3 Soldier: |
| I rede we drawe cutte for þis coote – | I suggest that we draw straws for this coat; |
| Loo, se howe sone – alle sidis to saue. | See how soon, so everybody shall be content, |
| IV Miles: | 4 Soldier: |
| The schorte cutte schall wynne, | The short cut wins, that you know well, |
| þat wele ȝe woote, | |
| Whedir itt falle to knyght or knave. | Whether it falls to knight or knave. |
| I Miles: | 1 Soldier: |
| Felowes, ȝe thar noght flyte, | Fellows, you need not wrangle; |
| For þis mantell is myne. | This mantle is my gain. |
| II Miles: | 2 Soldier: |
| Goo we þanne hense tyte, | Then let us quickly get out of here |
| Þis trauayle we tyne &c. | We are wasting effort here. |

(322-3, 284-98)[40]

The sense of completeness and closure of this episode is not achieved by focusing one last time on the suffering Christ (the soldiers could have disappeared once they completed their "work" as the fourth one suggests) but rather on their utterly earthly and greedy behavior. They are playing a game, and their performance quotes popular games that involve playful forms of gambling. Surely this characterizes them as "bad" as opposed to Christ, but one could think of more respectful a manner to annually stage such a central scene as the Crucifixion. Common interpretations of Christ's tranquility during the play have emphasized his nobility and divinity as opposed to the soldiers' unruly behavior. It should be noted, however, that in the following play, *The Death of Christ*, both Christ and the Virgin have many lines, what Beadle and King describe as "lyrical

lamentations [that] stand out like arias amidst the demotic recitative of the Jews,"[41] my point being that the same sense of solemnity could be achieved in *The Crucifixion Play* as well without silencing Christ for most of the play. But since the focus of the crucifixion episode was the performance of brutality—most likely a more authorized reenactment of the "somergame" event depicted in the exemplum—the dramatic structure and focus of the play are built around from the viewpoint of the soldiers, and hence Christ's tranquility.

Although the performance of brutality, violence, and moking one of the players are dramatic characteristics indeed reminiscent of the description of the "somergame," the exemplum is—as Clopper contextualizes it—a depiction of a festive game and not of "devotional drama." Clopper adduces evidence to support this conclusion:

> [A]lthough the description might suggest that this is a Passion play, clearly it is not, because Peter and Andrew, although they were crucified, were not crucified with Christ. The fact that the two disciples are tormented along with Christ suggests to me that they are the patron saints of the church and that the parishioners are engaged in some annual attempt to coerce protection for another year or something of the sort.[42]

This explanation is convincing, and I am not claiming that the "somergame" *was* a passion play, however, if we are willing to conceive of such games as sources of influence on later devotional drama, it is arguable that different performative forms utilized the sacred history for a variety of goals. One cannot limit the purposes of the mystery plays merely to devotionality because social, financial, local, and political interests were evidently a significant part of the agenda of producing and performing the

biblical stories. In this sense, "coercing protection" is not that different from the *performative* goals of annually ensuring a guild's social and financial status. In addition, it should be emphasized that the mystery plays are full of anachronisms that relate the biblical past to the present of the players and spectators. Although these plays did not introduce changes into the core narrative as we are told about this "somergame," and yet both uses of anachronisms suggest a theatrical utilization of the biblical stories for goals other than devotional. James Simpson goes as far as to argue that "the cycle plays of York and Wakefield are not primarily sacramental or devotional. They do occasionally make sacramental references, though only very occasionally and with nothing like the insistence of the Corpus Christi procession or … *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*."[43] Two brief examples from the *York Crucifixion Play* prove the point: Soldier 1 ridicules and laughs at Christ, who expresses his willingness to sacrifice himself in order to redeem mankind because of Adam's sin. The soldier uses popular vernacular language and anachronistically evokes Muhammad as a diabolical oath:

| | |
|---|---|
| Jesus: | Jesus: |
| Þou badde at I schulde buxsome be | You laugh that I should be willing |
| For Adam plyght for to be pyned. | To be nailed/pinned For Adam's plight. |
| … | … |
| 1 Miles: | 1 Soldier: |
| We, herke sir knyghtis, for | Damn, sir knights, for |
| Mahoundis bloode, | Muhammad's blood, |
| Of Adam-kynde is all his oght. | All his thought is about Adam's kind. |
| (316-17, 51-2; 61-2) | |

Another kind of dramatic and performative use of anachronisms in the *Crucifixion Play* as well as in the rest of the cycle has to do with the connections between the sacred history being enacted and the numerous references to the work and identity of the guildsmen who produced the plays. In her essay "Work, Markets, Civic Structure: Organizing the York Corpus Christi Plays" Beckwith suggests that "it is the Crucifixion pageant that most articulates these themes of making, and of division and wholeness, in ways that have a very close bearing on the interaction between the city's political regulation and the sacramentalism that supposedly underwrote it."[44] Accordingly, she continues,

> Only when Christ is laboriously stuck in the mortise, in the vertical axis, suddenly on display to the audience, can we see the fruit of the [pinners] labors. ... The pageant constantly refers us to the crucifixion as work, and outrageously prolongs that work. ... The job of pinners is, of course, to make the joins, the pivotal points that both link and articulate the structure of the made object. Their work is in fact to join things strongly and usefully together. When Christ in the second speech that cuts across the soldiers to address the audience says: "What þei wirke wotte þai noght," [They know not what they do] the costs of such a division are made to speak.[45]

How distinct is the performative phenomenon of the "trade symbolism"[46] analyzed here and so characteristic of the mystery plays from the anachronistically "incorrect" action of crucifying Peter and Andrew with Christ "in some annual attempt to coerce protection for another year or something of the sort" as Clopper suggests? These examples manifest how performing the biblical and holy episodes was a way for the producers and participants of the plays to express and validate their own identity, social status, and

cultural significance in daily life on the one hand and also *perform* themselves as part of the sacred history on the other. Regarding the varied uses of the church building in late medieval England, (from practicing religious rituals to teaching and marketing in it) R. N. Swanson writes that "the interplay between social and religious activities was often intricate" and that the "exploitation of 'religion' for social purposes" was "perfectly normal."[47] But beyond these social purposes, and based on a similar concept of the immediate relevance of religious history and God's plan of salvation to one's own life, the use of anachronisms in plays, rituals, and games made space for each member of the community to relate him or herself to the sacred events. This manipulation of time and space in the mystery plays or in the "somergame" (blending the religious past with the very present by means of anachronisms) can explain socially and aesthetically why it was important to create dualistic stage personas that combined the identity of the sacred characters and that of the performers. In other words, it is not only the remoteness and fixed identity of the mythological characters that led to the performative co-existence of actor and character, as I demonstrate below, but also, the significance attributed to the performers' and spectators' own identity in relation to the scheme of salvation. Similarly, Richard Homan follows V. A. Kolve in discussing the centrality of prefiguration (events in the Old Testament that prefigure significant events and persons in Christian history) as another kind of anachronism that is central to Christian theology as well as to the dramatic structure of the Corpus Christi cycles and suggests:

> Given that figural relationships were, to the medieval mind, not aesthetic truth but historical truth, the creations of figural similarities between medieval life and the significant events of the Bible assume a potency beyond their artistic effect. The

> anachronisms in the cycles can be seen as an effort to communicate actively with the scheme of redemption as it was believed to exist in the mind of God. The performers of the cycles, specifically in their use of anachronisms, were actively making themselves figure in God's plan. Anachronism, as an artistic device relates things from chronologically separate periods for symbolic effect. However, in a culture that views major similarities between things from different periods as evidence of God's plan of redemption as the very pattern of history, anachronism acquires significant power.[48]

It seems significant to me that the use of anachronisms or biblical inaccuracies characterizes both the "somergame" and the mystery plays. This is because in both cases the biblical stories are reenacted as part of an event that has pragmatic and performative purposes, which are concrete and meaningful to the participants, prior to or beyond the reenactment of the sacred history.

Clopper, however, insists on a dichotomy between such games and devotional drama: "the distinction that I am making here is between *miracula*, that is clerkes pleis, which use masked performers who parody or make fun of sacred events, and civic or guild vernacular religious dramas whose intent was devotional (but which, of course, may have included episodes reminiscent of *miracula*)."[49] And yet, even if these are two distinct performative genres (which, in any case, would be a contemporary imposition of the concept of distinct dramatic and theatrical genres), I would like to suggest that this exemplum attests to a convention that perhaps found its way from such games into authorized and controlled forms of religious theatre in the vernacular. I opened the previous chapter by quoting a prohibition from York that forbids any actor to play in more than two plays, suggesting therefore that at least ten actors played the role of Christ in the different plays that compose the York cycle. There could be many reasons for this

decision, most likely among them the sheer ability (or inability) of an actor to perform successfully—without becoming exhausted—more than two roles. The consequences of such a convention are that the audiences saw and heard at least ten different "Christs."[50] But what are the origins of this convention? Of the idea that in order to convey a character not only is there no need for one person to play the role throughout the entire performance but that it is even forbidden? In the exemplum about the crucifixion game the player who has already played Christ simply and straightforwardly questions: "Quis erit Christus?" ["Who shall be Christ?"] In the next round of the game he does not want to play the role of Christ again, but he now wants to be one of the devils or tormentors. His reasons are clear—he wants to eat and drink and be part of the earthly (the literally *down to earth*) fun and festivity. Significantly, however, the concept of freely changing and exchanging roles in repetitive performances is clearly *part of the game.* As mentioned, we know that many actors played the role of Christ throughout a cycle, but I would like to take this idea one step further. Since each play of the cycle was repeated about twelve times at the different stations[51] (perhaps a performative custom that originates in the repetitive nature of games in general), could it be that the actors of a single episode exchanged or had the option to exchange their roles at the different stations? After all, Christ was stretched on the cross only once whereas an actor playing this role in the Crucifixion play would have been stretched and "crucified" over twelve times (!), or, as Beckwith writes "the communication of the pain and difficulty of this crucifixion relies on the real physical risk of the actor, for the lugging up of a man onto a cross is a piece of theatrical virtuosity, as any actor who has played Christ will know.

Will he fall? Is he safe? How does he stay up there? How painful is it? Does his body ache?"[52] Accordingly, now I ask, is "he" only one actor?[53]

Whether or not actors indeed switched roles throughout the repetitive production of the episodes that composed an entire mystery play will remain a theoretical speculation. And yet it is clear from the exemplum that in such "somergames," such as the one described in the exemplum, a performative distinction is maintained between the roles of Christ and the tormentors, on the one hand, and the players' identity and presence, on the other hand. Particularly interesting in this context is the way the player in the role of Christ refers to himself as "I," placing his identity in the liminal space between his dramatic role as Christ and his own desire—as one of the *players*—to enjoy the food, drinks, and fun:

> *I* was Christ and was crucified, beaten, mocked, held to be a fool; *I* was hungry and thirsty, and nobody gave *me* anything. *I* looked down below and saw tormentors and demons in great joy. For he who could make them drink and eat was well pleased. *I* looked on the right and saw *Peter* on the cross, and *I* looked on the left and saw *Andrew* on the cross, so that for *me and my apostles* everything was a pain, but for *our tormentors and the demons* everything was comfort. And therefore *I* tell you for sure that *if I* must play again, *I do not want to be Christ nor an apostle but a tormentor or a demon*. (Emphasis added)

The player ("quoted" by the preacher) does not say "for me and my *friends* everything was a pain…." Rather, he smoothly slips from one ontological level—as player—to another—as role.[54] Even more significant than the distance between the image or idea of Christ and any player who would present Christ's recognizable gestures is the interest expressed by the players in their own experience of performing and playing. Obviously, it

is exactly this earthly interest that leads the preacher to characterize the player's complaints about his role as an example of misconduct. Metaphorically drawing an analogy between the actor playing Christ in the "somergame" and those who accept suffering in real life the preacher explains:

> It goes similarly in this life, in every estate and rank. He who wants to play Christ's pageant [Qui voluerit ludere Christi *pagyn*] will suffer a lot, will be held to be a fool, will be hungry and thirsty, and nobody will give him anything; but his tormentors and the demons are invited to comforts, and whoever knows how to torment, mock, and do the rest best, he will be held to be a master. And this is the reason why so few play Christ's pageant [Et ista est causa quare tam pauci ludunt Christi *pagyn*] and so many become tormentors and demons, so that they draw from the good and move to evil.[55]

The didactic agenda behind the exemplum's description of the "somergame" is clear, but from the point of view of performance studies the players' interest in their own experience in the present cannot be overlooked as unimportant for the meaning and significance of the whole event—in fact, for their motivation to take part in this event in the first place, just as the fourth reason in favor of "miraclis pleyinge" quoted in the *ToMP* suggests:

> And sithen as ther ben men that only by ernestful doinge wilen be convertid to God, so ther been othere men that wilen not be convertid to God but by gamen and pley." [And since there are men that only by earnest doing are converted to God, so there are other men that are not converted to God but by game and play.] (98, 168-71)

Could it be, for example, that in such games a social hierarchy determined how many times and who would play each part? Did games of the crucifixion of "Christ" echo the pagan festive custom of a "mock king" or a "king for a day"?[56] Could such social considerations have filtered into the casting procedures of the civic cycles? Was the role of Christ in the "devotional drama" also undesirable, or was it considered an honor to play this role?[57]

For the purposes of contextualizing the *ToMP* Clopper insists on differentiating between such games as the one described in the exemplum and later religious dramas: "the *Tretise* is antitheatrical in opposing itself to the games of the world, of the *theatrum*, not to religious dramas. It is a significant document in the antiludic discourse of the later Middle Ages."[58] And a bit later "the somergame is *a game*, and the contest seems to center on the rewarding of the tormentors and demons with food and drink for being the best tormentors."[59] However, not only are there clear similarities between such a "somergame" and the civic drama, as I have shown,[60] but also, just as comic, parodic, and even subversive elements found their way into the mystery plays (think of the deriding, insulting, and comic treatment the soldiers give Christ while attaching him to the cross in the *York Crucifixion Play*), it seems that at least a grain of seriousness and religiosity was at the core of the "ludi inhonesti" which Clopper understands to be the subject of the *ToMP*. Thus, the fifth reason that the *ToMP* quotes in favor of "miraclis pleyinge" is that it is better to play these kinds of plays than other kinds that are even worse, suggesting, I think, that there was at least some religious aspect to these performances:

> Also summe recreacion men moten han, and bettere it is (or lesse yvele) that they han theire recreacion by pleyinge of miraclis than by pleyinge of other japis.

> [Also men must have some recreation, and it is better (or less evil) that they have their recreation by playing miracles than by playing other jokes/tricks] (98, 176-8)

If we understand the word "japis" as "tricks," as suggested by the *Middle English Dictionary*, we have further indication that the meaning of "miraclis" is close or even identical with "miracles" in the conventional and religious sense of the word. Perhaps because of the games/plays' claim of being connected to some kind of a religious enactment and effect the author of the *ToMP* in reply even more strongly condemns them:

> And therfore as this feinyd recreacioun of pleyinge of miraclis is fals equite, so it is double shrewidnesse, worse than though they pleyiden pure vaniteis. [And therefore as this feigned recreation of playing of miracles is false righteousness, so it is double shrewdness, worse than if they played pure vanities.] (103, 357-9)

Then the author of the *ToMP* raises the question "And yif men axen what recreacion men shulden have on the haliday after their holy contemplacion in the chirche," [And if men ask what recreation men should have on the holy-day/holiday after their holy contemplation in the church] (104, 363-5)[61] thus connecting "miraclis pleyinge" directly with an activity that is related to or follows participation in religious ritual in the church, and hurries to negate *any kind* of extra-liturgical performance:

> [w]e seyen to hem two thingis—oon, that yif he hadde verily ocupiede him in contemplacion byforn, neither he would ask that question ne han wille to se vanite; another we seyn, that his recreacioun shulde ben in the werkis of mercy to his neiebore and in diliting him in all good comunicacion with his neiebore, as

> biforn he dilitid hum in God, and in all othere nedeful werkis that reson and kinde axen. [[w]e say to him two things—one, that if he had really been occupying himself in contemplation before/in advance, neither would he ask that question nor have will for such vanities; and we also say that his recreation should be the outcome of the works of mercy he does for his neighbor and that he should be delighting himself in good communing with his neighbor, just as before he delighted himself in God, and in all the other needy works that reason and kindness ask for.] (104, 365-72)

This negation of any sort of recreative activity that includes some kind of performance is significant because Clopper states many times that in his opinion there was and would be no objection to such drama as the devotional drama performed in the mystery plays. For example:

> But the *Tretise*-author's position is not iconoclastic; he has no objections to images and paintings as long as they are "verry [true] withoute menging of lesingis and not to curious" (line 374). He does not opposite religious paintings that narrate the biblical story truly (and thus presumably he could have no objections to plays that did the same).[62]

Moreover, as mentioned, the *ToMP* specifies its objection to the performances "on the haliday after their holy contemplacion" (104, 363) and yet we know that in most places the cycle plays were initially performed as part of the Corpus Christi holiday that definitely involved "holy contemplation" as one part of the festivity.[63]

In addition, a "grain of religiosity" is evident, I think, from the descriptions of the "somergame" and the "Corpus Christi play" Wenzel published. In both cases the "devils," "tormentors," and probably the audience as well are obviously having a good

time rather than meditating on Christ's suffering. And yet, the very image of the suffering Christ/player who indeed was suffering is a very powerful image. In both descriptions the player mentions how he was held up high—a significant spatial detail that adds to the context and mood of the event. Moreover, that the consequence of such games might have been in fact ridiculing the sanctity of the crucifixion scene does not mean that the original intention was to mock Christ or the scene of the crucifixion. In fact, the first reason that the *ToMP* quotes as offered in favor of "pleyinge miraclis" is that these plays were intended to worship God: "But here agenus they seyen that they pleyen these miraclis *in the worschip of God* and so diden not thes Jewis that bobbiden Crist." [But here again they say that they play these miracles *in the worship of God* and these Jews that struck Christ did not] (97, 147-9). This line suggests to me that the criticism in the *ToMP* is against the extreme and farcical action of players who specifically *imitate* the role of the Jews in the scenes of the Passion, (and who under the cover of the Jews' characters perhaps allow themselves to lose control) and is not aimed at any kind of plays or players that are literally compared to the Jews who tortured Christ. Paradoxically, the more extreme the scourging of "Christ" in the games the closer they would come to the mythological image of the original crucifixion's reality.

I suggest therefore that just because a performance was titled a "game" this does not mean that it was completely devoid in form and content of elements that later on were used to compose passion plays or other kinds of devotional drama. As I have shown for the word "miracles," the word "game" also had a range of meanings rather than one fixed definition. I now move on to investigate the range of meanings associated with the word "game." In a late fourteenth-century religious lyric, written in a serious mode and tone as

a dialogue between Christ who is on the cross and Mary who laments his sufferings, his anguish is compared to a "game" he has to "play." This phrase (line 19 below) manifests a completely different use of the word "game" that here evokes sadness, suffering, and religiosity:

*Dialogue between Jesus and the B.V. at the Cross*

| *Ihesus* | *Jesus* | |
|---|---|---|
| Maiden & moder, cum & se, | Maiden and mother come and see, | 1 |
| Þзi child is nailed to a tre; | your child is nailed to a tree | |
| hand & fot he may nouth go, | hand and foot he cannot release | |
| his bodi is wonden al in wo. | his body is all wounded. | |
| Al abouten he is to-toren, | All about he is torn to pieces | 5 |
| his heued is wreen with a þorn, | his head is wrapped with a thorn | |
| his sides boen on blode be, | his sides are both full of blood | |
| with blod he's blent, he nay nouth se. | with blood he's blinded, he can see nothing. | |

| *Maria* | *Mary* | |
|---|---|---|
| Mi suete sone þat art me dere, | My sweet son that is my dear, | |
| What hast þou don, qui art þou here? | What have you done, why are you here? | 10 |
| Þi suete bodi þat in me rest, | Your sweet body that in me rested, | |
| Þat loueli mouth þat i haue kist,— | That lovely mouth that I have kissed,— | |
| Nou is on rode mad þi nest, | Now this cross has become your nest, | |
| Mi dere child, quat is me best? | My dear child, what is my remedy? | |

| *Ihesus* | *Jesus* | |
|---|---|---|
| Ion, þis womman for my sake | John, this woman for my sake | 15 |
| Womman, to Ion, I þe be-take. | Woman, to John, I you betake. | |
| Alone i am with-oten make, | Alone I am without a mate, | |
| On rode i hange for mannis sake, | On a cross I hang for mankind's sake | |
| *Þis gamen alone me must pleyзe,* | *This game alone I must play,* | |

| | |
|---|---|
| For mannis soule þis det to deyȝe. | For mankind's soul this debt today. |
| Mi blod is sched, my fles is falle, | My blood is shed, my flesh is fall, |
| Me þristet sore, for drink i calle : | I am very thirsty, for drink I call : |
| Þei ȝeuen me eysil medlid with galle. | They gave me vinegar mixed with gall |
| For mannis senne in wo I walle, | For man's sin in woe I boil, |
| ȝef ei weren kende to louen me outh, | If they were kind to love me they aught, |
| Of al my peine me ne routh. | Of all my pain not to fear me |
| Fader, my soule I þe be-take ! | Father, my soul I thee betake! |
| Mi bodi deyȝet for mannis sake, | My body dies for mankind's sake, |
| Senful soules in helle lake— | Sinful souls in hell lake— |
| To hem i go awey to take. | To him I go away to take |
| Mannis soule, þou art my make ; | Man's soul, you are my make ; |
| Loue me wel, I þe nouth for-sake, | Love me well, I do not forsake you, |
| & my moder herteliche | And my mother heartily |
| For sche helpet e stedfas<t>liche, | For she helped you steadfastly |
| An þou salt comen at blisse to, | And you shall come that bliss too, |
| Þer my fadir is for euermo. Amen.[64] | There my father is for evermore. Amen. |

Carleton Brown notes that this poem is the earliest English version of this dialogue, and he suggests that "although 'Ihesus' is written opposite the first section of this piece, it is clear that in lines 1-8 the speaker is another person. These lines might be assigned to John."[65] Whether or not the lines written in the third person imply the presence of another participant, this poem is very theatrical, not only because it is written in the form of a dialogue, but also because of the very lively and graphic descriptions of Christ's situation. These characteristics are typical of such poetry, but the line in which Christ describes his situation as a "game alone I must play" is quite unusual. What might seem at first from a contemporary point of view as a *theatrum-mundi* poetic metaphor that illustrates Christ's sacrifice for humankind does not accord with the medieval senses of

the words "game" and "play." According to the *Middle English Dictionary* "game" was mostly used to denote the range of meanings that have to do with play, fun, mirth, joy, happiness, pleasure, delight, festivity, amusement, contest, sport, love making, etc. There is also, however, another meaning to the word "game" that seems most appropriate for the interpretation of this poem: "5a: An action, proceeding, happening, occurrence; course of events and 5b: to be dealt with severely, receive rough treatment."[66] The *MED* lists a few places where "game" has this meaning, including the poem quoted above. This definition shifts the perspective from thinking of "game" and "play" only in the context of the comic, joyful, parodic, and harmless. Like performance itself, even games with strict laws often have the potential to easily turn fun and levity into liminal situations where participants cease to be safe and are put at the risk of physical or emotional danger by being excluded or tormented by other participants. Moreover, the idea of conceiving the original Crucifixion as an "event," a "happening" (as in the poem) on the one hand, and of reenactments of it as "games," "events" of joy (as in the "somergame") on the other, widens our conceptions of the interrelated meanings and uses of "game" and "play." In other words, just as I suggested that even if the word "miraclis" is used within the same text idiosyncratically we must consider the connections between its two meanings, here again, it seems possible to suggest that the meanings of "game" and "play" should not be limited to amusement, but rather understood in their wider referential fields. Fun and mirth can be the outcomes of a "game," a contest can express a human drive for playing a game, but a game in itself is first an event, something that is happening, and that might even include "receiving rough treatment." It is a performance. This description is quite close to the kind of enactment of Christ's sufferings in what

Clopper believes to be lay parallel forms of clerical "miracula." Therefore, although I do not think that the poem is a description of a theatrical performance, let alone a reference to some kind of a "somergame," its use of the word "game" shows that this word also did not have a clear-cut and fixed meaning and that it could convey more serious and reverent meanings. Further, it connects the original *event* of crucifying Christ with the idea of reenacting and performing such a scene. This notion of a game, or for that matter of a "performance" as an "event" that includes the players, the spectators, the text of the performance itself, its "event-ness," and its residues is what leads Willmar Sauter to

> conceptualize theatre and other performative activities as events, not in the sense that they have to be major or important events, but because all theatre takes places as events. ... Theatre manifests itself as an event which includes both the presentation of actions and the reactions of the spectators, who are present at the very moment of the creation. Together the actions and reactions constitute the theatrical event.[67]

In this sense I suggest a deep even though somewhat abstract connection between performative phenomena such as devotional drama, "somer*games*," and the image of the original Crucifixion scene as described in the poem as a "game" being "played."

The poem I quoted is not an isolated example of this use of "game" in the context of performing the suffering or divine body of Christ. Two other intriguing examples of the use of "game" as "an event," that reconnect us with the question of performing Christ's *miracles*, appear in two of the most metatheatrical plays of the York Cycle—the Curriers' *Transfiguration* and the Bowers and Fletchers' *Christ before Annas and Caiaphas*. As in the poem where "game" is used to denote the most climatic event of the

Passion, the event of the Transfiguration is also of large magnitude and has to do directly with a miracle, a "wondir-werke" as Jesus characterizes the Transfiguration (195, 135), using an expression that appears many times in the *ToMP* as a synonym of "miraclis." Similarly, in *Christ before Annas and Caiaphas* Christ is mocked for his ability to perform miracles:

> Anna:
> What wondirfull werkis workis at wighte?
> Cayphas:
> Seke men and sori he sendis siker helyng—
> And to lame men and blynde he sends er sight.
> (243, 34-6)

> [Annas:
> What wonderful works does that one work/perform?
> Cayphas:
> To sick and sorry men he sends healing—
> And to lame and blind men he sends their sight.]

When Christ is brought to the court where Annas and Cayphas are engaged in drinking "wyne þat will make you to wynke" [wine that will make you to sleep], which in the following line is described as "licoure full delicious" [delicious liquor] (lines 76-77)[68] he is badly and rudely mocked by the soldiers in ways that elaborate and exceed the scriptural descriptions.[69] As Beadle and King introduce the play:

> Christ's appearance before the High Priests also sets a pattern for the plays which follow, the calm, still, and largely silent figure of Jesus providing a stark contrast

> with the violent verbosity and frenetic activity of those around him. Some of this is implicit in the Gospels. What is *not* is the sadistic ferocity of the beating he receives before being passed on to Pilate. The soldiers cruelly elaborate their task by formalizing it as *a popular buffeting game called "pops,"* a muted modern descendant of which is the children's game Hot Cockles.[70]

This performative reference to yet another kind of an unruly game that originates in lay culture is another indication of potential connections between the performance texts that the *ToMP* opposes—the "miracula"—and the episodes that compose the mystery cycles. This also goes very well with the terminology used in the *ToMP* that compares those who "lowyn and japen of the miraclis of God" [laugh and make jest of the miracles of God] (97, 136-7) to the "Jewis that *bobbiden* Christ" (97, 133) [Jews that hit Christ]. Clopper quotes G. R. Owst who cites the description from Bodleian manuscript 649 (c. 1420), according to which the "bobbing" of Christ was a game:

> A common game in use nowadays is that which that soldiers played with Christ at his Passion: it is called *the bobbid* game. In this game, one of the company will be blindfold and set in a prone position; than those standing by will hit him on the head and say—"A bobbid. A bobbid, abiliried: Smyte not her, but thu smyte a gode!" And as often as the former may fail to guess correctly and rede amys, he has to play a fresh game. And so, until he rede him that smote him, he will be blindfold stille and hold in for the post of player.[71]

The similarity between Beadle and King's description, the *bobbid* game, and the York episode cannot be overlooked. Note also that the repetition of the game until the "player" discovers the identity of the one hitting him resembles the repetition that is characteristic of games recorded in the sermon exemplum discussed above, and which also resembles

the repetitive structure of an episode in a mystery play that would be performed time and time again.

In other words, in these two plays the three elements that I have been discussing—"game" as in the "somergame," "game" as an event, and performing the miracles or the divinity of Christ—are all interwoven in ways that suggest to me the relevance of applying the *ToMP* to the analysis of such "devotional drama." Both plays also have a surprising number of thematic and textual common denominators with the *ToMP*.[72] I am hesitant to suggest a direct connection between the texts, and yet evidence about the performance of the two plays exists from at least as early as 1415, which comfortably fits the dating of the *ToMP* (1380-1425). The following citations from the 1415 *Ordo Paginarum* (the "Order of the Pageants") summarize the happenings in the performances demonstrating (in addition to the textual evidence the plays supply) that a "miracle" was performed and that violence was used:

| | |
|---|---|
| Couureo*urs* | Petrus Iacob*us* & Ioh*ann*es Iesus<br>ascendens in mont*em* & *tr*ansfigurans<br><…> apparentes et <…> |
| [Curriers | Peter, James, and John, Jesus ascending<br>the mount and transfiguring <himself<br>before them, Moses and Elijah> appearing,<br>and <the voice speaking in a cloud>][73] |

and

| | |
|---|---|
| Bowers | <…> nas Cayphas et iiijor Iudei |
| Flecchers | p*er*cucient*es* [et] col<…>ant*es* Ies*u*m<br>Petrus Mulier accusans Petru*m* &<br>Malchus. |

[Bowers <Jesus, An>nas, Caiaphas, and four Jews
Fletchers striking [and] buf<fet>ing Jesus, Peter,
the woman accusing Peter, and Malchus][74]

In *The Transfiguration*, as Clifford Davidson writes, "Christ's divine power—power joined to humility—finds particular expression."[75] In fact, the action in this play—Christ's miraculously proving to his apostles and to Moses and Elijah by the actual intervention of God the Father that he really is divine—concisely expresses one of the questions implicitly raised in the *ToMP*: the problematics of *performing* Christ or God *performing* a miracle:

> [m]uch more God and all his seintes denien alle tho cristen men unkinde that pleyen or favouren the pley of the deth or of the miracles of ther most kinde fadir Crist that diede and wroughte miraclis to bringen men to the everlastande heretage of hevene. [God and all his saints deny much more all those unkind Christian men that play or favor the play of the death or of the miracles of their most kind father Christ that did and wrought miracles in order to bring men to the everlasting heaven.] (106, 437-40)

In this passage, as in many other lines in the *ToMP*, the writer's characterization of the plays is serious. Christ's death and miracles are not compared to parodic and lascivious games that in this context would obviously be forbidden, but to the actual idea of playing with these events and taking them out of their original context. In *The Transfiguration* Peter describes the miracle that Jesus has just performed:

| Petrus: | Peter: |
| --- | --- |
| His clothyng is as white as snowe, | His clothing is as white as snow |

His face schynes as þe sonne; His face shines as the sun
To speke with hym I haue grete awe, I am in great awe of speaking with him
Swilk faire before was neuere fune. Such an event never happened before.
(195, 97-100)

Stunned by this appearance John suggests:

Johannes: John:
I rede we aske þam all on rowe I suggest we ask them in order
And grope þam how þis *game* is begonne. And question them how this *game* began.
(195, 103-4)

This sense of the word "game" as an event, as a real happening, but which is also on the verge of meaning a "game" being performed as in the "somergame," one that includes the humiliating of Christ, appears also in *Christ before Annas and Chaiphas*:

Anna:
Do sir bidde am bring in þat boy þat is bune.
Cayphas:
Pese now sir Anna, be stille and late hym stande,
And late vs grope yf þis *gome* be grathly begune.
Anna:
Sir þis *game* is begune of þe best,
Nowe hadde he no force for to flee þame.
(248, 202-6)

[Annas:
Do, sir, tell them to bring in that boy that is bound.

Cayphas:
Peace, now, Sir Annas; be still, and let him stand,
And let us see if this *game* can begin.
Annas:
Sir, this *game* has begun for the best.
Now he cannot flee them.]

In these two references from the *York Plays*, the use of the word "game" is similar to its use in the religious poem where it denotes the very event of the original crucifixion. In both cases it contextualizes a happening that involves brutal treatment of Jesus.

Finally, there is a third use of the word "game" that ties together the "somergame," the real events of brutality that were performed on the "real" Christ, and the sense of a dramatic production such as the performances of the mystery plays themselves. Evidence of this use appears in the mid-fifteenth-century Proclamation of the *N-Town Play* that introduces and narrates what is about to be performed. This passage describes the episode after the fall where God will express his anger toward Adam and Eve:

Tercius Vexillator:
...
Oure Lord gan appose þem of þer gret delyte,
Bothe to askuse hem of þat synful blame.
And þan Almythy God for þat gret dyspite
Assygned hem grevous peyn, *as ȝe xal se in*
*game*,
Indede.

[Third Flag Bearer:

Our Lord began interrogating them about their great sin,
So that they both might exonerate themselves of that sinful blame.
And then almighty God for that great disobedience
Assigned them grievous pain, as you shall indeed see in the *game*.]
(1:7, 44-49)[76]

Although here the word "game" clearly depicts the dramatic performance that is about to be seen, it is noteworthy that it is associated with the pain that Adam and Eve are about to suffer. "Game" in the sense of the dramatic performance appears twice more in the *N-Town* proclamation, toward its very end:

Trecius Vexillator:
Now haue we told ȝow all bedene
The hool mater þat we thynke to play.
Whan þat ȝe come þer xal ȝe sene
This *game wel pleyd* in good away.
Of Holy Wrytte þis *game* xal bene,
And of no fablys be no way.

[Third Flag Bearer:
Now we have told you altogether
The whole matter that we are about to play.
When you come there you shall see
This *game well played* in good a way
Of Holy Scriptures this *game* shall be,
And not of any lies.] (1:21, 516-21)[77]

All these examples demonstrate the complex and diverse use of the word "game" (which is very often linked with "play"). This word therefore denotes not only

reenactments of biblical episodes or stories but also, and more importantly, real happenings with real consequences for the participants—performers and spectators alike. These meanings of the words "game" and "play" suggest to me that such events as the ones I mentioned all share something of the "performative." In other words, a "game" or a "play" in late medieval terminology is a performative event where something *real* happens *really* and this is what makes the event a significant experience. An actor playing Jesus need not *really* die on the cross in order to experience *real* pain, just as a spectator need not believe that the actor is really dying as Christ in order to experience real anxiety and pity for the suffering actor as well as for the suffering Christ. Jody Enders analyzes this phenomenon in relation to what she terms a medieval "urban legend" about a priest who played Christ being crucified in a passion play and according to the story "would have died had he not been rescued."[78] She writes:

> In all these theatrical moments of extreme jeopardy, the pleasures, perils, and pains of pretense are suspended as the audience determine whether or not they have witnessed—or *are witnessing*—real death, whether or not any given spectacle is imitating or enacting performativity. What all our stories underscore so anxiously is the dreaded moment when theatrical events are not quite representation and not quite reality.[79]

The meaning and significance of any of these events, including the mystery plays, are the outcome not merely of the story being performed but also of the experience of the participants: the performers as well as the spectators. This definition does not exclude theatrical or dramatic representations of narrated stories but rather it is an inclusive term that groups together performances such as the mystery plays, less controlled *games* and

happenings such as the "somergame," and also real events such as the Crucifixion itself. Significantly, in the fourth reason that the *ToMP* quotes in favor of "miraclis pleyinge," (arguing that such entertainment is a good way to convert people) this terminological inclusiveness is evident:

> And now on dayes men ben not convertid by the ernestful doing of God ne of men, thanne now it is time and skilful to assayen to convertyn the puple *by pley and gamen as by miraclis pleyinge and other maner mirthes*. [Since nowadays men are neither converted by earnest doing of God nor of men, then now it is time and rational to try to convert the people by play and game as well as by "miraclis pleyinge" and other types of mirth.] (98, 171-5)

In addition to the complex use of the word "game" it should be noted that further in the York *Transfiguration* other references to the wondrous events are termed "signs," "works," and "miracles," words that all appear in a similar context in the *ToMP*. In order to "testify" that Jesus really is the Son of God, God the Father appears miraculously out of a descending cloud:

| | |
|---|---|
| Pater in nube: | God the Father in a cloud: |
| Þis is my sone, as ȝe haue saide, | This is my Son, as you have said, |
| As he has schewed by *sygnes* sere. | As he has shown you by *signs* here. |
| Of all his *werkis* I am wele paied, | With all his *works* I am very pleased, |
| Therefore till hym takis hede and here. | Therefore take heed to him and hear. |

(196, 173-6)

And a few lines later Peter describes his experience and refers to the disappearance of Moses and Elijah who were summoned from hell "at dongeoun" (line 128)[80] to take part in the miracle:

| Petrus: | Peter: |
|---|---|
| A, lorde, what may is *meruayle* be, | Ah, lord! What is this marvel? |
| Whedir is þis glorious gelme al gone? | Where has this glorious gleam gone? |
| We asugh here pleynly persons thre | We saw here three plain persons, |
| And nowe is oure lorde lete allone. | And now our lord is left alone. |
| Þis *meruayle* movis my mynde, | This marvel moves my mind, |
| And makis my flessh affrayed. | And makes my flesh afraid. |
| (197, 185-90) | |

In relation to this description of the performance of a miracle let us consider the following passage in the *ToMP*:

> For Crist seith that folc of avoutrie sechen *siche signys* as a lecchour sechith signes in verrey love but no dedies of verrey love. So sithen thise miraclis pleyinge ben onely singis love withoute dedis, they ben not onely contrarious to the worshipe of God—that is, bothe in signe and in deed—but also they ben ginnys of the devvel to cacchen men to byleve of Anticrist, as wordis of love withoute verrey dede ben ginnys of the lecchour to cacchen felawchipe to fulfillinge of his leccherie. Bothe for these miraclis pleyinge been verrey leesing as they ben signis withoute dede and for they been verrey idilnesse, as they taken the miraclis of God in idil after theire owne lsut. [For Christ said that adulterous people seek *such signs* just as a lecher seeks signs of true love but does not carry out deeds of true love. So since these miraclis pleyinge are only signs of love without the deeds, they are not only contrary to worshipping God—that is, both by sign and by deeds—but also they are devices of the devil to catch men to

> believe in Antichrist, just as words of love without real deeds are devices of the lecher to catch fellows to fulfilling his lechery. For these miraclis pleyinge are very bad because they are both signs without deeds and also very idle, since they take the miracles of God idly for the purposes of their own lust.] (99, 197-209)

First, notice that "miraclis pleyinge" are compared in these lines to "signs *of love*," suggesting I think a kind of performance closer to devotional drama than to purposely degrading games. In other words, the criticism (which is reinforced in other places in the *ToMP*) is that the participants' interest becomes focused on their own enjoyment or earthly gain rather than on the sacred events being "played" with, and therefore these are only signs. Second, although the word "sign" in this passage seems to refer to the untrue or misdirected intentions of the players, i.e., their wrong focus, its first appearance in the quotation seems to be referring to the performances themselves, thus potentially bearing the same meaning as in *The Transfiguration*—of "a miracle."

Indeed, one of the recurring arguments in the *ToMP* is that playing and "bourding" with "the most precious werkis of God" means "takith his name in idil and so *misusith* oure byleve" [taking his name idly and so misusing our belief] (93, 27-9). I emphasize the idea of misusing belief because there is a clear concern or even fear expressed here from the very act of changing the clearly defined context of religious themes, stories, and images, especially when miracles are concerned. There is a difference between telling or knowing about a certain event, or even creating a two-dimensional image of it, "a deed bok" [a dead book] (98, 185), and performing it "quickly" [live]. The logic immediately follows: "For sothely whan we so doun, drede to sinne is takun awey." [For surely when we do so, fear of sin is taken away] (94, 33-4). In

other words, making the abstract and awe inspiring materialized and tangible neutralizes the effect, or in the words of the *ToMP* "and right as a nail smiten in holdith two thingis togidere, so drede smiten to Godward holdith and susteineth oure bileve to him." [and just as a nail that has been hammered in holds two things together, so dread hammered in toward God holds and sustains our belief in him] (94, 37-9). A nail that holds together two things is a metaphor of the dread and awe (of the abstract) that "holds together" the belief of the believer in God.

Having shown that words such as "miraclis,"[81] "game," "play," and "sign" were used in more than one sense, I would like to examine briefly one more concept the meaning of which Clopper aims to fix—"representation." Clopper argues that the relevant term to title religious performances such as the mystery plays is "representations" as opposed to any form of "miracle plays." And yet Clopper himself gives an example of what he considers to be a description of a "miracula" in a story from the 1220 *Life of St John of Beverley* where the term representation appears as part of the characterization of the event. Although he notes that the use there of the word *representatio* "is an exception,"[82] such a use again shows that words and concepts such as "miracle," "game," "play," and "representation" could be employed in a relatively wide range of meanings. Because these words are all closely related to the social and cultural realm of the performative, by definition they denote complex activities and phenomena that exist on the threshold between real life and what is not. This, to conclude this part of the argument, is a significant reason that I think we may and should read in the *ToMP* aesthetics that are relevant to a wide range of late medieval performances including the religious vernacular theatre.

**Etymology: Biblical Meanings of "Miraclis"**

After discussing the performative genre of "miracula" and associating it with the *ToMP*'s use of "miraclis" Clopper examines the appearances of "miraculum" in the Vulgate and the Old Testament in order to establish the origin and context of "miracula" as he defines the term. Basing his analysis on the Hebrew and Latin sources Clopper argues that

> There is a relatively simple explanation for how these activities came to be called *miracula*. In the Old Testament *miraculum* was used to translate a number of Hebrew words of varying connotation but *none of which* corresponds to the medieval and modern sense of a supernatural event caused by divine intervention and involving a suspension of the laws of nature.[83]

Although the *ToMP* does not refer to any of the eight biblical instances that in the Latin include the word "miraculum" it seems to me that Clopper turns to the Hebrew origin because in the second part of the *ToMP* there are six direct references to the Old Testament where "playing" ("ludere") is characterized as a bad and destructive action.[84] The reliance of the *ToMP* on the Old Testament as an authority justifies therefore, I assume, the examination of the appearance of the concept of "miracula" in Jerome's translation of the Hebrew.

Clopper convincingly shows that during the Middle Ages the word "miraculum" acquired an additional and negative sense to that of "a miracle"—one example he gives is Varro's gloss on a line from Plautus's *Cistellaria*, according to which "*miracula* cause

wonder" but are particularized "by reference to distorted masks (*personae*) and emphasizes the ugliness, the monstrous quality of things that terrify."[85] However, an examination of the eight appearances of the word "miraculum" in the Vulgate again shows that its meaning is driven from a relatively wide associative range, especially when considering the original Hebrew words and contexts. Most importantly, in at least three of the eight instances the Hebrew word *does* denote a miracle in the conventional sense. I shall now examine the places in the Vulgate where the word "miraculum" or one of its variants appears. I will always quote the Hebrew original first (with transliteration of the sentence into English), second the Vulgate Latin translation, and third the John Wyclif's Middle English translation of the Bible (ca. 1395). For a modern English translation I add the King James edition.

First, in Numbers 26.10 the event that is described is definitely a miracle—the earth opens and swallows people:

במדבר 26. 10 "ותפתח הארץ את פיה ותבלע אותם ואת קרח במות העדה באכל האש את חמשים ומאתיים איש ויהיו לנס."

Vatiftach haaretz et piha vativla otam ve-et Corach bemot ha-eda baochal ha-esh et chamishim umataim ish vayihiu le *ness*.

Numeri 26:10 "Et aperiens terra os suum devoravit Core, morientibus plurimis, quando combussit ignis ducentos quinquaginta viros. Et factum est grande *miraculum*."

Numbers 26:10 "and the erthe openyde his mouth, and deuouride Chore, while ful many men dieden, whanne the fier brente two hundrid men and fifti; and a greet *myracle* was maad."

[Numbers 26:10 "And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men, and they became a *sign*."]

"Miraculum"—in this case "myracle" in Middle English, "sign" in the King James translation, and "ness" in Hebrew (=a miracle *and* a post, a flag, a sign)—refers to the impact of the divine intervention, so that the event re-inscribes in collective memory the power of God in cases of misconduct. A second example of a direct connection between the use of the word and a miracle can be found in the first of two quotations from Isaiah. The prophet warns the people that God will perform more and more of his miracles (proof of his power; the Hebrew words *ha-flé va fé-lé* which literally mean "a wonder," the Hebrew word *pé-lé* or *fé-lé*) until they correct their behavior:

"לכן הנני יוסיף להפליא את העם הזה הפלא ופלא ואבדה חכמת חייו ובינת נבוניו תסתתר." 29.24 ישעיהו

Lachen hineni yosif lehafli et haam haze *hafle va fele* ve avda chochmat chayav uvinat nevonav tistater.

Isaias 29:14 "Ideo ecce ego addam ut admirationem faciam Populo huic *miraculo* grandi et stupendo; Peribit enim sapientia a sapientibus eius, Et intellectus prudentium eius abscondetur."

Isaiah 29:14 "Y schal adde, that Y make wondryng to this puple, in a greet *myracle and wondurful*; for whi wisdom schal perische fro wise men therof, and the vndurstondyng of prudent men therof schal be hid."

[Isaiah 29:14 "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a *marvelous work* among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."]

The most intriguing example of the use of the word "miracula" in the context and even literal sense of a miracle, however, is the Latin translation of the verse from Exodus:

שמות 11.7 "ולכל בני ישראל לא יחרץ כלב לשונו למאיש ועד בהמה למען תדעון אשר יפלה ה' בין מצרים ובין ישראל."

Ulechol bnei Israel lo yechratz kekev leshono lemeish vead behema lemaan tedaun asher *yafle* adonai ben mitzraim uven Israel.

Exodus 11:7 "Apud omnes autem filios Israhel non muttiet canis ab homine usque ad pecus: ut sciatis *quanto miraculo* dividat Dominus Aegyptios et Israhel."

Exodus 11:7 "Forsothe at alle the children of Israel a dogge schal not make priuy noise, fro man til to beeste; that ye wite bi how greet *myracle* the Lord departith Egipcians and Israel."

[Exodus 11:7 "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."]

In this case, the word "miraculo" is not a translation of the Hebrew words but rather an *addition* to the text made by Jerome, meaning "what a miracle" God will perform. Notice that the Latin has no equivalence in the King James translation but only in the Wicliffite one. There is a plausible explanation for this addition. The expression "quanto miraculo" appears just before "dividat" which is the translation of the Hebrew "yaflé." The word "yaflé" indeed means to divide, to differentiate, and even to discriminate, but it is also sounds like a conjugation of the word "pélé/félé" that I mentioned before, and although written slightly differently both words sound very similar. My assumption is that Jerome regarded the context as appropriate for understanding this word as a miracle or a wonder

and therefore gave what he thought to be the double meaning of "yaflé." In any case, the context again is the omnipotence of God that is expressed by his great actions. I emphasize this because whereas Clopper is correct in pointing out that the uses of "miraculum" have negative intonations, which could explain the nature of the kind of performances he believes "miracula" to have been, a central etymological characteristic of this term has to do with the power and miraculous interventions of God. The direct relation between this meaning and one of the central arguments of the *ToMP* is that God's actions are not only not to be ridiculed and mocked, but on a much more rigid and severe level the *ToMP* warns its addressees not to intervene in any way with God's deeds but rather to occupy themselves with suffering and penance. In a meta-textual sense, the rhetoric of the *ToMP* is based on creating an image of an awe-inspiring and fearful God, whose power is reflected in his ability to perform such horrifying miracles, and therefore people should not create a situation, such as is the case with "miraclis pleyinge" where they become too familiar with God. This kind of frightening tone is also reflected in the image of social statuses and hierarchies that emerge from the *ToMP*. As Claire Sponsler poignantly observes:

> When the *Tretise* mounts its attack on certain kinds of theatricality it does so by employing a series of analogies, all of which turn on class and gender subordination. Although these analogies are entirely conventional, they nonetheless express a characteristic set of beliefs that have a bearing on the antitheatricality of the *Tretise*. As the argument is being laid out at the beginning of the *Tretise*, the author sets out a comparison between a playgoer and God on the one hand and servants and their masters on the other, saying, "sithen an erthely servaunt dar not takun in pley and in bourde that that his erthely lord takith in ernest, myche more we shulden not maken oure pleye and bourde of tho

> miraclis and werkis that God so ernestfully wrought to us. For sothely whan we so doun, drede to sinne is takun awaey." [since an earthly servant dares not to take in play and in jest that that his earthly lord takes earnestly, much more we should not make out play and jest of the miracles and works that God so earnestly wrought to us. For surely when we do so, dread to sin in gone,.] (94, 30-4) Another similar relationship is called to mind when the *Tretise,* describing how drama "reversith dissipline" (76), relates how a "scoler" trembles "seing the yerde of his master" (80-1). A third example involves the jealous husband who, "seeinge his wif to japun with his kindnessis, and to lovyn by hem another man more than him," chastises her (567-70). In another instance, the naturalness and appropriateness of patterns of domination and subordination are asserted when playing with God's miracles is likened to the inappropriate and unseemly "felawchip of a thral with his lord" which "makith his lord dispisid" (501-2). In all of these cases, what is assumed is an inevitable and just hierarchy of domination that is destabilized by theatrical activity.[86]

Since Jerome uses the word "miraculum" specifically to express a conception of God as a dominating fatherfigure—one that people should fear—it seems that the *ToMP*'s rhetorical depiction of God in the same manner indicates a similar understanding and use of the term. In other words, the concept "miraculum" has a negative sense of which "distorted masks" is one possible interpretation but it might also include other kinds of activities that potentially subvert the ultimate authority of God. The logic is that such activities as games and performances of themes that have to do with God and his deeds—"werkis"—take the risk of making God too familiar and therefore less awe-inspiring. Another way to look at the connections between the biblical meaning of "miraclis" as frightful events that manifest God's power and the sense of the word in the *ToMP* could have to do with the word "sign." If "miraculum" is a *sign* of God's power any attempt to

jest with this concept, or even to imitate it (as in theatrical presentations of biblical stories) might, according to the ideology expressed in the *ToMP* lessen and also attempt to appropriate the abstract image of God's power.

As can be seen, and as Clopper notes, the eight appearances of the word "miraculum" in the Vulgate are not derived from or based on eight appearances of the same word in Hebrew. Still, it could be argued that they all have a thematic common denominator that perhaps could have suggested to Jerome the translation of all the different words into "miraculum." In the three quotations listed above, as well as in the other five, the word "miraculum" is associated not only with God's power to perform miracles but specifically with events that evoke fear and awe of his power. In this sense—and as Clopper argues—the word "miraculum" seems to have been associated with terror and fear. But whereas Clopper wants to create a direct and literal link between the idea or even mood of horror and fear that characterizes the biblical events and the "miracula" that supposedly were frightening and horrific I suggest that the linkage is different. I think that the relevance of the biblical Latin "miraculum" to the use of "miraclis" in the *ToMP* has to do with the idea that in all the biblical cases it is the fear and awe of God and what he is able to do to people who do not obey him as opposed to that very same fear, awe, and dread that is "taken away" by performing and materializing such events. In other words, to play "miraclis" is like playing with the *fear* of God itself. It means to take an abstract but very central *feeling* that characterizes the relations between the believers and God and to play with it, to touch it, and to destabilize it. Precisely because of its negative etymology "miraculum" is valuable to and appreciated by the writer/s of the *ToMP*.

Following are the rest of the quotations that bear contextual relations to the three verses quoted above:

שמואל א' 14.15 "ותהי חרדה במחנה בשדה ובכל העם המצב והמשחית חרדו גם המה ותרגז הארץ ותהי לחרדת אלוהים."

Vatehi *charada* bamachaneh basadeh uvechol haam; hamatzav vehamashchit chardu gam hema vatirgaz haaretz vatehi lecherdat elohim.

1 Samuelis 14:15 "Et factun est *miraculum* in castris, per agros: sed et omnis populus stationis eorum, qui ierant ad praedandum, obstupuit, et conturbata est terra: et accidit quasi *miraculum* a Deo."

1 Samuel 14:15 "And a *myracle* was don in the castels, and bi the feeldis, but also al the puple of the `stacioun of hem that yeden out to take prey, dredde, and `the castels weren disturblid; and it bifelde as a *myracle* of God."

[1 Samuel 14:15 "And there was a *trembling* in the host, in the field; and among all the people; the garrison and the spoilers, they also trembled; and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling (so it grew into a *terror* from God)."]

Here the word "miraculum" is used to translate the Hebrew *charada*, which is literally fear, horror, or as in King James translation, trembling. Again, the context is God's wrath toward his people who disobey him. Next is a verse from Job:

איוב 33.7 "הנה אימתי לא תבעתך ואכפי עליך לא יכבד."

Hineh *eimati* lo tevaatcha veochpi alecha lo yichbad

Iob 33:7 "Verumtamen *miraculum* meum non te terreat, Et eloquentia mea non sit tibi gravis."

Job. 33: 7 "Netheles my *myracle* make thee not afeerd, and myn eloquence be not greuouse to thee."

[Job, 33:7 "Behold, my *terror* shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee."]

In this quotation Job's fourth friend speaks to him, telling him that he does not have to fear him. This line seems to have the least to do with the former meanings and yet "miraculum" is once again associated with fear and terror of great magnitude, particularly in the case of Job, who has been suffering one catastrophe after another. And finally, in the second quotation from Isaiah "miraculum" is once again used to denote fear and trembling:

ישעיהו 21.4 "תעה לבבי פלצות בעתתני את נשף חשקי שם לי לחרדה."

Taa levavi palatzut biatetani; et neshef chishki sam li le-*characda*

Isaias, 21: 4 "Emarcuit cor meum: Tenebrae stupefecerunt me: Babylon dilecta mea: Posita est mihi in *miraculum*."

Isaiah, 21:4 "Myn herte fadide, derknessis astonieden me; Babiloyne, my derlyng, is set to me in to *myracle*."

[Isaiah, 21:4 "My heart is bewildered, terror hath overwhelmed me; The twilight that I longed for hath been turned for me into *trembling*."]

In any case, because of this disparity between the Hebrew Old Testament and the Vulgate, Clopper chooses to narrow his etymological interpretation: "Of the eight instances of *miraculum* in the Vulgate, I believe that the key to the usage we have been examining lies in two passages from Jeremiah."[87] Let us now examine these two instances to understand why Clopper thinks that Jeremiah is the source for understanding how "miraculum" became a name of the performance genre of "miracula":

"הנני על נביאי חלומות שקר נאום ה'; ויספרום ויתעו את עמי בשקריהם ובפחזותם ואנוכי לא 23.32 ירמיהו שלחתים ולא ציויתים והועל לא יועילו לעם הזה נאום ה'."

Hineni al neviay chalomot sheker neum adonai; Vayesaprum vayatuu et ami beshikrehem uvepachazutam veanochi lo shelachtim velo tsivitim ve-hoel lo yoilu laam haze neum adonai.

Ieremias 23:32 "Ecce ego ad prophetas somniantes mendacium, ait Dominus; Qui narraverunt ea, et seduxerunt populum meum; In mendacio suo et in *miraculis* suis, Cum ego non misissem eos, nec mandassem eis, Qui nihil profuerunt popula huic, dicit Dominus."

Jeremiah, 23:32 Lo! Y to the profetis, dremynge a leesyng, seith the Lord; which telden tho, and disseyueden my puple in her leesyng, and in her *myraclis*, whanne Y hadde not sente hem, nether hadde comaundide to hem; whiche profitiden no thing to this puple, seith the Lord.

[Jeremiah, 23:32 "Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies and by their *lightness*; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord."]

Clopper enlarges on this quotation and basically explains how the Hebrew word פחזות (pachazut) which is the equivalent of "miraclis" in this instance, and which in Hebrew indeed means "lightness" as in the King James translation but that can also have "the force of 'loose talk' or 'exaggerated, boastful tales,'"[88] suggests the performance genre of "miracula" because "these pseudoprophets claim to have visions and then seduce and astound the people with their lies and tales."[89] Clopper's interpretation which I accept, does not contradict my explanation above. However, Jerome's use of "miraclis" here is peculiar in light of all the other biblical references, and once again I think that there might be a confusion with the Hebrew. "Pachaz" (here conjugated as "pachazut") sounds

very much like "pachad" which means fear in Hebrew. More importantly the two words are written almost identically—only one letter marks the difference, and both letters are extremely similar to each other: "ד" as in פחד and "ז" as in "פחז." The two letters are basically equivalent of d and z in English.

This leaves us then with the final quotation that once again uses "miraculum" in a context that depicts God's wrath and power to cast fear and destroy the people:

ירמיהו 44.12 "ולקחתי את שארית יהודה אשר שמו פניהם לבוא ארץ מצרים לגור שם ותמו כל בארץ מצרים יפלו בחרב ברעב יתמו; מקטון ועד גדול בחרב וברעב ימותו והיו לאלה לשמה ולקללה ולחרפה."

Velakachti et sheerit yehuda asher samu pneihem lavo eretz mitzraim lagour sham vetamu kol beeretz mitzraim, yiplu bacherev baraav yitamu; mikaton vead gadol bacherev uvaraav yamutu vehayu leala *leshama* velikllala ulcherpa.

Iremias 44:12 "Et adsumam reliquias Iudae, qui posuerunt facies suas ut ingrederentur terram Aegypti, et habitarent ibi et consumentur omnes in terra Aegypti cadent in gladio et in fame consumentur a minimo usque ad maximum, in gladio et in fame morientur; et erunt in iusiurandum, at in *miraculum*, et in maledictionem, et in opprobrium."

Jeremiah, 44:12 "and Y schal leese al Juda, and Y schal take the remenauntis of Juda, that settiden her faces, to go in to the lond of Egipt, and to dwelle there; and alle schulen be waastid in the lond of Egipt, thei schulen falle doun bi swerd, and schulen be wastid in hungur, fro the leeste `til to the mooste, thei schulen die bi swerd and hungur, and schulen be in to swering, and in to *myracle*, and in to cursyng, and in to schenschipe."

[Jeremiah, 44:12 "And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt shall they fall; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the

famine: and they shall be an execration, and an *astonishment*, and a curse, and a reproach."]

Both quotations from Jeremiah, therefore, fit the interpretation I suggested above about the use of "miraculum" in the sense and context of an awe-inspiring God that one must fear.

Taking all of the uses of miraculum in these biblical passages into account, I conclude that the word almost always depicts an event that involves God's intervention and power (many times a miracle) and that most of the events are supposed to evoke fear and awe. For this reason the events associated with or titled "miraculum" might indeed acquire negative characteristics, which could be the reason that this word in medieval culture acquired negative associations in addition to the "neutral" and positive meaning of a wondrous event. By using the word "miraclis" as the title and subject of the *ToMP* in its complex sense, the text articulates the energy and dynamics of the relations between the people and God that the author/s believe in and wish to reinforce: people should not play with God's *miracles* (in the conventional sense of the word), in order not to interfere with and lose their sense of God's authorial power that is based on fear and dread.

Based on the similarities between popular performative events and the authorized civic Corpus Christi cycles and on the influences that the former had on the latter as I have analyzed and demonstrated in the previous part of this chapter, I reach two main conclusions. First, late medieval religious vernacular theatre derives its coherence, power, and efficacy not only from its devotional nature, but also, and perhaps even more so, from its performative relations to the real and earthly life of its producers and spectators.

These performances, as Jody Enders writes about crucifixion episodes and passion plays that were based on the real presence, identity, and even risk of the performers, "were involved in a theatrical genre that did something *real* in real life and *to* real life."[90] In the terminology of conventional theatre semiotics characterizing this theatre solely as "devotional" focuses the analysis almost only on the "fictional worlds" of the biblical stories being represented and their didactic messages (and hence the tendency to view liturgical drama as a primary source for this theatre). This characterization, however, tends to exclude all the extra-textual components of these performances and the social, cultural, and aesthetic importance of all the performative non-fictional elements (such as the insertion of lay folklore and customs, the use of various kinds of anachronisms that connected the biblical past with the concrete present, audience interaction and participation, crossdressing and male actors playing female parts, class struggles and social hierarchies, ritualistic validation of social status and identity, and performance in the context of the complex characteristics of "game" in the late medieval sense of the word). Most importantly, and specifically relevant to this work, creating a dichotomy between the mystery cycles and unauthorized lay and/or clerical "games" and practices, means ignoring the performative significance and presence of the performers, in a theatre in which this kind of performer/character coexistence was eminent to the experience.

My second conclusion that is that whether the *ToMP* was written as an objection to the performance of religious themes, persons, or events in general (as has previously been assumed) or that Clopper is right in arguing that its objects of study were the parodic and unruly "miracula," we can and should examine its relevance to the analysis of the late medieval aesthetic discourse and concepts of performance in religious

vernacular theatre. Beyond the connections between the two performative "genres," the word "miraclis" in the text significantly refers to Christ's miracles, thus suggesting to me that the *ToMP* is *not* limited to one kind of parodic event but rather refers to the more general phenomenon of performing religious subject matter. Moreover, in many places the text characterizes the performances under attack not necessarily as parodic but straightforwardly as performative events that take sacred actions of God and God himself out of the restricted context of religious ritual into the playful and potentially subversive arena of performance and game. Based on these conclusions, in the next chapter I turn directly to the *ToMP* and analyze four concepts of performance that are closely relevant to the theatricality of the mystery plays and thus imply the existence of late medieval aesthetic theory.

**Notes**

[1] This question is the motivation for Lawrence M. Clopper's in-depth discussion of the text. I examine his arguments in detail below, but see his ideas in three places: "*Miracula* and *The Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 878-905; "*Miracula, Ludi inhonesti*, 'Somergames,' and the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*," in *Drama, Play, and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 63-107; and his "Is the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* a Lollard Tract Against Devotional Drama?" *Viator* (forthcoming).

[2] See for example Rosemary Woolf's "Attitudes to Drama and Dramatic Theory," in *The English Mystery Plays* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 77-105, especially 84-87; Jonas Barish's "Antitheatrical Lollardy," in *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 66-79; Glending Olson's "Plays as Play: A Medieval Ethical Theory of Performance and the Intellectual Context of the Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge," *Viator* 26 (1995): 195-221; and Clifford Davidson's "The Medieval Stage and the Antitheatrical Prejudice," in *History, Religion, and Violence: Cultural Contexts for Medieval and Renaissance English Drama* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 226-39.

[3] Two notable exceptions are Theodore K. Lerud's "Quick Images: Memory and the English Corpus Christi Drama," *Ludus* 5: *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Wim Hüsken (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 213-38, in which Lerud argues through the *ToMP* that plays were conceived in the same general category as were painted and sculpted images, and David Mills's "*Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*," in A. C. Cawley, et al., ed., *Medieval Drama*. Vol. 1 of *The Revels History of the Drama in English* (London: Methuen, 1983), 83-91, who analyzes briefly some of the points the *ToMP* raises.

[4] Clifford Davidson, ed., *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series, 19 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1993). Davidson introduces the text (henceforth *ToMP*) as "the longest and most significant piece of dramatic criticism in Middle English. Most often identified as the product of a hostile Wycliffite (or Lollard) author or authors and usually believed to have been written sometime between 1380-1425" (1). All quotations are from this edition.

[5] Clopper, "Is the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* a Lollard Tract," 1. Note how Clopper prioritizes a historical analysis over a "textual one." Accordingly in this essay his goal is to determine in greater detail the origin and context of the treatise rather than to analyze it from the angle of performance studies. Thus he concludes that the text is more likely to have been written by a Dominican secular cleric than by a Lollard author.

[6] See for example E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1903; Unabridged republication in one vol.: New York: Dover Publications, 1996). V. A. Kolve's *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd., 1966), 10-13, as well as all the references mentioned in notes 2 and 3.

[7] Clopper, "Is the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* a Lollard Tract," 67.

[8] Elin Diamond's delineation of the differences between theatre and performance is useful. Although her definition is aimed at contemporary performance and theatre it is also very useful for contextualizing much earlier performative practices that do not easily fit the traditional definition of "theatre" such as is the case with medieval theatre. Firstly, taking upon Schechner Diamond includes in the category of performance "popular entertainments, speech acts, folklore, political demonstrations, conference behavior, rituals, medical and religious healing, and aspects of everyday life." And more specifically, in comparison to theatre, she writes:

> In brief, theater was charged with obeisance to the playwright's authority, with actors disciplined to the referential task of representing fictional entities. In this narrative, spectators are similarly disciplined, duped into identifying with the psychological problems of individual egos and ensnared in a unique temporal-spatial world whose suspense, reversals, and deferrals they can more or less comfortably decode. Performance, on the other hand, has been honored with dismantling textual authority, illusionism, and the canonical actor in favor of the

> polymorphous body of the performer. Refusing the conventions of role-playing, the performer presents herself/himself as a sexual, permeable, tactile body, scourging audience narrativity along with the barrier between stage and spectator.

Elin Diamond, "Introduction," *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. Elin Diamond (New York: Routledge, 1996), 2-3.

[9] E. K. Chambers's *The Medieval Stage* is perhaps the most significant place where the *ToMP* originally came to be associated with religious drama. He also establishes there the meaning of the term "miracle plays" as an umbrella term for religious drama. Chambers first mentions the *ToMP* in the context of minstrelsy:

> In the well-known Wyclifite (*sic*) sermon against miracle plays, an imaginary opponent of the preacher's argument is made to say that after all it is "lesse yvels that thei have thyre recreaceon by pleyinge of myraclis than bi pleyinge of other japes"; and again that "to pley in rebaudye" is worse than "to pley in myriclis." Now, there is of course no necessary dramatic connotation either in the word "pley" or in the word "japis," which, like "bourde" or "gab" is frequently used of any kind of rowdy merriment, or of the lower types of minstrelsy in general. But on the other hand the whole tone of the passage seems to draw a very close parallel between the "japes" and the undeniably "myriclis," and to imply something in the former a little beyond the mere recitation, even with the help of impersonation, of a solitary mime. (I 84)

In this passage Chambers's evolutionary model is clearly manifested as he basically suggests that the *ToMP* talks about "playing" as a general phenomenon, attributable to many performative forms, but which also has the potential to mean or "to become" "real drama" that includes impersonation etc. Nevertheless, he in fact identifies the dramatic elements of games on the one hand and the playful characteristics of dramatic performances on the other and relates the *ToMP* to both performative forms.

In the second volume of *The Medieval Stage*, however, Chambers directly connects the *ToMP* with religious theatre:

> Such opposition to the religious drama as can be traced after the thirteenth century came not from the heads of the Church but from its heretics. It is chiefly represented by a curious *Tretise of miraclis pleyinge* which dates from the end of the fourteenth century and may safely be referred to a Wyclifite origin. (II 102)

Chambers's evolutionary model also dictates his use of the term "miracle-play" as a generic title for religious drama in all its forms. For example: "The English miracle-play reaches its full development with the formation of the great processional cycles" (II 108).

[10] There is often a tendency to assume that medieval theatre aesthetics are at best a secondary concern. A few quotations will serve to demonstrate this attitude: Lesely Wade Soule, in her *Actor as Anti Character* (discussed in the introductory chapter) is convinced that "occasional theatre of this kind was not aesthetic, but primarily defined by its social,

political and/or religious functions. In such circumstances, mimesis functioned particularly strongly as ideology and would probably have been associated with non-aesthetic projects" (16). Similarly, Glending Olson, who discusses ethical theoretical perspectives of the *ToMP*, clearly states that according to his reading of the text "at the core of this theory is the perception of performance and drama as a kind of playing and thus principally as a kind of social *activity* rather than as a kind of artistic creation or object." "Play as Play," 197, original emphasis. And in a review of Sarah Beckwith's *Signifying God*, Alexandra F. Johnston refutes some of Beckwith's arguments by putting into words a common view regarding medieval theatre aesthetics: "her argument that the body of the actor replaces the host in this 'sacramental theatre' can be seen as valid in a modern production divorced from the world of late medieval piety, but to argue that the original producers and actors *thought of the plays as anything more* than a pale imitation of the reality of the host is not persuasive." Book Review Section, *Theatre Journal* 55:1 (2003): 188, emphasis added.

[11] Janette Dillon, *Language and Space in Medieval and Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 31.

[12] I enlarge on these issues below, but on symmetry and simultaneous positioning of parallel or opposite thematic images, see Pamela Sheingorn's "The Visual Language of Drama: Principles of Composition," *Contexts for Early English Drama*, ed. Marianne G. Briscoe and John C. Coldewey (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 173-91.

[13] For the methodological order and convenience of writing this section I focus mainly on Clopper's chapter on the *ToMP* in his *Drama, Play, and Game*. In relevant places I consider additions or different opinions he suggests in his other two essays on the subject.

[14] It should be noted, however, that in Clopper's most recent essay "Is the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* a Lollard Tract Against Devotional Drama?" he fills in this gap and explains how the term "miracula" or "miraclis" came to have the meaning he believes was predominant in the late Middle Ages, i.e., "derisiveness, illusion, scurrility, false prophesy and the like" (4) and not a wondrous event. His etymological explanation for this is that two Latin words with different meanings—miracula, a feminine noun with "a number of negative meanings" became confused with the neuter nominative plural of miraculum, which is spelled the same way, miracula. Due to this confusion, some of the pejorative meanings of the first transferred to the second in some contexts. Thus he is saying that the ME word "miraclis" inherited that confused meaning (3-4). This explanation indeed supports the possibility that this is the meaning of "miraclis" in the *ToMP*; however it still does not answer the question I raise next about the obvious places in the *ToMP* where "miraclis" is used to denote a miracle in the conventional sense.

[15] *Drama, Play, and Game*, 70.

[16] Ibid., 85.

[17] In addition, whereas Clopper insists on attributing this single and negative meaning to "miracula" there are other opinions as well, most notably those that associate performing miracles as part of popular culture and daily life. R. N. Swanson argues that the

> miraculous [was] an important element in late medieval religion. ... It was (and long had been something of a literary cliché that miracles were less common than hitherto (either because they were less needed, or less merited), but *miracula* were not infrequent. Collections of miracles in preparation for canonization proceedings survive relating to Richard Rolle, Osmund of Salisbutry, and Henry VI. ... Other scattered references indicate that miracles were accepted as a part of life, such as those linked to Margery Kempe, or the case from Lichfield of a child who was submerged in a stream for half-an-hour but (presumably) lived, which was probably attributed to St. Chad.
>
> From this evidence, the miraculous might be quite mundane. Not surprisingly, most miracles concerned healing: the insane restored, the blind and deaf recovering their faculties, the resuscitation of people presumed dead (especially children). But there were others. Animals were also healed, and lost possessions recovered—including stolen church goods which were found in a churchyard.

*Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 290-1.

According to this description it could perhaps be suggested that the *ToMP* is in fact an objection to the performance of such "miracles" because this kind of popular culture has the potential to intervene with the sanctity of God's miracles. However the examples given in the *ToMP* belong to a different context and such healing miracles are not mentioned in it. The *ToMP* specifically mentions the Passion of Christ and other biblical events such as Doomsday as examples of what is forbidden to play with and therefore it seems unlikely that the text refers to the performance of magic, black magic, and so on.

[18] Here are the all the places in the *ToMP* where "miraclis" appears specifically and unequivocally in the sense of a miracle; I do not quote the places where it can be argued that linguistically it can mean a performance genre:

* "*Miraclis*, therfore, that Crist dude heere in erthe outher in himsilf outher in hise seintis weren so efectuel and in ernest done that to sinful men that erren they broughten forgivenesse of sinne, settinge hem in the weye of right bileve" (93, 9-13).
* "Thann, sithen *miraclis* of Crist and of his seintis were thus efectuel, as by oure bileve we ben in certein, no man shulde usen in bourde and pleye the *miraclis* and werkis that Crist so ernystfully wroughte to oure helthe" (93, 22-25).
* "myche more we shulden not maken oure pleye and bourde of tho *miraclis* and werkis that God so ernestfully wrought to us" (94, 31-2).
* "and whanne we takun in bourde and pley the most ernestful werkis of God as ben hise *miracles* ..." (94, 55-7).
* "thanne, whanne we pleyin his *miraclis* as men don nowe dayes..." (94, 48-9).

* "so whanne we takun in pley and in bourde the *miraclis* of God, he fro[m] us takinge his grace ..." (94, 53-4).
* "[t]hanne, sithen thes miraclis pleyeris taken in bourde the ernestful werkis of God, no doute that ne they scornen God as diden the Jewis that bobbiden Crist, for they lowen at his passioun as these lowyn and japen of the *miraclis* of God" (97, 133-7). This sentence is of particular interest because the word "miraclis" appears twice. Its second appearance toward the end of the sentence, marked in italics, is another use of the word in order to denote wondrous events. Its first appearance, however, "thes miraclis pleyeris," referring to the players, was traditionally understood to mean the actors/players who play the miracles of God, but might indeed mean the players who play/act in such degrading performances in which the works of God are ridiculed so badly that the result resembles the Jews mocking the crucified Christ.
* "Men thanne pleyinge the name of Goddis *miraclis* as plesingly, they leeve to do that God biddith hem so the scornen his name and so scornyn him" (97, 144-6).
* "Also sithen it is leveful to han the *miraclis* of God peintid, why is not as wel leveful to han the *miraclis* of God pleyed ..." (98, 179-81). This sentence is perhaps one of the most important ones in the whole text for the purpose of establishing the meaning of the word "miraclis." Not only is the term specifically used here to denote a "work of God," but also, in its second appearance in the sentence it is clearly stated that the miracles are played—that is they are referred to as the *content* of the performance and not as the performance's generic category.
* "Bothe for these miraclis pleyinge been verrey leesing as the ben signis withoute dede and for they been verrey idilnesse, as they taken the *miraclis* of God in idle after theire own lust" (99, 206-9).
* "Right therfore as men by feinyd tokenes bygilen and in dede dispisen ther neighboris, so by siche feinyd *miraclis* men bygilen hemsilf and dispisen God, as the tormentours that bobbiden Crist" (99-100, 226-9).
* "And therfore as this feinyd recreacioun of pleyinge of *miraclis* is fals equite, so it is double shrewidnesse, worse than though they pleyiden pure vanities" (103, 357-9).
* "Loke, thanne, frend, yif thy byleve tellith that God dide his *miraclis* to us for we shulden pleyn hem..." (105, 400-02).
* "Thanne sithen miraclis pleyinge reversith the wille of God and the ende for the whiche he wrought *miraclis* to us, no doute but that miraclis pleyinge is verre taking of Goddis name in idil" (105, 405-08). This example, again, is an instance where the word miraclis coupled with pleyinge might linguistically mean a performance genre. Its other appearance in the sentence unequivocally means a wondrous event.
* The following sentence, from the second part of the *ToMP*, parallels performing (as in imitating) God's miracles and death to performing one's own father's death: "[m]iche more God and alle his seinties denien alle tho cristen men unkinde that pleyen or favouren the pley of the deth or of the *miracles* of ther most kinde fadir Crist that diede and wroughte *miraclis* to bringen men to the everlastande heretage of hevene" (106, 437-41).
* Especially interesting is the following sentence in which the words "pleyinge" and "miraclis" are not coupled but are interwoven and the linguistic use of "miraclis" leads to

the sense of miracles rather than a performance genre: "But peraventure heere thou seist that of pleyinge *of miraclis* be sinne, never the later it is but litil sinne" (106, 442-3).
* "Thanne sithen the pley of Ismael was not leveful with Isaac, myche more fleysly pley is not leveful with the ghostly werkis of Crist and of his seintis, as ben *hise miraclis* to converten men to bileve..." (107, 479-82).
* "Than pleyinge with the *miraclis of God* disservith more venjaunce and more sinne is than disservyde the pleyinge of Ismael with Isaac." (108, 498-501).
* "so myche more pleyinge with the *miraclis* of God makith hem dispisid sithen pleyinge to comparisoun of the mervelouse werkis of God is fer more cherl than ony man may ben cherl of a lord..." (108, 502-05).
* "[s]o it is a werry lesing to seyen that for the love of God he wil pleyen *his miraclis*" (108, 518-19).
* "[s]o these miracle playeris and the fautours of hem as they maken the *miraclis* of God onely a mene to ther pley, and the pley the ende of the *miraclis* of God, han ar more pris ther pley than the *miraclis* of God" (109, 555-58).
* "[s]o unkindely seyen men nowe on dayes, 'Crist doth now no *miraclis* for us, pleye we therfore *his olde*,' adding many lesingis therto so colowrably that the puple gife as mych credense to hem as to the trwthe" (111, 622-26).
* "Rit forsothe as the licnesse of *miraclis* we clepen *miraclis*, right so the golden calfe the children of Israel clepiden it God, not for it was in itsilf, but for they maden it to licnesse of God, in the whiche they hadden minde of the olde *miraclis* of God beforn and for that licnesse they worschipiden and preiseden, as they worschipiden and preisiden God in the dede of his *miraclis* to hem" (112, 637-43).
* "So sithen now on dayes myche of the puple worschipith and preisith onely the licknesse of the *miraclis* of God as myche as the word of God in the preshours mowth by the which alle *miraclis* be don" (112, 644-47).

These quotations add up to twenty-six sentences in the *ToMP* in which the word "miraclis" appears (sometimes twice or more in the same sentence) unequivocally meaning God's miracles and wondrous events. In many cases the text specifically states that its objection is to the performance or playing of those miracles. When the word "miraclis" does not necessarily denote the *content* of the plays it is almost always coupled with "pleyinge" most likely denoting indeed the *kind* of performances under attack—although it could also be a simple prepositional use, thus meaning "the playing of miracles."

[19] Translation of all quotations from the *ToMP* are mine.

[20] *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Hans Kurath (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1952), 17.

[21] See his "English Drama: From Ungodly *Ludi* to Sacred Play," *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 739-66.

[22] *Drama, Play, and Game*, 86-7.

[23] John M. Wasson, "The English Church as Theatrical Space," in John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan, ed., *A New History of Early English Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 27. In the sentence "The apparent favorite was *The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin*, presented over some ninety-five years, from 1399-1400 to 1543-1544" I just quoted, I think that Wasson means "ninety-five *times*" and not *years*, but this is how it appears in the book.

[24] Lincoln Cathedral is the seat of the bishop of Lincoln, and therefore the cathedral church for the entire diocese of Lincoln; this means that performances in Lincoln Cathedral were not just local but had a regional significance.

[25] Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret G. Rogerson, ed. *Records of Early English Drama: York*, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979). Latin: vol. 1, 9 / Translation: vol. 2, 695. Henceforth quotations from the documents will appear as follows: *REED: York*, page number of original document / page number of English translation.

[26] See also my discussion in the next chapter about the travelers who came to York.

[27] *Drama, Play, and Game*, 138-9.

[28] "Is the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* a Lollard Tract," 8.

[29] For a concise discussion of Bakhtinian and other models of the social roles of carnival and festivity that ultimately aim to restore social order, see Chris Humphrey's "Social Protest or Safety-Valve? Critical Approaches to Festive Misrule," in his *The Politics of Carnival: Festive Misrule in Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 11-37.

[30] "The Flood," *The York Plays*, ed. Richard Beadle (London: Edward Arnold, 1982) 85-6. All quotations from the York plays are from this edition. Page and line numbers are noted parenthetically and separated by a comma, first are page numbers and second line numbers. Translations are meant to make the medieval lines as readable as possible and I therefore use and combine the following sources: J. S. Purvis, *The York Cycle of Mystery Plays: A Complete Version* (London: S.P.C.K., 1957); Richard Beadle and Pamela M. King's translations as they appear in *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); and my own translations.

[31] See for example Peter Happé's "Farcical Elements in the English Mystery Cycles," *Ludus* 6: *Farce and Farcical Elements*, ed. Wim Hüsken and Konrad Schoell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 29-43.

[32] Joan Young Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 117-8. The story originally appears in Geoffrey de la Tour Landry's *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-*

*Landry*, ed. G. S. Taylor (London: John Hamilton LTD., 1930), 34-8. *The Book of the Knight of the Tower* was written in the late fourteenth-century (1371-2) by Tour Landry as an instructions book for his daughters. Tour Landry lived between Chollet and Verins in the province of Anjou but in the fifteenth century his book was translated into several different languages—including English—into which it was translated at least twice. The popularity of the book makes it fair to assume that it reflects popular behavior and customs and the story is therefore relevant to the analysis of the Noah plays. See Dawn Marie Hayes, *Body and Sacred Places in Medieval Europe, 1100-1389* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 62-5.

[33] For a critique of the design of gender relations in the Noah Plays as well as in scholarly discussion of this subject see Garrett P. J. Epp's "Noah's Wife: The Shaming of the 'Trew,'" *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, ed. Eve Salisbury, Georgiana Donavin, and Merrall Llewelyn Price (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 223-41.

[34] Theresa Coletti, "Purity and Danger: The Paradox of Mary's Body and the En-gendering of the Infancy Narrative in the English Mystery Cycles," *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 65. See the entire essay (65-95) for an excellent analysis of the complex and paradoxical socio-cultural meanings of the body of Mary in the cycles as well as its use as a sign for the expression and negotiation of "highly charged topics such as age and sexuality in marriage, adultery, cuckoldry, and illegitimacy, and that explores the interaction of domestic and economic relationships" (67).

[35] Peter Meredith and John E. Tailby, ed. *The Staging of Religious Drama in Europe in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Documents in English Translation* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1983), 117.

[36] Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), 63. Quotation within quotation: Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 36.

[37] *Drama, Play, and Game*, 72.

[38] Siegfried Wenzel, "Somer Game and Sermon References to a Corpus Christi Play," *Modern Philology* 86:3 (1989): 279-80. Emphasis added. See also Clopper, *Drama, Play, and Game*, 72-4.

[39] Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 210.

[40] I draw my examples primarily from the York mystery play not only because there is a lot of available evidence regarding its production, but also since we have evidence about its inception from the same period as the composition of the *ToMP* (late fourteenth

century), and York is comparatively close to the places where the *ToMP* could have originated. See more on this in Clifford Davidson's "Introduction," *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, especially pages 14-16.

[41] Beadle and King, *York Mystery Plays*, 222.

[42] *Drama, Play, and Game*, 73.

[43] James Simpson, "The Dramatic" in *Reform and Cultural Revolution: The Oxford English Literary History, Vol. 2, 1350-1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 525. See the entire essay (502-57) for a detailed and illuminating analysis of the theatrical, ironic, and political use of anachronisms in the mystery plays. In it Simpson argues that "[t]he cycles are not 'instructional' at all. Instead they offered a space in which the members of many institutions could reflect on their own practice in the active life" (509). See also Richard K. Emmerson's "Dramatic History," (unpublished manuscript) for a detailed critique of Simpson's failure to mention a variety of other dramatic forms and recent scholarship that not all correspond to his suggestions regarding the mystery plays. It should be noted, however, that Emmerson does not disagree with Simpson's analysis and ideas.

[44] Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God*, 53.

[45] Ibid., 54.

[46] See more on this in Alan D. Justice's "Trade Symbolism in the York Cycle," *Theatre Journal* 31: (1979): 47-58 and in Kathleen Ashley's "Sponsorship, Reflexivity and Resistance: Cultural Readings of the York Cycle Plays," *The Performance of Middle English Culture: Essays on Chaucer and the Drama*, ed. James J. Paxon, Lawrence M. Clopper, and Sylvia Tomasch (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998), 9-24.

[47] Swanson 257-8.

[48] Richard L. Homan, "Ritual Aspects of the York Cycle," *Theatre Journal* 33.3 (1981): 306-7.

[49] *Drama, Play, and Game*, 5.

[50] One way to experience the changing actors who play the same role is to look at the photos of the 1998 Toronto reconstruction of the York Plays. The web page http://arts-sciences.cau.edu/engl/toronto/york98.htm includes photos of all the plays. Regardless of accuracy or authenticity, following consecutively all the plays of the Passion in which Christ is enacted each time by a different actor gives the feel of the distinction between the persona of Christ and the persons enacting his role.

[51] See for example Meg Twycross's "The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays," *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 37-84; especially 38-45.

[52] Beckwith, *Signifying God*, 66-7.

[53] There is no evidence for this suggestion, however, I think that it is an important question to consider because it emphasizes the extreme effort a single actor would have to *perform* in order to perform the same episode twelve times and it focuses our attention on the very moments of transition from one performance this episode to the next.

[54] Wenzel correctly notes that "because of its function as a sermon *exemplum*, the ... text cannot be taken as a complete description of what was actually performed; its details may well have been selected for a purpose" (282). This is of course true but that dialectic flux between character and role is built into the rhetoric of the description and meaning of the event.

[55] Siegfried Wenzel, "Somer Game and Sermon References to a Corpus Christi Play," 280. Quotations in Latin 278.

[56] Sandra Billington has long ago pointed out the fact that in the York *Christ before Herod* a direct reference to the "king for a day" ritual appears, connecting Christ with this role:

> References to Yule [enacting the passion and death of Christ] would make the irony clear to an audience which indulged in buffeting and other games at that time. And more detail is found in the York plays. In the first (of the Lytsteres) Herod presumes Christ to be the local Fool-entertainer or magician and looks forward to seeing water turned into wine and the dead brought to life. When Christ is brought in he is welcomed, and Christ remains silent. The soldiers reassure Herod that a man is taking them to assess the mood of his audience. In other words they take him to be a professional or artificial Fool, who earns his living form entertaining and who, theologically, is the most condemned. Herod, being a trickster himself, is pleased and even when warned that Christ calls himself King of the Jews, Herod interprets this as a King-game in which one of a community is elected king "in his kith where he comes froo" (line 224).

*A Social History of the Fool* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 18-19. See also Billington's *Midsummer: A Cultural Sub-Text from Chretien De Troyes to Jean Michel, Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe;* 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), especially Chapter 9, "Religious Theatre," for an account of the different workings of king games into French biblical drama.

[57] Peter Parshall notes that "the mocking of Christ is fully consistent with a range of Roman legal practices entailing the dire humiliation of criminals who were condemned to capital punishment." This kind of historio-cultural performance of violence might very well be at the roots of such somergames and also at the roots of the mystery plays, suggesting a potential connection between the identity of the actors playing Christ and social outcasts. See Parshall's "The Art of Memory and the Passion," *The Art Bulletin*

81:3 (1999): 459. Parshall refers the reader to K. M. Coleman, "Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments," *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990): 46-7.

[58] *Drama, Play, and Game*, 68. Clopper convincingly distinguishes between the word *theatrum* which was used to denote Roman and pagan games and obscenities and between late medieval religious performance that we now term "theatre." Accordingly he identifies such games and *ludi inhonesti* as part of the tradition of the *theatrum* and as unrelated to religious drama in the vernacular. On this, see especially his chapter "The *Theatrum* and the Rhetoric of Abuse in the Middle Ages" in his *Drama, Play, and Game*, 25-62. It should be noted, therefore, that in the *ToMP* the words "theatre" or *theatrum* are never mentioned.

[59] *Drama, Play, and Game*, 74.

[60] In addition, as can be discerned from the title of Siegfried Wenzel's essay "Somer Game and Sermon References to a Corpus Christi Play" he suggests a direct connection between the two performative forms. After quoting and discussing the sermon exemplum he turns to another sermon, also dated from the late fourteenth century that basically repeats the same story, this time specifically calling the event "a Corpus Christi play":

> Therefore, if we wish to resist sins, everyone of us must be Christ and suffer many tribulations and anxieties, just as Christ suffered on the cross. But I believe that nowadays we behave like a person in my country who was playing Christ in the Corpus Christi play in the first year of his coming to the village of A.; and in the second year the townspeople wanted to have him for the same play. He said: "No way, my lords." They said: "Why so?" And he answered: "To be sure, when I played Christ last year, I was badly scourged and crucified and got neither food not drink; and those who were below me, who were playing the torturers and devils, had much fun and food and drink, and ate well and drank to each other, and I myself had nothing. For this reason I certainly don't want to play Christ ever again. But if it pleases your worships, I will gladly play a devil, so that I can have fun and eat and drink and do lots of bad things as those others did last year." Lo, I believe there are many who behave in this way nowadays, for they will not do penance for their sins nor suffer any tribulation for the love of God and the salvation of their soul, but want to have fun and rich and dainty food and drink and practice all the deadly sins. (281-2)

Although Wenzel quotes Alexandra Johnston who explains that "a Corpus Christi play" is not necessarily identical with the mystery cycles, he connects the two sermons to one another and sees them as related to a large phenomenon of plays and games that either occurred on or around Corpus Christi day, or that were in fact early versions of the mystery cycles (282-3).

[61] I am not sure if the meaning of "haliday" is closer to "holy-day" or to the more recreational holiday. However, the Corpus Christi celebration that in York was for a long

time directly connected with the performance of the Corpus Christi cycle was a religious event that combined both meanings of the term.

[62] "Is the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* a Lollard Tract," 9.

[63] See Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) especially the sections "The Feast's Arrival in England," (199-204) and "Corpus Christi Drama," (271-87).

[64] "Dialogue between Jesus and the B.V. at the Cross," from a Commonplace Book, dated 1372, in Carleton Brown, ed. *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), 85-6; Emphasis added, translation mine. On the details and suggested origin of this poem see Brown's "Introduction," especially pages xvi-xx:

> One of the most important collections of religious lyrics is that preserved in John Grimestone's Commonplace Book (Advocates MS. 18. 7. 21). At the end of the Table of Contents (fol. 9 b) the compiler has recorded his name and the date of the compilation: "Orate pro anima fratris Iohannis de Grimistone qui scripsit istum librum cum magna solicitudine Anno domini 1372. Aue maria pro anima sua pro amore dei." (xvi)

The name Grimestone as well as other details Brown mentions such as the fact that "the compiler states that he was friar, and the contents of the book show that he belonged to the Franciscan order" (xvi) lead him to suggest a Yorkshire origin of these lyrics: "Too much reliance, of course, should not be placed on evidence of this kind: friars migrated from convent to convent, so that even if we could establish the Yorkshire origin of Brothers John and Nicholas [Grimestone] it would not fix the home of the book. Nevertheless, the district toward which these family names point agrees fairly well with the dialect of the Grimestone lyrics, which is that of the northern border of the East Midlands." (xviii)

I mention all these details in order to establish a connection between this lyric, the "somer*game*" described above, and the *ToMP*, which all seem to have been written in the late fourteenth century and in the northern shires of England. For a brief introduction to the contexts of such religious lyrics, see Evelyn Birge Vitz's "The Liturgy and Vernacular Literature," in Thomas J. Heffernan and E. Ann Matter, ed., *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church* (Mich. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institue Publications, 2001), 551-618; particularly 568-75.

[65] *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century*, 266-7.

[66] *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Sherman M, Kuhn (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1963).

[67] Willmar Sauter, *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 11.

[68] One of Clopper's reasons not to relate activities such as the "somergame" described above to the mystery plays is the recording in the exemplum that the participants ate and drank during the performance. In this play, for example, we have indications of what might have once been excessive behavior that included drinking during performance. Similarly, in the City Chamberlain's Rolls from 1396 the following expenses on the feast of Corpus Christi are listed: "And for the players, 15s 4d. And for bread, beer, wine, and meat, and faggots for the mayor and the honourable men during the day at the play, 18s 8d." suggesting, I think, that food and drinks were a significant part of the festivity and closely related to the performances. *REED: York* 9/695.

[69] In the next chapter, where I discuss my own analysis of the *ToMP*, I elaborate on the meanings and importance of the biblical references to "playing" (*ludere*) that are given in the second part of the *ToMP* and their relation to the text's ideology. There is however one reference that is particularly relevant and applicable to the very idea of mocking Christ in performance. The *ToMP* compares playing the passion of Christ to the biblical story of Elisha in which children "mocked him and said unto him: 'Go up, thou baldhead; go up, thou balhead.' And he looked behind him and saw them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tore forty and two children of them." (2 Kings 2: 23-24) Based on this event the *ToMP* explains and warns:

> But, frend, peraventur yee seyen that no man schal make you to byleven that it is good to pleyen the passion of Crist and othere dedis of him. But here agenus herith how whanne Helise steyede up into Bethel, children pleyingly coming agenus him seiden, "Steye up ballard! Steye up ballard!" And therfore he cursed hem, and two bores of the wyilde wode al totoren of hem, two and fourty children. And, as alle seintis seyen, the balledness of Helisee betokeneth the passion of Crist, than sithen by this storye is opynly schewid that men schulden not bourden with the figure of the passion of Crist ne with an holy prophete of Crist, mych more in the Newe Testament. [But friend, you say that no man shall make you believe but that it is good to play the passion of Christ and other of his deeds. But here again hear how when Elisha went up into Bethel, children playing came towards him saying: "Go up, baldhead! Go up, baldhead!" And therefore he cursed them, and two bears of the wild wood tore them apart, forty-two children. And as all the saints say, the baldness of Elisha signifies the Passion of Christ, so since this story openly/clearly shows that men should not jest with the figure of the passion of Christ neither with a holy prophet of Christ, moreover in the New Testament.] (113, 674-85)

As in the other biblical examples of situations that involved "playing" and ended badly, the relation to performance is not the theatrical meaning of "play" as enactment, but rather the entire event, that here, like in the late medieval games and plays, included mocking and deriding Elisha/Christ in a playful manner.

[70] Richard Beadle and Pamela M. King, *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 138; emphasis added. This, of course,

is another example of how lay violent customs and elements of performative popular culture filtered into the religiosity of the "devotional drama," similarly to the examples I gave before regarding the *Noah Plays* and the *Crucifixion Play*.

[71] Clopper, "Is the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* a Lollard Tract," 7. See also G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 510.

[72] Beyond the dramatization of performing real miracles in *The Transfiguration* and mocking Christ for not performing them in *Christ before Annas and Caiaphas* both plays are full of terms that also dominate the *ToMP* such as synonymously interchanging "werk" with "sign" and "meruayle" (miracle).

[73] *REED: York*, 19/705.

[74] Ibid., 21/706.

[75] Clifford Davidson, *From Creation to Doom: The York Cycle of Mystery Plays* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1984), 86.

[76] "The Proclamation," *The N-Town Play*, Cotton MS Vespasian D. 8, ed. Stephen Spector, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Translation mine.

[77] Ibid. In her essay "Preaching and Medieval English Drama" Marianne G. Briscoe discusses the potential relations between the clergy and the late medieval religious drama. She argues that although the evidence suggests close relations "each case must be examined carefully." Her example that supposedly problematizes this relationship rests on the traditional meaning of game: "For instance, in 1244 Bishop Robert Grosseteste complained of clergy who 'make' miracle and May plays. But Grosseteste's term 'play,' or 'ludus,' most probably means 'game' and does not refer to drama at all." *Contexts for Early English Drama*, 152. This is the approach that indeed guides Clopper's reading of the *ToMP*, and yet, as I have shown the word "game" can also specifically denote plays such as the mystery cycles.

[78] Jody Enders, *Death by Drama and Other Medieval Urban Legends* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 55. The story about the performance of the Passion on Metz's Place en Change in 1437, in which Father Nicholas de Neuchâtel-en-Lorraine played Christ and supposedly almost died himself is recorded in the *Chronique de Phillipe de Vigneulles*. See Enders's note 2 on page 258 and her "Works Cited" (294) for the full reference.

[79] Enders 66. Original emphasis.

[80] When Elijah describes his current existence among the dead he ends his speech with an anticipated happening of the future:

| | |
|---|---|
| But quyk schall we come | But quickly we shall soon come |

| | |
|---|---|
| With *Antecrist* for to fyght, | To fight With *Antichrist* |
| Beffore e *day of dome.* | Before the *day of doom.* |
| (195, 118-20) | (162) |

This prediction is very interesting in the context of the *ToMP*. One of the reasons Clopper gives to prove that the *ToMP* is not related to the mystery cycles is based on the fact that it specifically condemns people who play a play of Antichrist: "So thanne thes men that seyen, 'Pley we a pley of Anticrist and of the Day of Dome that sum man may be convertid therby,'" (101-2; 295-6) Clopper argues that the reference to the "play of Antichrist" in the *ToMP* "is a piece of negative evidence [because] there is only one extant Antichrist play in civic religious drama, that at Chester, and it is probable that this play is to be dated to the end of the fifteenth or to the sixteenth century. There is no Antichrist play in the York cycle, nor is there any evidence that there ever was one" (*Drama, Play, and Game*, 87). I do not suggest that Elijah's lines in the play are "evidence" of the existence of an Antichrist play that perhaps at an early stage was part of the York cycle, and yet the mentioning of a future fight with Antichrist before the day of doom as these two events are joined in the *ToMP* is intriguing. Moreover, in many plays in the cycle characters refer to events that according to the Bible are about to take place in the future thus also preparing the audience for other plays and episodes that are about to arrive. A charming example of such metatheatrical connections between different plays is recorded in the final lines of the Woolpackers and Woolbrokers' *Supper at Emmaus*:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 Perigrinus | 1 Pilgrim |
| Here may we noute melle | Let us not dwell anymore |
| more at this tyde | on this now |
| For prossesse of plaies that precis in plight | For the procession of plays is on its way |
| He bringe to his blisse on euery ilke side, | May he bring you to bliss on every side |
| That sofferayne lorde that most is of myght. | That sovereign lord that most is of might. |
| (365, 191-4) | |

Perhaps, therefore, the lines about Antichrist are an indication of such an episode.

[81] For a discussion of a different context of "performing miracles" as a religious practice see C. Clifford Flanigan, Kathleen Ashley, and Pamela Sheingorn's "Liturgy as Social Performance: Expanding the Definitions," in *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, 695-714. The authors discuss miracles performed in the Church as described in the *Book of Sainte Foy's Miracles*, "an eleventh-century compilation of miracle stories centering on the Benedictine monastery at Conques" (699). I do not suggest that these performative events are connected to late medieval religious drama or to the *ToMP*, although such "miracle" performances as the one "about a woman named Avigerna who had appropriated a ring promised to Sainte Foy, which then became stuck on her finger" (713) included "comic and grotesque elements" (714) and despite those "the action takes place in sacred space and is interwoven with official liturgical practice, so that the story implies synthesis of, not disjuncture between, 'sacred' and 'mundane.'" (714) This is the kind of complexity I attribute to such concepts as they appear in the *ToMP*.

[82] *Drama, Play, and Game*, 75 n. 35.

[83] Ibid., 75, (emphasis added).

[84] See the next chapter for a detailed analysis of these instances as well as note 68 above.

[85] *Drama, Play, and Game*, 75-6.

[86] Claire Sponsler, "Mischievous Governance: The Unruly Bodies of Morality Plays," *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods, and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 77.

[87] *Drama, Play, and Game*, 75.

[88] Ibid., 76.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Enders, *Death by Drama*, 11.

# Chapter 3

## Concepts of Performance in the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*

Having established the relevance of the *ToMP* to the understanding of performative sources that shaped devotional drama such as the civic mystery plays (particularly "games" and liturgical drama), I move on in this chapter to discuss performance theory in the text. Although the *ToMP* strongly objects to the performance of "miraclis" and therefore seems primarily to be taking an ethical stance, I am convinced that it is part of a much larger discourse that underlies the performance of religious theatre and that included the negotiation of aesthetic concepts. By aesthetic concepts I mean, for example, questions such as: how does the performance relate to the audience? What are the means of performance that create an effective experience? What are the specific performative needs of "religious theatre"? And most specifically in the context of this dissertation, how does such theatre conceive of actor/character dialectics in the particular case of late medieval culture? That is, how is the very place that actors *stand in* in this kind of theatre regarded by their contemporaries? Identifying these concerns in the text is highly significant not only in order to demonstrate the existence of an aesthetic performance discourse, but also in order to articulate aesthetic attitudes that typify the late medieval theatre and that may be relevant to religious theatre in general.

It seems to me that the religious raison d'être of late medieval culture has been taken as such an obvious factor of its theatre that the discussion of performance aesthetics is regarded as secondary to the social and devotional goals that supposedly "use" art in "only" a "functional" manner. The traditional scholarly emphasis on the didactic nature

of this theatre and on its "unprofessional" producers implies a dismissal of its artistic quality and therefore a dismissal of the existence of its underlying aesthetic theory. However, not only is didactic theatre built on the foundations of an aesthetic (as, for example, twentieth-century propaganda theatre easily demonstrates), but also, as the *ToMP* clearly argues, once religious themes enter the *playground* of theatre and performance, "disinterested" elements other than religious ideology such as aesthetics and exploration of cultural identities also enter. The *ToMP* is a significant document for examining this aspect of the late medieval theatre.

In the following pages I suggest that the text implies at least four concepts of performance that are central characteristics of the vernacular mystery plays and that also indicate the performative interest of the religious theatre in purposefully differentiating between the actor and the role. This differentiation posits the actor as a mediator who connects spectators with the holy characters and simultaneously performatively maintains his own identity as distinct from the character (mainly because of the character's holiness and remoteness on the one hand and the actor's shared identity with the audience members on the other). This evokes a complex and double message that includes the story being told but that also enables a performative expression of the community's present existence and concerns. Accordingly, the first concept of performance I discuss in the *ToMP*—"contrariety and simultaneity"—is relevant specifically to this idea of the actor as a mediator, or more precisely, to the double voice that is heard through his enactment. I suggest that "contrariety and simultaneity" best typify the acting concept that dominated the enactment of religious characters and that the doubleness it creates is exactly what disturbs the writers of the text. Demonstrating that the *ToMP* indeed

characterizes religious theatre as a "contrary" situation leads me to discuss the second concept of performance that is very central to the text and which deals with the idea that such performances are merely signs and therefore "unreal." Under the heading "Performance and Signification" I examine the *ToMP*'s attitude regarding efficacy and the "real" devotional potential of religious theatre. This leads me to the third concept where I look at the text's problematization of this theatre's emotional appeal and effect, and finally I discuss the text's attitude to the religious theatre as a communal enterprise. Before I discuss these four concepts, I outline the *ToMP*'s structure.

**Structure**

The *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* is composed of two main parts—lines 1-385 and lines 386-749. It has not been established whether both parts were written by the same author or not, but I tend to agree with Clopper that they were. There are two main reasons for my assumption. First, although the text is divided into two, I suggest that structurally it is in fact composed of four main parts that form a complete argument against "miraclis pleyinge": 1. Lines 1-146, a general introduction and objection to "miraclis pleyinge" or "pleyinge miraclis." In this part the writer establishes the realness of the original deeds and "werkis" of Christ as opposed to the undesirable and forbidden action of "bourding" with them. 2. Lines 147-385, in which the writer quotes six reasons in favor of "miraclis pleyinge" and then gives six detailed answers of his own in order to refute them. 3. Lines 386-673 (first and main section of the second part), in which the writer assumes that the text has not been convincing enough to this point, and therefore turns to a "half frynde" and gives four different cases from the Old Testament that serve as figurative examples

of why playing with God and/or his deeds is bad. Admittedly in a way this section repeats the argument of the opening section, but whereas the first part deals mainly with the meaning and significance of God's miracles and deeds and with his dominance over the people, in the third part of the *ToMP* the writer specifically focuses on the concept of "play." 4. Lines 674-749, a concluding section that envisions an apocalyptic end to a society that clings to playing and bodily pleasure rather than "now on dayees leven pleyinge and given hem more to ernestful werkis, plesaunt to God" [nowadays leaving playing and giving themselves more to earnest deeds, pleasant to God] (114, 705-6). The different emphasis in each part as well as the way the entire text builds up toward a strong conclusion unifies the text.

The second reason that I think both parts form a unified text written by the same author also has to do with the sense of closure and completeness of the whole piece. Toward the very end of the text the writer goes back precisely to the same metaphor that appeared at the outset—a nail that holds two things together, which is compared to the dread of the believer that "holdith and susteinith oure bileve to him" (94, 37-9). And at the end of the *ToMP*:

> And therfore, dere frend, spende we nouther oure wittis ne oure money aboute miraclis pleying, but in doinge hem in dede, in grette drede and penaunce, for sikir the weping and the fleyshly devocion in hem ben but as strokis of han hamer on either side to drive out the nail of oure drede in God and of the day of dome, and to maken the weye of Crist slidir and hevy to us, as rein on erthe and cley weies. [And therefore, dear friend, we should spend neither our wits nor our money on miraclis pleyinge, but rather in really doing deeds, in great dread and penance, for surely the weeping and the fleshly devotion that are part of miraclis playinge are only *as strikes of a hammer on the other side to drive out the nail of*

> *our dread in God and of the day of doom*, and to make the way of Christ slippery and heavy for us, as rain on earth and clay roads.] (114, 717-24) emphasis added.

Significantly, although the author repeats the same metaphor, thus reconnecting the text's readers with its beginning, this time he uses the visual image of a hammer and a nail in a way opposite to that in which he used it at the outset, thus evoking a sense of completeness, of coming full circle. At the beginning of the text the author claims that "miraclis pleyinge" is bad because it takes away dread, which like a nail holds believers close to God. But in the second appearance of this metaphor, and after he has expanded on the corruptive nature of "miraclis pleyinge" he compares it to hammering the nail from the other side, thus driving out the dread of God. This is a very powerful image—central to Christian iconography because of the visual and emotional associations tied with nailing Jesus to the cross—that concisely summarizes the main ideology and argument of the text: there should be no *space* between the nail and what it holds together, and performances such as "miraclis" are exactly what create such space. Once the space is opened it is very hard to close it again, and here the author uses another evocative visual image: the Christian road, i.e. the Christian way of life becomes slippery and muddy like the road on a rainy day. This image, although contextualized negatively, characterizes performance very much like contemporary definitions of the term as a liminal space, one that is hard to define, and above of all one that does not have strict borders. Whether or not the same author composed the two parts of the text, they share the same ideology against "miraclis pleyinge," and as I have shown they demonstrate the same rhetoric. Therefore, in my analysis of the four concepts of performance that follows I treat the text as a whole unit.

## "As the Voice of Crist and the Voice of the Flyesh ben of Two Contrarious Lordis": Contrariety and Simultaneity

From my discussion of the relations between the *ToMP* and the aesthetic ideology and practice of the late medieval religious vernacular theatre in the previous chapter it becomes clear that one of this theatre's central tenets was the simultaneous and parallel positioning of different ontological levels during performance. Most notably, I refer to the interplay between religious texts and context on the one hand and earthly folklore, playfulness, and negotiations of late medieval social identities on the other. Moreover, the late medieval religious theatre is a unique example in Western theatre history in its comfortable inclusion of the highest and most sacred and metaphysical themes along with a society's most mundane and concrete concerns. Combining farce with elevated poetry surely became, for example, one characteristic of Shakespeare's theatre. But beyond the fact that the roots of Elizabethan drama and performance can be traced in the medieval theatre, the *religious* characteristic of the medieval theatre has performative implications that by far exceed a mixture of genres. Distinctly from religious pictorial art (painting or sculpture) the agency of the actor in the theatrical medium, who is present as the performance takes place (as opposed to a painter who is physically absent from a spectator's experience of viewing a painting), cannot be overlooked or ignored. An image of Christ in a painting does not constantly refer to the *artist*, whereas the situation of

acting constantly does, at the expense, it could be argued, of focusing solely on Christ or any other sacred character, which is the primary goal of devotional theatre.[1]

In this sense it is appropriate to compare the actor in the religious theatre to a preacher, who also mediates between an audience and the message he takes upon himself to transmit performatively.[2] And yet there are significant differences between the two when considering the complex appeal of the late medieval religious vernacular theatre. Erick Kelemen's view of the *ToMP* is highly illuminating from this perspective. He discusses the theoretical stance of the text as aiming to differentiate between preaching (which is good) and acting in the theatre (which is bad) because of the former's efficacy in converting the people as opposed to the supposed failure of theatre at such a task. Evidence in the *ToMP* itself of such a discourse can be found in lines such as:

> For siche pleyinge men as myche honoryn (or more than) the word of God whanne it is prechid, and therfore blasfemely they seyen that siche pleyinge doith more good than the word of God whanne it is prechid to the puple." [For men honor such playing as much as (or more than) the word of God when it is preached, and therefore they blasphemously say that such playing does more good to the people than the word of God when it is preached.] (111-2, 629-33)

Referring to the performativity of preaching that is based on the technique of "quoting"—a central characteristic of epic acting[3]—Kelemen suggests that

> [Q]uotation is itself a kind of mimesis, a performance of the quoted speaker by the speaker who quotes. As such, quotation indexes not only the permeable boundaries among text but also among speakers, adding metaphysical worries about presence to the mix of issues in the *Tretise*'s theory of drama and preaching. In direct quotation one both speaks as another and allows another to

> speak *through* one. The former paradigm equates quotation with a kind of mimesis in which a frame of discourse securely distinguishes the "two" speaking subjects as separate, but the latter paradigm indicates how this mimesis also implicates the one who quotes in complex and contradictory relationships with the quoted, an intersubjectivity that can be difficult to untangle. In quotation one allows another's voice to inhabit one's own. Quotation is a surrender of control that paradoxically requires a kind of self mastery, folding the speaker into an identificatory process in which the boundaries of the self and other are momentarily unclear.[4]

Kelemen sees the preacher as a performer who jumps out of his secure professional identity into that of a character about which he is telling a story, performing what Briscoe terms "sacred oratory."[5] This is quite similar to the performative situation of the actor, and yet there is a significant difference: whereas the preacher maintains during the performance his authorial identity as a religious person, the actor's own identity as opposed to the character is his mere self. This self, especially in "non-professional" theatre where the performers are not identified as "actors" (as in Shakespeare's parodical "mechanicals"), is very much the same as the selves of the audience members. Thus a performer in the religious theatre is inherently contrary: he simultaneously is present as an enactor of the most sacred and spiritual characters and physically there in his own fleshly existence. Moreover, differently from the preacher's performative situation that belongs to a religiously restricted context, in the theatre of the mystery plays, which, as I have demonstrated, was nurtured by unruly and pagan games and rituals no less than by liturgical drama, the performer's contrariety combines the maximum degree of "high" and "low" (elevated and popular) culture.

Thus, the performative concept of conjoining "high" and "low" culture into one is ultimately brought together in the very body of the performer. A performer in the mystery plays both *plays* in the "Huizingian" sense of performance and simultaneously stands in for and therefore *plays* the most sacred and foundational characters and ideas of his own culture. The spectators, similarly, participate in an event that is first based on fun related to the present (recall how much the "tormentors" in the "somergame" enjoy themselves simply because they eat and drink), and simultaneously it is an event through which they experience the abstract and eternal truths on which their lives are based. Whereas this doubleness might seem perfectly reasonable to the creators of medieval theatre as well as to a contemporary theatergoer, one can understand why from a certain religious point of view, such as that of the *ToMP*, this duality might seem problematic.

Aesthetically, from the perspective of actor/character dialectics it is the co-presence of both as a simultaneous and contrary stage persona that enables both festive celebration and even theatrical transgression of contemporary identities *as well as* maintaining the distance and fixedness of the holy characters being represented. In other words, I suggest that the dramaturgy, staging, and concepts of acting in this religious theatre were the outcome of an aesthetic manipulation of the ever-existing tension between performer and character. This phenomenon of a deliberate double, simultaneous, or contrary performative appeal has echoes in almost every aspect of late medieval drama and performance (i.e. the use of the theological code of figuration *and* of textual and performative anachronisms; the concept of dramatic space that enabled a paradoxical theatrical inclusion of heaven and hell within the world and on the streets of the city as well as performance of time that comfortably absorbed the future within the present; the

spatial tension between the pageant wagons as "iconic sites" and the streets as platea;[6] the use of masks and of crossdressing; performative paradoxes for ethical and religious reasons, such as the representation of nudity (Adam, Eve, Christ) created a situation where "post-lapsarian shameful bodies" represented, for example, the "perfect body of Jesus Christ";[7] the fact that many actors played the same role; and so on).

In addition, the aesthetic implication of simultaneity and contrariety, as is clear in medieval pictorial arts, is that almost any concept overtly signifies its other, its "negative." Contrariety, as an aesthetic concept, posits two (or more) elements each dialectically and hierarchically reflecting and signifying the other and not trying to conceal each other. Vice and virtue, life and death, heaven and hell, good and bad, right and left, male and female, etc. are all presented simultaneously. Unlike in other hierarchical binaries in which only the dominant part is present while its other is nullified, in medieval thought and aesthetics—not by any means less conceptually hierarchical—the other is almost always symmetrically and overtly present. Any given image or concept becomes complete only by its co-existence with its other.[8] I suggest that actor/character dialectics were conceptualized similarly as part of the same aesthetic discourse that governed the different arts, as well as for the performative reasons discussed above.

However, whereas juxtaposing two contrary images on stage or in a painting clearly and overtly differentiates between the two, acting is a much more liminal situation because there cannot be a physical separation between the actor and the character, unless, for example, by the use of masks that simultaneously reveal the face of the performer and that of the character.[9] In addition, this convention of duality, simultaneity, and contrariety

was surely further complicated wherever the performance of the character of Christ was considered, since, as Ellen M. Ross emphasizes, "a fundamental affirmation of Jesus Christ's humanity *and* divinity undergirds the plays."[10] This observation, which Ross uses as a point of departure for a textual analysis of this theological concept in the York and N-Town cycles, creates, I think, an extremely complex, almost impossible situation from the point of view of acting and performance. Whereas the question of performing the character of God the Father was conventionally solved as he was sometimes represented in the words of Pamela Sheingorn "with environmental realism as a kind of superpope,"[11] the performance of the character of Christ is more problematic. Although from a theatrical point of view his humanity seemingly makes it easier for a human being to enact him—which led, I believe, to scenes that demanded the performers to display and endure extreme physical effort, pain, and suffering—the question is, what happens to his divinity? And how do we know whether this was a question at all?

In the first section of the *ToMP* there are a few lines, which I have found no analyses of, and which I believe are extremely relevant to this very question in that they problematize the performance and/or reception of the enactment of religious subjects as a simultaneous and contrary situation:

> And sithen no man may serven two lordis togydere, as seith Crist in his gospel,[12] no man may heren *at onys* efectuely the voice of oure maister Crist and of his owne lustis. And sithen miraclis pleyinge is of the lustis of the fleyssh and mirthe of the body, no man may efectuely heeren hem and the voice of Crist *at onys*, as the voice of Crist and the voice of the fleysh ben of two contrarious lordis. [And since no man can serve two lords together, as Christ says in his gospel, no man can hear at once effectually the voice of our master Christ and of his own lust.

> And since miraclis pleyinge belongs to the lust of the flesh and mirth of the body, no man can effectually hear himself and the voice of Christ at once, because the voice of Christ and the voice of the flesh belong to two contrary lords.] (96; 109-15)

The importance of these lines in relation to medieval religious theatre cannot be overlooked. They straightforwardly mark and characterize the performances under attack as ones that claim to offer a simultaneous experience, viewed by the *ToMP* as a contrary one. These lines focus on and criticize people who *hear* or claim to hear the "voice of Christ" but who in fact do not hear him because they are attentive only the fleshly "voice" that is occupied with the "mirth of the body." Significantly, from this argument it can be deduced that supporters of "miraclis pleyinge" did not object to such a simultaneous performative process, as indeed the fifth reason quoted in favor of the performances implies:

> Also summe recreacion men moten han, and bettere it is (or lesse yvele) that they han theire recreacion by pleyinge of miraclis than by pleyinge of other japis. [Also men must have some recreation, and it is better (or less evil) that they have their recreation by playing miracles than by playing other jokes/tricks.] (98, 176-8)

However, the standpoint of the *ToMP* is that the voice of Christ cannot be heard in such a performance because of the audience member's focus on the voice of his/her own pleasures. In other words, although the "miraclis" claim to sound the voice of Christ, it is in fact not present in them.

The text's differentiation between the voice of Christ and that of the flesh is very reminiscent of the typical medieval dichotomy between the body and the soul which, as I discuss below, is also central to the *ToMP*'s arguments against "playing" based on biblical references. On a metaphorical level the body or the flesh are the earthly pleasures of the participants in "miraclis pleyinge," whereas the soul is the abstract and spiritual "voice of Christ" that is allegedly conveyed through these performances. I would suggest, however, that the text's emphasis on the flesh or the body could also be relevant on a more literal level of interpretation, regarding the very body and voice of an actor in performance. I raise this option because of the final line that creates an ontological parallelism between Christ and "the flesh" who are compared to "two lordis" who use their voice to claim presence and authority.

Even if these sentences refer to spectators only and are written metaphorically,[13] I think that we find in them significant evidence of theoretical awareness of the complexity of the performative situation of representing Christ or religious *subjects* in general. This passage establishes the idea that performance was recognized as multi-channeled and that at least for the *ToMP* author this was not a desired situation. Since the paragraph builds such a strict parallelism between the *voices* of "Christ" and "the flesh" within the specific context of "miraclis pleyinge" I think that it can be argued that the idea of playing Christ is at least invoked. The argument that stands behind these lines also establishes that "miraclis pleyinge" cannot be viewed merely as unruly and subversive games because of the explicit intention mentioned here to sound the "voice of Christ" while simultaneously enabling spectators to have fun. This then, gives us a very different picture of the concept of "devotional theatre" as performances that were supposedly similar to liturgical drama

in that clearly devotionality was not the only effect sought after. Finally, if the actor in the role of Christ is the literal producer of both "voices," he becomes the most concentrated locus of the *ToMP*'s argument and he is thus defined as a simultaneous and contrary figure.

Let us now examine the meaning of this paragraph in relation to the whole text and to the performance of religious theatre in general. The paragraph opens with a metaphor of a master and a servant that, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, is used frequently in the *ToMP*. The argument is clear: no one can (or should) serve two masters ("lordis") simultaneously ("at onys"). The two "lordis" in the opening metaphor refer to the double goal that "miraclis pleyinge" either aims to achieve or achieves de facto: devotion and recreation or self-indulgence (how reminiscent of Horace's famous dictum according to which poetry should teach *and* delight). This argument against simultaneity and doubleness, which is also characterized as contrariety, or one could say against the *dialogic* nature of theatre,[14] is highly significant for identifying concepts of performance in the text. In this expository section the author articulates this central and essential characteristic of theatrical performance—its complex and multi-channeled appeal. In this sense the *ToMP* itself negates Clopper's dichotomy between unruly games and "devotional theatre" as it lucidly delineates the impossibility of focusing solely and ultimately on the "voice" of Christ when he is *reenacted*—whatever the performative context is. The *ToMP* rigidly calls for a monologic situation in which meditation on Christ is not disrupted by a mediator—whether that be the enjoyment spectators gain out of the performances or the very doubleness that occurs by enacting Christ. The author's criticism and quest for a unified and single "lord" or "voice" fit very well with Sarah

Beckwith's analysis of the ideological changes regarding mysticism that were happening around the same period because of the growth of vernacular language, changes that are also relevant to religious vernacular theatre:

> It matters little to the expressive spirit what language it speaks, for the language is the mere vehicle of its message. And it matters little that the mystical text, like any other text, is dialogic, because it was thought to be the monologue, the *one voice* of God Himself. But in fact the increasing use of the vernacular has a crucial effect, a simple but powerful one, for it means precisely that there is a renewed attention to the way that language actually affects what is being expressed. And once this relationship is acknowledged, the monolithic claims to speak for an oracular authority become markedly less convincing.[15]

The use of the vernacular that draws attention to the language itself, to the *mediator* of the text, image, or idea, can be compared to the function of performance or of the performer as transmitters that interfere by "fleshly" means with the abstract voice of Christ. Both phenomena not only turn the holy into something tangible and reachable, which is a central claim in the *ToMP* against "miraclis pleyinge" in general—reconsider the servant who becomes too familiar with his master and therefore "drives out the nail of dread"—but they also divest the holy of its definition as sui generis.

A straightforward reading of the lines from the *ToMP* quoted above suggests that its criticism is indeed addressed to the impossibility of combining play and bodily pleasure with religious seriousness. This is because one cannot *hear* his/her own bodily voice and that of Christ's. However, the final line of the paragraph, quoted as the heading of this section—"as the voice of Crist and the voice of the fleysh ben of two contrarious lordis"—creates a methodological equality between Christ and "the flesh." If we

understand "the flesh" to mean a human being and if we consider the literal meaning of "voice" as the sound and words expressed by one, could this line be implying the performer? He who uses his own fleshly voice through which he sounds Christ's? This dialogic mechanism, which is at the basis of any theatrical performance, might have been contested by the author of the *ToMP* because it creates an "at onys" situation that is "contrarious." I cannot prove that these lines refer to performers beyond the interpretation I have suggested. And yet even if these lines focus merely on the spectatorial experience and on the incompatibility of the enactment of sacred themes with bodily festive enjoyment, the text's emphasis and repetition of terminology that is so inherently theatrical—"voice" and "flesh" (body)—indicate awareness of the double being of the performer, if only for the reason that the performers themselves heard their own voices as they spoke the words of Christ and were involved in the same social and communal goals as the spectators. From this perspective I recall Erick Kelemen's observation quoted above about a preacher who "demonstrates" a character's actions, jumping in and out of his identity as preacher but constantly maintaining it, as opposed to a performer in the religious theatre who during performance inevitably hears "at onys" his own voice and that of Christ.[16] In addition, a bit later on in the *ToMP* priests are warned not to be "miracle players" and also not to participate as spectators, demonstrating, I think, awareness of the significance of the performer's role:

> And therfore to pristis it is uttirly forbedyn not only to been miracle pleyere, but also to heren or to seen miraclis pleyinge lest he that shulde been the ginne of God to cacchen men and to holden men in the bileve of Crist. [And therefore to priests it is utterly forbidden not only to be a miracle player, but also to hear or to see

> miraclis pleyinge; especially he that should be a tool of God to catch men and to hold men in the believing of Christ.] (99, 211-14)

Moreover, the text repeats again and again that the very playing of or with Christ's life, death, and miracles reduces the honor he deserves because it turns his divinity into something earthly. Particularly illuminating is the comparison between Christ and one's own father. The writer says that just as one would not put on a play of his own father's death and suffering this obviously should be forbidden in the case of God:

> For if thou haddist had a fadir that hadde suffred a dispitouse deth to geten thee thin heritage, and thou therafter woldest *so lightly* hern it to make therof a pley to the and to alle the puple, no dowte but that alle gode men wolden denien the unkinde, miche more God and alle his seintes denien alle tho cristen men unkinde that pleyen or favouren the pley *of the deth* or of the miracles of ther most kinde fadir Crist that diede and wroughte miraclis to bringen men to the everelastande heretage of hevene. [For if you had a father who had suffered a cruel death to get you your heritage, and thereafter you would *so lightly* take it to make a play out of it for you and for all the people, doubtless all good men would deny you as unkind, much more God and all his saints deny all those unkind Christian men that play or favor the play *of the death* or of the miracles of their most kind father Christ that died and wrought miracles to bring men to the everlasting heritage of heaven.] (106, 432-41)

This comparison is interesting in relation to the concept of contrariety because it suggests that performance is not the appropriate site for mourning about something or someone one really cares about. Just as people mourn about their own fathers in the specific rituals created for this purpose so should be the case with their godly father. Theatrical performance, in other words, is an a-priori contrary situation from the viewpoint of the

*ToMP*'s author because it is not an ultimately focused event, but rather one in which people behave lightly, are concerned about themselves, and in which interest in the flesh prevails over interest in the spirit. From the angle of performance studies, articulating the idea that a performance can become, or even is, a social site for mourning *and* joy simultaneously, by means of an aesthetic experience, is one of the most fundamental characteristics of this elusive category.

The contrariety between the "voice of Christ" and that of the "flesh" from the telling paragraph quoted above is reinforced in the second part of the *ToMP*. In this part the author gives several examples from the Old Testament that "prove" the destructiveness of playing ("ludere" in the Vulgate), two of which emphasize the ultimate contrariety between the spirit and the flesh. The first example is based on the biblical instance of Ishmael (flesh) who played with / laughed at Isaac (spirit):

> And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham mocking/playing. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. (Genesis 21:9-10)

The *ToMP* discusses the implications of this instance at length (lines 461-544) and repeatedly emphasizes the dichotomy between Ishmael and Isaac, who prefigure the war between the flesh and the spirit. The argument is:

> [T]han pleyinge that is fleschely with the werkis of the spirit is to harming of ever either, and most schal the fleysh hurtyn the spirit, as in suche pleyinge the fleysh is most meintenyd and the spirite lasse. And as in good thingis the figuride is evermore bettere than that that is figure, so in yvel thingis that that is figurid is fer

> werse than the figure; than sithen the plaeyinge of Ismael with Isaac is figure of the pleyinge of the fleysh with the spirit, and the ton is yvel, thanne fer werse is the tother. [Fleshly playing with the works of the spirit is harmful to both, and mostly shall the flesh hurt the spirit because in such playing the flesh is more maintained and the spirit less. And as in good things the figured is always better than that which figures, so in evil things that which is figured is far worse than the figuring; then since the playing of Ismael with Isaac is figurative of the playing of the flesh with the spirit, and the first is evil, then far worse is the other.] (107-8, 490-8)[17]

But whereas scholars such as Jonas Barish regard the *ToMP*'s metaphor and those that follow as inexact allegories, I believe that the text is very consistent and specific in its choice of biblical examples. In spite of his negative attitude toward the *ToMP*'s rhetoric I think that Barish correctly interprets the specific use of the Isaac and Ishmael incident. He suggests that "the playing of the boys frightens Sara because it symbolizes an intimacy and a potential equality between the two which might one day imperil Isaac's inheritance."[18] It is true that the idea of "playing" is not invoked in any of the biblical examples to literally denote theatrical performance or impersonation but rather in order to characterize the liminal and "playful" arena that characterizes performance. Yet the idea expressed here that playing can dangerously bring together two parties that "should" be held apart corresponds exactly to the fear expressed in the *ToMP* that playing "with" God might make him too close and too familiar. This is closely relevant to the "competition" between the "voices" of Christ and of the "flesh" during performance, especially if they are sounded by the same person—a situation where they become closest. Dismissing the importance of the *ToMP* because it does not offer terminology that adheres to limited ideas of acting and narrow concepts of "play" misses one of the text's most valuable

contributions to our understanding of late medieval performance—the complex and intricate meanings of words and concepts that belong to the field of performance.

Similarly, in the second biblical example, concerning the war between the parties of Abner and Joab and the bloodshed that occurred, I think that the *ToMP* is very specific in its target. The biblical reference is:

> And Abner said to Joab, let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise. Then they arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which pertained to Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together; wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon. (2 Samuel 2: 14-16)

The literal reason to use this reference according to the *ToMP* is the outcome of a war between two contrary parties, as is the case with the spirit and the flesh:

> If this, frend, wil not suffisen to thee that the eyghen of the blind wite takun sighte, take hede how the pleyinge of two contrary partis togidere, as of the pleyinge of the childre of Abner and the childre of Joab weren thre hundrid men and sixty sleyn and mo, out of doute myche more harm doth pleyinge of gostly werkis after lustus of the fleysh as they ben more enemies. [If this, friend, is not enough for the eye of the blind to take sight, think how much harm was done by the playing of two contrary parties together, as the playing of the children of Abner and the children of Joab, wherein three hundred and sixty men and more were slain; doubtless the playing of spiritual werkis after/with lust of the flesh does much more harm, since they are greater enemies.] (109, 545-51)

Even on this literal level of interpretation the metaphor is clear and striking: combining the flesh and the spirit creates a dangerous situation. I do not think that the author of the *ToMP* necessarily had in mind the specific idea of an actor playing Christ, but the body of the performer is the ultimate site of inclusion/confrontation of flesh (actor) and spirit (Christ/character)—a situation viewed by the *ToMP* as dangerous. Beyond this, the biblical situation is one that starts with play (although this is a literal understanding of the Hebrew word "ישחקו" "yeshachaku" which in the biblical context can mean "quarrel") and ends with bloodshed, or in other words, this is a situation that gets out of control. As we have seen, many of the unruly games and episodes in the mystery plays include violence and have exactly this potential. Clearly the producers of the plays did not view this contrariety between "flesh" and "spirit" as dangerous in the same way that as the *ToMP* does—or they would not present the plays. However, that this issue is raised at all by the text suggests that it was part of the discourse about performance, and that enacting Christ in an arena other than the authorized religious ritual was problematic. Acknowledging the difference between flesh and spirit and actor and character is, I think, at the basis of an acting concept that deliberately performed this tension by a wide range of performative means.[19] This, however, does not contradict scenes that included extreme and total "realism," in which actors were required to physically embody Christ's sufferings, but rather it helps articulate the late medieval concept of acting, which, I suggest in Chapter 4, took place between the epic and the total. Finally, this is a central aesthetic and performative question that the *ToMP* raises.

## "Fals Wittnessenge" and "the Lcnesse of God": Performance, Signification, and Efficacy

Almost like the differences and tensions between contemporary definitions of performance as opposed to theatre, the *ToMP* repeatedly distinguishes between something that is real (in the sense that it really happened, such as Christ's life, death, and miracles) *and/or* that has the performative power to change a situation (for example, to convert people, as religious ritual and preaching can) and an action that is merely a sign or a signifier. "Miraclis pleyinge" is frequently defined in the text as no more than signs because the plays not only *use* the real, original, and "efectuel" (93, 22) miracles and works of God but also they "*misusith* oure byleve" (93, 29) by giving these miracles a new context, and even worse, a new purpose: play. For example:

> For Crist seith that folc of avoutrie sechen siche singnys as a lecchour sechith signes of verry love but no dedis of verry love. So sithen thise miraclis pleyinge ben onely singis love withoute dedis, they ben not onely contrarious to the worschipe of God—that is bothe in signe and in dede—but also they ben ginnus of the devvel to cacchen men to byleve of Anticrist, as wordis of love withoute verry dede ben ginnys of the lecchour to cacchen felawchipe to fulfillinge of his leccherie. [For Christ says that adulterous people seek such signs [plays] just as a dissolute person seeks signs of true love but does not seek deeds of true love. So since these miraclis pleyinge are only signs of love without deeds, they are not only contrary to the worship of God—that is both in sign and in deed—but also they are tools of the devil to catch men to believe in Antichrist, as words of love without true deeds are tools of the dissolute person to catch people to fulfill his dissolute ways.](99, 197-206)

And:

> For, as seith the gospel, "Not he that seith 'Lord, Lord, schal come to blisse of hevene, but he that doth the wille of the fadir of hevene schal come to his kindam." So myche more not he that *pleyith* the wille of God worschipith him, but onely he that doith his wille in deede worschipith him. Right therfore as men by *feinyd tokenes*, bygilen and in dede dispisen ther neighboris, so by siche *feinyd miraclis* men bygilen hemsilf and dispisen God, as the tormnetours that bobbiden Crist. [For, as the gospel says, "Not he that says 'Lord, Lord, shall come to bliss of heaven, but he that does the will of the father of heaven shall come to his kingdom." So much more not he that plays the will of God worships him, but only he that does his will in deed worships him. Therefore just as men by feigned tokens beguile and even despise their neighbors, by feigned miracles men beguile themselves and despise God, as did the tormentors that hit Christ.] (99-100, 221-29)

And perhaps one of the most important appearances of this idea in the text seems to me to suggest that because these plays are merely signs, and whatever happens in them either does not happen for real or is not taken seriously, people might think that concepts such as hell and punishment are unreal as well:

> And therfore many men wenen that ther is no helle of everlastinge peine, but that God doth but thretith us, not to do it in dede, as ben playinge of miraclis in signe and not in dede. [And therefore many men think that there is no hell of everlasting pain, but that God only threatens, not doing it for real, the way that the playing of miraclis is in sign and not for real.] (100, 255-58)

And in any case "ofte sithis the convertinge that men semen to ben convertid by siche pleyinge is but *feinyd holinesse*, worse than is othere sinne biforehande." [Often this

converting that men seem to be converted by such playing is but feigned holiness, worse than is other sin beforehand.] (102, 323-26) or, one more quotation along the same lines:

> And therfore as this *feinyd recreacioun* of pleyinge of miraclis is fals equite, so it is double shrewidnesse, worse than though they pleyiden pure vaniteis. For now the puple giveth credence to many mengid leesingis for othere mengid trewthis and maken wenen to been gode that is ful yvel, and so ofte sithis lasse yvele it were to pleyin rebaudye than to pleyin sich miriclis. [And therefore as this feigned recreation of playing of miracles is false equity, so it is double shrewedness, worse than if they played pure vanities. For now the people give *credibility to many mixed falsehoods for other mixed truths* and are made to think that something full of evil is good, and therefore it is less evil to play lies than to play such miracles.] (103-4, 357-63)

This final quotation problematizes the theatrical situation that because of its inherent mediative and representational characteristic does not and cannot *present* the one and ultimate truth, but rather a product that is "mixed." My understanding of this paragraph is that it implicitly talks about the ways that performance differs from the scriptural events. Whether or not the *ToMP* is related to plays such as the episodes of the mystery cycles, one of their most outstanding and essentially theatrical characteristics is that they not only add ideas and situations to the biblical stories but also they often alter the biblical viewpoint and even add voices that are not given in the original. A classic example is once again the York *Crucifixion Play* that is written and performed from the earthly viewpoint of the tormentors and not of Christ, or the dominance of Lucifer and his devils in the opening of the cycle, or Joseph in *Joseph's Trouble about Mary*, and so on. Surely in unruly games that were based on scriptural subjects there was even more room for

shifting viewpoints, which as the *ToMP* warns, create liminal space that is "mixed" and therefore potentially subversively enters and opens up the tight space created by "a nail smiten in holdith two thingis togidere." (94, 37-8) As Herbert Blau writes: "as soon as thought gets into performance, the central problem of drama becomes what is already intrinsic to theatre ... knowing what there *is* to be performed. ... The play's the thing, we used to say, as if we knew what the play was."[20] But *unlike* what Blau assumes in what he writes next: "Well, there was fairly good reason for that. There used to be a time, as with the Sacred, when we could go back to the Book and check our interpretation. The Text was the inseminating source to which we were to show fidelity, line perfect, deferring to the Author as if he were God the Father."[21] Blau of course does not refer specifically to medieval theatre or even to religious theatre but rather to a concept of performance that recognizes the centrality and existence of an author and an authorial voice that would have seemingly been helpful guidance in the process of directing a play. His invocation, however, of "the Sacred," "the Book," and "God the Father" is telling in regard to common attitudes to medieval theatre and performance. The assumption that religious or devotional theatre that is basically straightforwardly based on the Scriptures creates no space for interpretation, difference, and performative playfulness is obviously incorrect.

The idea of signs as opposed to realness and real deeds that the *ToMP* inscribes and emphasizes throughout has two interrelated meanings for the articulation and analysis of late medieval concepts of performance, just as it demonstrates that performing religious subjects—because of their unique ontological status—was problematic. First, whether or not the objection to "miraclis pleyinge" (since they are only signs) is a late medieval reworking of the Platonic rejection of mimesis,[22] the *ToMP*'s ideology suggests

that the product of "miraclis pleyinge," i.e., the *performance*, was acknowledged and conceptualized as an unreal event: not in the Baudrillardian sense that it "did not take place," but rather in the "Schechnerian" sense, because it was regarded as a *non-efficacious* event. In other words, in a way, the *ToMP* reworks the Platonist idea that has filtered through the centuries (according to which theatre is a false duplication of what is already a copy of the original "ideal"), but it does so not in order to claim that theatre is a "disinterested aesthetic object" or because it fails to depict an image in the "true likeness" of God, but rather because the text is interested in criticizing the performance's successful or unsuccessful (i.e., devotional) *effect* and results. It is particularly intriguing in this context that the author defines the spectatorial experience as "fals wittnessenge" (102, 318), and even the defenders of the plays themselves explain that those who participate in the performances

> see[inge] ferthermore that al this wordly being heer is but vanite for a while, *as is miraclis pleyinge*, wherthoru they leeven ther pride and taken to hem afterward the meke conversacion of Crist and of hise seintis. [see[ing] furthermore that all this worldly being here is but vanity for a while, *as is miraclis pleyinge*, as a consequence they abandon their pride and adopt the meek behavior of Christ and of his saints.] (97, 156-60)

The performance itself might be "vanite for a while," but the world it aims to represent—the life and death of Crist, or in semiotic terms, its signified—surely is not. This differentiation between signifier and signified that is at the basis of all theatre semiotics has a special twist in the case of religious theatre that represents holy themes and sacred figures, especially within a believing community. Whereas in conventional theatre the

performers (signifiers) are usually more real than the *fictional* world being enacted, in cases such as late medieval religious theatre, the characters and their "works" are uniquely considered to be at least as real as the performers if not more real. This is a paradoxical situation of representation, and according to the *ToMP* also a problematic one, because the "ghostly" is much more real and "everlasting" than the "fleshly."

Taking the "works" and life of Christ into the liminal arena of playing, where "people give credibility to many *mixed* falsehoods for other *mixed* truths" leads to the second meaning of this concept, which does not necessarily refer to the theatrical enactment or embodiment of the biblical episodes and figures. In addition to the plays being "feigned tokens" and not the "real" thing, signification as opposed to performance and efficacy means also (mis)using sacred themes by taking them out of the religious, non-contrary, ritualistic context that was specifically designed for them. It is the representational process, the very act of signifying, I argue, that marks the difference for the *ToMP* between such performative activity and ritualistic or festive celebration in the adoration of God, even though it might include theatrical elements such as dance or singing. This is the meaning, I suggest, of the final biblical example of "playing" that the *ToMP* finds acceptable and that appears toward the very end of the text:

> Than, frend, yif we wilen algate pleyen, pleyne we as Davith pleyide bifore the harke of God, and as he spac byfor Michol his wif, dispising his pleyinge. [Then, friend, if we will in any case play, let us play as David played before the ark of God. And as he spoke before Michal his wife, despising his playing.] (114, 724-26)

As is well known, the kind of playing that David performed before God was ritualistic (dance, music, and song), did not include character enacting or representation, and most significantly, was direct and unmediated, focusing on one and only one purpose: the glory of God.[23] Without understanding the context I have argued for, this biblical example might indeed seem out of place, as Barish mistakenly interprets it:

> At length, however, and quite without warning, the preacher introduces a use of *ludere* that completely undermines his own case. Unexpectedly he admits that there may be, after all, such a thing as godly playing. … In the passage at question (2 Samuel 6:20-21), David dances before the Lord to celebrate the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem, clad in nothing but the sleeveless ephod of the Israelite priests. Michal's contemptuous reproof on this occasion, apparently for David's frivolity, his exhibitionism seems very much in the vein of the Lollard preacher; her attitude toward David's playing duplicates his toward theatrical playing. Why then should the preacher relent in this instance? … Clearly David's dancing forms a far more telling precedent in favor of play than all the unfavorable instances together tell against it, and the homilist's abrupt eleventh-hour endorsement of it merely underscores the fact that the whole case against *ludere* is a house of cards.[24]

Barish fails to realize the sheer difference between a "miraclis player" and David who directly turns to adore God by means of play. Almost any religious ritual uses or can choose to use theatrical language or performance, just as theatre can aim to be religiously ritualistic, but what clearly marks theatre as different from ritual is *mimesis* and the agency of the actor.[25]

As I argued in the previous section on contrariety and simultaneity the *ToMP*'s selection of biblical examples that involve different kinds of "playing" is specific and not

random. The third scriptural "proof" against "miraclis pleyinge" that the author invokes is the people of Israel who turned to the golden calf while Moses was on Mount Sinai. Here is the simile:

> Rit forsothe as the licnesse of miraclis we clepen miraclis, right so the golden calfe the children of Israel clepiden it God, not for it was in itself, but for they maden it to the *licnesse of God*, in the whiche they hadden minde of the olde miraclis of God beforn and for that licnesse they worschipiden and preiseden, as they worschipiden and preisiden God in the dede of his miraclis to hem. [Just as the likeness of *miracles* we call *miraclis*,[26] so the golden calf which the children of Israel called God, not because it was God in itself, but because they made it in the *likeness of God*. What they had in mind were the old miracles of God before, which they worshiped and praised in that likeness, as they worshipped and praised God when he did his miracles for them. (112, 637-43).

The golden-calf episode is a straightforward biblical example of the potential danger of using and turning to graven images, and it definitely serves in the context of the *ToMP* to demonstrate the disparity between an unreal sign, which is in "the likeness of God," and God's realness. This biblical figurative event includes both interpretations I suggested that are relevant to the performance/signification concept of performance. The golden calf is not only an unreal imitation, sign, or substitute for the real thing, but also the very process of trying to make the unreachable (Moses, Christ, God) tangible and material, in fact changes the ritualistic context and meaning—and thus "misuses" belief.

Further support for the argument that the *ToMP* theorizes about the tension and disparity between a sign and its signified specifically in regard to the performative representation of holy themes and figures can be found in the (Wycliffite?) treatise

*Images and Pilgrimages*.[27] Although this text is included in Anne Hudson's *English Wycliffite Writings*, Clopper suggests that like the *ToMP* it might also be a Franciscan text—that is, that despite all earlier assessments neither text is Lollard.[28] In any event, the similarity between the *ToMP* and *IaP* is striking. *IaP* specifically objects to the sculpting or painting of images of Christ. One of the main reasons for this is that the images are made "wiþ greet cost" (83, 16), an idea that also appears in the *ToMP* (see my discussion on "communality" below); like the *ToMP* the preacher here criticizes the people who invest their time and money in creating and adoring the images rather than "help þere pore neȝeboris" (84, 61-2); These images are criticized because they are made with so much silver and gold that they not only falsely reflect Christ's suffering and penance but also they become attractive to believers because of this characteristic. Therefore: "now men shulden be nire gostly and take lesse hede to siche *sensible signes*" [now men should be more ghostly (spiritual) and take less heed to such sensible (tangible) signs] (84, 46-7). Again, like the *ToMP* the writer of this treatise differentiates between the reality of the original and any imitation of it that focuses attention on the craft and artistry of the creators. Just as the apostles of Christ led people to heaven

> withouten siche newe peyntyngis schewid by manus craft, for oure lord God dwellis by grace in gode mennus soulis, and withoute comparesoun bettere than all ymagis made of man in ere, and bettwe an alle bodies if seyntis, be e bones of hem neuer so gloriously shreynyd in gold. [without such new paintings shown by people's craft, for our lord God dwells by grace in good men's souls, and incomparably better than all images made by man in earth, and better than all bodies of saints, are the bones of him never so gloriously enshrined in gold.] (84, 49-53)

It is true that whereas the *ToMP* condemns all "miraclis pleyinge," the main target of *IaP* is the fact that the images are richly decorated and not "a pore ymage made after þe lickenes of God" [a poor image made after the likeness of God] (85, 93-4). The *ToMP* is, however, also ready to be tolerant of paintings if "they ben but as nakyd lettris to a clerk to tiden the treuthe" [they were but as naked letters to a clerk to read the truth] (104, 376-7). In addition to the thematic concern of both texts they also share many terminological and linguistic similarities. In the specific context of this work, however, one of the most important ideas that *IaP* explicitly states—establishing my argument about the late medieval acknowledgement, theorization, and problematization of the difference and tension between a sign and its signified in the case of religious art/performance—is as follows:

> 3it þe puple is foul disceyuyd by veyn trist in þes ymagis. For summe lewid folc wenen at þe ymagis doun verreyly þe *myraclis* of hemsilf, and at þis ymage of þe crucifix be Crist hymsilf, or þe seynt at þe ymage is þere sett for licknesse. And erfore þei seyn "þe swete rode of Bromholme," "þe swete rode of Grace," "þe swete rode at þe norþe dore," *"oure dere Lauedy of Walsyngham," but nou3t "oure Lauedy of heuene," ny "oure lord Iesu Crist of heuene,"* but cleuen sadly strokande and kyssand þese olde stones and stokkis, layying doun hore grete offryngis, and maken avowis ri3t þere to þes *dede ymagis* to come þe nexst 3eer agayn, as 3if þei weren Crist and oure Lauedy and Ion Baptist and Thomas of Caunterbery and siche oer. [Yet the people are foully deceived by vain trust in these images. For some unlearned folk think that the images really do the miracles by themselves, and that this image of the crucifix is Christ himself, or the saint whose the image is set there for likeness. And therefore they say "the sweet rod of Bromholme," "the sweet rod of Grace," "the sweet rod at the north door," "our dear Lady of Walsyngham," but not "our Lady of heaven," or "our Lord Jesus

> Christ of heaven," but cling to their practice of sadly stroking and kissing these old stones and stocks, laying down their great offerings, and making vows right there to these dead images to come the next year again, as if they were Christ and our Lady and John the Baptist and Thomas of Canterbury and other such.] (87, 153-63)

Although there might be a tendency to read in this paragraph testimony to a more so-called "realistic" style of depicting Christ, Mary, and other holy figures, (because the spectators allegedly get confused between the image and the real), I do not think that this is the case. The idea of these important lines, as expressed throughout the rest of the treatise, is that the artifacts are so attractive (in this case because of their beauty and grandeur, and in the case of "miraclis pleyinge" because of their fun and mirth) that they become the spectators' focus rather than their (more real) signified objects.

The implication and importance of this concept of performance—the tension between the sign and the signified—for our analysis and understanding of acting is evident. Not only does it prove that the performance or enactment of holy subjects was problematized, but also I think that because of this question the attempt of theatre creators, especially in devotional theatre, would be to maintain this difference, and to declare that on stage is a sign that merely represents the real and intangible persona. This, again, does not contradict the fact that certain scenes would involve extreme "realism" or "total theatre," or, as both the *ToMP* and *IaP* argue, that audiences would focus merely on the signs.

## "Wepinge Bitere Teris": Performing Emotions

Perhaps one of the most significant reasons not to limit the context of the *ToMP* only to unruly games and "miracula" lies in the third argument that the text makes in favor of the performative activity under attack, which vividly depicts conventional behavior of spectators at such events:

> Also ofte sithis by siche miraclis pleyinge men and wymmen, seinge the passioun of Crist and of his seintis, ben movyd to compassion and devocion, wepinge bitere teris, thanne they ben not scorninge of God but worchiping. [Also often by such miraclis pleyinge men and women, seeing the passion of Christ and of his saints, are moved to compassion and devotion, weeping bitter tears, so they are not scorning God but worshiping.] (98, 161-4)

I will enlarge on the *ToMP*'s answer to this argument, but in itself it supplies invaluable evidence of how people sometimes reacted to such performances as the Passion of Christ, which is specifically mentioned, and moreover these lines disclose the expected and coded behavior of audiences witnessing such performances. In other words, in order to *perform* devotion, one had to shed "bitter tears" and to be seen by his or her community members crying. That the defenders of "miraclis pleyinge" mark this behavior as proof that the plays should not be condemned reveals not only that this was a convention, even a role that spectators took upon themselves, but also that it denotes a coded criterion of an effective performance. Tears, according to the defenders of "miraclis pleyinge" in the *ToMP*, are the product that demonstrates a spectator's religious excitement and authentic intentions. This, of course, does not rule out the option that people were really moved by the performances, and yet that the image of a weeping audience becomes inscripted as a criterion of devotional/theatrical efficacy suggests that the public performance of

emotions was a behavioral convention. What does a whole community "weeping bitter tears" sound like? Did the people really cry or was this a kind of a ritual that included facial and vocal gestures? This line in the text is theoretical evidence of a very important concept of performance that seems to have characterized late medieval religious theatre. According to the defenders of "miraclis pleyinge" people are not expected to hold their emotions inside but rather to express them loudly and publicly,[29] and a performance's success or efficacy is judged by its ability to stir emotions and move people to tears. Significantly, this articulation of the performance of emotions as coded behavior is utterly different from conceiving of late medieval performance discourse as uncontrollably emotional, as Norbert Elias claimed in *The Civilizing Process*. Barbara H. Rosenwein criticizes such assumptions:

> [Elias's] pervasive practice of speaking of the "primitive," "childlike" emotional life of the Middle Ages, at about the same time as Marc Bloch was writing about its "emotional instability" and "impulsiveness," for example, was one that few scholars in the 1980s and after could swallow. As Robert van Krieken remarks, "the image of undisciplined, impulsive medieval personality smells just a little, reminiscent of how many used to view 'primitive' culture."[30]

I emphasize this because, whereas the argument quoted in the *ToMP* about the people who weep bitter tears has been taken for granted as merely a depiction of a stereotyped image of religious behavior, I suggest that the very use of it as a rhetorical device within the *ToMP* gives us evidence not only about the energies, conduct, and active role of the spectators in the performances, but also about a theoretical (aesthetic) discourse that

existed and that had criteria for "good" or "bad" performances. In other words, "weeping bitter tears" or displaying emotions is a late medieval concept of performance.

Although the performance of emotions cannot be directly related to the question of actor/character dialectics, analyzing the "bitter tears" as a spectatorial convention, an expected gesture that expresses one's identification and participation in the communal experience, can help us avoid certain assumptions about acting techniques. It is in this sense that I believe John R. Elliott, Jr. should have read and interpreted the six pieces of evidence he gathers in his essay "Medieval Acting," which are testimonies of spectators who were so moved by the performances they saw that they cried.[31] Elliott brings together the following references from distinct places and times: Oxford, 1610, the scene in which Desdemona was killed in *Othello* "in which some things, not only speeches but actions too, brought forth tears…"; London, 1592, where "How would it have joyed the brave Talbot, the terror of the French, to think that after he had lien two hundred years in his tomb he should triumph again on the stage, and have his bones new-embalmed *with the tears of ten thousand spectators*"; Bourges, 1536, where in the *Acts of the Apostles* "*most of the audience* thought the whole thing was real and not feigned"; Metz, 1485, in which "A young barber named Lyonard was a very beautiful boy, resembling a beautiful girl, and he played the part of Saint Barbara so discreetly and devoutly that *many spectators wept with compassion*"; Metz, 1468, in which "The part of St. Catherine was performed by a young girl, about 18 years old, who was the daughter of Dediet the glazier … [T]hough this girl had 2300 lines in her role, she never stumbled, and she spoke her lines in so lively a manner and so pitifully that she made *many people cry*"; and

Paris, 1420 where in a "representation of the Passion of our Lord, done by live actors … *no man* could see this representation without his heart being moved to compassion."[32]

Elliott uses these references that have in common a description of a weeping audience as evidence of the effectiveness of late medieval acting. However, this effectiveness is linked in his view with the idea that acting tended to be "realistic" assuming, I gather, that only acting that strives to be "realistic" can evoke such emotions. His terminology leaves no room for doubt:

> The goal of the medieval actor—at least in 'serious' roles—was identical to the goal of every actor at all times: namely to make it possible for his audience to imagine that he really *was* the character he was playing and to move the audience's emotions accordingly. The consistency with which this goal was striven for, and occasionally achieved, is clear from the descriptions quoted above.[33]

I argue, on the other hand, that the actor's goal was precisely the opposite: *not* to have the "audience imagine that he really *was* the character," and yet this does not mean that the performances were any less moving or exciting. In other words, Elliott's deduction of the acting style from the descriptions of the weeping audiences is irrelevant. It seems to me that since Elliott's goal is to prove medieval acting and theatre to be of high quality as opposed to earlier notions of it as naïve and unsophisticated, he wrongly associates acting techniques and effective performances with the culturally conventional spectatorial display of emotions. In other words I do not think that evidence about a crying audience can or should lead us to conceive of medieval acting as "striving" to convince an audience that an actor "becomes" the character, first and foremost because non-"realistic"

acting techniques can be as moving as "realistic" ones. Moreover, we can conclude the opposite from some of the references that Elliott quotes. First, note how in almost all of the quotations the witnesses specifically mention that "many," "most," or even "ten thousand" of the spectators were crying. This suggests to me either that these testimonies refer to the socially acceptable and expected expressive gesture of emotions on behalf of the audience, and/or that this is a rhetorical tool, often used to describe moving performances. Would anyone today consider ten different performances that ended with standing ovations as an indication that the acting in them tended to be "realistic?" But more importantly, in the references themselves there are clear indications expressed by the witnesses that the elimination of the actor in favor of the character was not a goal. The description of the crossdressed boy playing the part of Saint Barbara literally emphasizes this doubleness, the very act of one performing someone else, an-"other" person, just as the description of the young girl who performed St. Catherine is closely bound to the very act of performing: the writer evokes the familial identity of the performer as well as the fact that she was performing lines and "never stumbled." From a different perspective, the 1536 reference from Bourges in which in a performance of the *Acts of the Apostles*, which depicts a series of martyrdoms, "most of the audience thought the whole thing was real and not feigned" and which leads Elliott to argue that there was "emphasis on dramatic realism,"[34] suggests to me potential use of extreme physicality and even violence that exceeds "dramatic realism" as the borders between performer and character might have been blurred to the degree that performers were *really* hurt.

I offer this critique of Elliott's essay not merely because of different semantics in the use or understanding of "realistic" acting as opposed to a style that ostentatiously

differentiates performers and characters. If we treat the lines in the *ToMP* as well as in the documents Elliott cites about weeping audiences as evidence of coded cultural behavior, we might agree with the *ToMP*'s criticism that these tears are not necessarily "real" expression of compunction. If people cried during performances of the Passion because they felt obliged to (not unlike how people might feel at times obliged to cry at funerals, memorials, and the like) then, as I explained in the former section, the theatre performances are "unreal."

Elliott is right, however, in pointing out that all references (including the *ToMP*) share similar rhetorical characteristics and thus indeed depict and prove the conventionality of the coded behavior of the spectators in performances about religious subjects. This tells us a great deal about the efforts invested by the performers to evoke such emotional reactions from the audience as well as suggesting the involvement of the spectators during the performance, to, perhaps, the degree of a collective trance, or, what at least seemed to be one. The idea that these performed emotions might not have been "real," that is, were perhaps not unequivocally devotional and contemplative is precisely the reason that the author of the *ToMP* rules out this justification:

> Therfore right as the weping that men wepen ofte in siche pley comunely is fals witnessinge that they lovyn more the liking of theire body and of prosperite of the world than likinge in God and prosperite of vertu in the soule, and therfore, having more compassion of peine than of sinne, they falsly wepyn for lakking of bodily prosperite more than for lakking of gostly, as don dampnyd men in helle. [Therefore, just as the weeping that men weep often in such plays commonly is false witnessing because they love more the liking of their body and of prosperity of the world than liking God and prosperity of virtue in the soul, and therefore, having more compassion for pain than for sin, they falsely weep for the lack of

> bodily prosperity more than for lack of spiritual prosperity, as damned men do in hell.] (102, 317-23)

The author of the *ToMP* does not believe that the public display of emotions is really and solely focused on the idea of the original Passion of Christ and *his* suffering, but rather believes that these performances create the opportunity for the spectators to cry for their own bodily situation and/or for the pain the actor is experiencing. The text implies that if the performance of weeping (true or empty) should be a sign of compunction the problem is that people at such extreme performances might be crying because of what they see happening in performance (the signifiers) such as extreme violence or just theatrical emotionalism. Significantly, he writes that they have more compassion for pain than for sin. Although the text most likely refers to the spectators' pain and travails (as opposed to their sins), I think that this observation is also related to the performance of pain that perhaps evoked the tears. Whether "falsely weeping" refers to the spectators' attention not being focused on Christ and their own sins but on their very lives in the present or whether it refers to the extremity of the experience during performance, the *ToMP* restates that this was indeed a conventional part of the performance. If the author is correct in his observation of the "real" reason for the tears, once again we have evidence that the performances were thought to have utilized the sacred events as a means for a society to contemplate its own distresses and travails—which is exactly what theatre does. This is also an indication that the performances involved not only laughter and lightness but also scenes that were intense enough to evoke tears and the public performance of emotions—a continuum of generic mixture so typical of the mystery plays.

The idea of "false weeping," however, is given not in direct reply to the justification of the plays quoted by the *ToMP* but rather in reply to the following argument according to which there are people who can be converted to God only by "game and play" (98, 166-75). In direct reply to the description of a weeping audience the writer argues that:

> [S]iche miraclis pleyinge giveth noon occasioun of werrey wepinge and medeful, but the weping that fallith to men and wymmen by the sighte of siche miraclis pleyinge, as they ben not principaly for theire oune sinnes ne of theire gode feith is not alowable byfore God but more reprowable. For sithen Crist himsilf reprovyde the wymmen that wepten upon him in his passioun, myche more they ben reprovable that wepen for the pley of Crisits passioun, leevinge to wepen for the sinnes of hemsilf and of theire children, as Crist bad the wemmen that wepten on him. [[S]uch miraclis pleyinge gives no occasion of (real) weeping and mediating, but the weeping that happens to men and women *by the sight of such miraclis pleyinge*, which is not principally for their own sins, nor because of their good faith, is not allowable before God but more reprovable. For since Christ himself reproved the women that wept for him in his Passion, much more should they be reproved that weep for the *play of Christ's Passion*, instead of weeping for their own sins and the sins of their children, as Christ told the women that wept for him.] (102, 301-11)

This is a significant addition to the analysis of the phenomenon of a "weeping audience" and the performance of emotions, as it gives another reason that explains why the *ToMP* does not appreciate the sincerity of weeping spectators. The text argues that because Christ did not want the women around him to cry during the *real* event of the Crucifixion, people watching a *play* of the Passion certainly should not do so. The reason is that those who cry do so because of the *sight* they see during the performance of the Passion. They

do not cry for their own sins and misbehaving, not even for their "gode feith," but rather, the spectators according to the *ToMP* cry because of what they see—presumably sights that are hard to watch. It is highly significant that the writer differentiates between the content of what is shown (the crucifixion or Christ's suffering) and the very act of watching these sights, suggesting that these were violent and unbearable scenes to view. The author repeats the word "sight" twice, implying its harshness, something that would evoke an emotional reaction from spectators.[35] From this perspective we have indications not only about the audience's performative codes but also evidence about a theoretical account of the performance itself.

Indeed, in the York Butchers' *Death of Christ*, Christ specifically asks Mary to "do way of thy weeping" (326, 144), a scene that would most likely evoke similar behavior from the spectators, and that perhaps was also addressed directly to the weeping audience. On the other hand, in the *Crucifixion* the actor playing Jesus who is nailed to the cross talks directly to the audience and asks the spectators to "fully feele nowe" (321, 256). These two lines correspond directly with the *ToMP*'s concerns, because, eventually, it cannot be determined *why* audience members are crying. Especially illuminating in this context is Margery Kempe's meditation on the Crucifixion. Carol M. Meale points to circumstantial evidence that suggests that Margery Kempe indeed had the opportunity to witness the plays at York, most likely on a "Midsummer Eve" on June 22, 1413,[36] and accordingly she argues:

> Allowing for this circumstantial detail, the textual evidence of the climactic set-piece meditation on the Crucifixion in Book I (80), in which both the imaging of the scene and the language deployed have strong echoes of what has now come to

> be known as the York Crucifixion Pageant (XXXV), takes on an especial significance. ... The workmanlike approach to their task adopted by the soldiers in the York Pinners' *Crucifixion Play*, in which they assemble their "hammeres and nayles large and lange" (316, 30), comment on the misplaced bore holes previously drilled to accommodate Christ's nailed hands and feet, and, to stretch His limbs into position, use a "roope" or "corde" to "tuhhe hym to, by toppe and taile" (318, 131; 113-14), bears direct comparison with Margery's account of how she saw "with her ghostly eye how the Jews fastened ropes on the other hand, for the sinews and veins were so shrunken with pain that it might not come to the hole that they had marked for it, and drew thereon to make it meet with the hole."[37]

From the point of view discussed here, however, beyond Kempe's powerful description of the Crucifixion scene and its potential relation to the York play, her own reactions to it are striking. Her performance of emotions (crying, weeping, sobbing) is reinforced in her descriptions of this event, and they are closely related to the sights she saw. "When she saw this piteous sight, she wept and cried right loudly as if she should have burst for sorrow and pain," and "when she heard the words and saw the compassion that the mother had of the son and the son of his mother, then she wept, sobbed, and cried as though she should have died for the pity and compassion that she had of that piteous sight, ... and after "the Jews with great violence rend from our Lord's precious body a cloth of silk" ... "she had a new sorrow so that she wept and cried right sorely," and so on.[38] Whether this public weeping was a unique characteristic of Kempe, or indeed a conventional behavioral mode, particularly at passion plays, it was not ultimately and always considered acceptable or desired as argued by the *ToMP* and as Carol Meale

observes regarding the response to another instance of Kempe's public display of emotions:

> [H]er treatment in Hull later in the year [1417], when she walked in some unidentified "procession" and earned outright hostility ("a great woman greatly despised her, and … [m]any other folk said that she should be set in prison," I 53, 95) indicates that civic order and individual composure were seen by some as commensurate with each other, and not to be infringed by emotionalism, whether politically or devotionally inspired.[39]

Based on this detail the *ToMP*'s distinction between painting sacred subjects and having them played is evident. The defenders of miraclis pleyinge suggest that since it is allowable to "han the miraclis of God peintid" [have the miracles of God painted] (98, 179-80), it is even a better way to teach them if they are played "for this is a deed bok, the tother a quick." [for this is a dead book, the other a quick/live] (98, 185). But the liveness of the performance is exactly what makes the difference for the *ToMP*'s author. He says that painting is allowed if and only if it is completely and utterly focused on Christ, neutralized of any other effects, to the degree that it becomes "nakyd lettris to a clerk to riden the treuthe" [naked letters to a clerk to read the truth] (104, 376-7) as opposed to "miraclis pleyinge that ben made more to deliten men bodily than to ben bokes to lewid men. And therfore yif they ben quike bookis, they ben quike bookis to shrewidenesse more than to godenesse." [miraclis pleyinge that is made more to delight men bodily than to be books to teach men. And therefore if they are live books, they are live books to shrewdness more than to goodness] (104, 377-80).

In conclusion, I have shown that weeping at performances should not be overlooked and regarded as stereotypical behavior of "emotional" people, but rather that this was a coded convention that signified appreciation of a strong theatrical experience. For this reason the *ToMP* criticizes the public display of emotions as unreal in the sense that it is evoked by the sights of the performances which themselves, as I argued above, are "unreal" events. The attempt to evoke such emotions helps to establish what we know from other pieces of evidence, that the performances displayed harsh and extreme scenes. The analysis of the "performance of emotions" as a performative concept teaches us a lot about the relations between the performances and the audiences and is at the basis of analyzing medieval reception theory and spectatorial involvement in the course of performance.

## "An Hool Comynte": (Urban) Communality and Financing

We do not need the *ToMP* to learn that the production of the religious theatre was a communal event. Almost any piece of evidence related to this theatre establishes this characteristic as a central tenet of the mystery plays.[40] And yet references to this concept within the *ToMP* not only establish "communality" as a performance concept but also help to identify some of the social and cultural meanings that were attributed to this concept, particularly where "communality" is not necessarily regarded as a positive phenomenon. For example, the recurring claim in the *ToMP* that "miraclis pleyinge" attract "not onely *of oon singuler persone but of al an hool comynte*" [not only one singular person but a whole community] (100, 239-40) potentially suggests the existence of a dispute over the attention of the community, since "miraclis pleyinge" could perhaps

endanger the authorial status of preaching or other cultural forms of piety alluded to in the text as better performative practices, especially if "miraclis pleyinge" claims to "turneth men to the bileve and not prevertith" [turn men to belief and not prevent it] (97, 160-61).[41]

Here are some of the depictions of "miraclis pleyinge" as communal events experienced by many people. In the fourth reason supporting miraclis pleyinge quoted by the *ToMP* the argument is that

> Now on dayes men ben not convertid by the ernestful doing of God ne of men, thanne now it is time and skilful to assayen to convertyn *the puple* by pley and gamen as by miraclis pleyinge and other maner mirthes. [Since on (holy)days men are not converted by the earnest doing of God or of other men, therefore now it is time and appropriate to convert *the people* by play and game as well as by miraclis pleyinge and other kinds of mirth.] (98, 171-5)

In reply to the argument that miraclis help in converting people, the writer says, as quoted above, that

> the same wise miraclis pleyinge, albeit that it be sinne, is othere while occasion of perverting of men, not onely of oon singuler persone but of al an hool comynte, as it makith *al a puple* to ben ocupied in vein. [the same with miraclis pleyinge, beyond it being a sin, it is an occasion of perverting men, not only one singular person but a whole community, as it occupies all the people in vain.] (100, 236-41)

One of the recurring ideas against miraclis pleyinge is that instead of being occupied in helping one's neighbors, those involved in the performances draw more and more people into the practice:

> And so thes miracles pleyinge not onely reversith feith and hope but verry charite by the whiche a man shulde weilen for his owne sinne and for his neieburs, and namely pristis, for it withdrawith not onely oon persone but *alle the puple* fro dedis of charite and of penaunce into dedis of lustis and likings and of feding of houre wittis. [Also so this miraclis pleyinge not only reverses faith and hope but real charity by which a man should correct his own sin and of his neighbors, and especially priests, for it withdraws not only one person but all the people from deeds of charity and of penance into deeds of lust and fun and of feeding of our wits.] (101, 289-94)

There are many more indications that the plays are events that attract and include a great many people—the text often refers directly to "men and wemmen"—and can thus be titled communal. But beyond this general observation there are two more points—both related to the specific energy that characterizes civic communities and to the money people spend on the plays—that not only associate "miraclis pleyinge" almost directly with expensive productions such as the mystery plays, but also significantly highlight the communal interest in its own products, and thus add a significant perspective to the meanings associated with "communality" as a concept of performance.

At the outset of the second part of the *ToMP* the author invokes the second amendment and warns against taking God's name in vain. His metaphor and choice of words are not incidental:

> Wherfore that his half frenschip may be turnyd to the hoole, we preyen him to beholden first in the seconde maundement of God that seith, "Thou schalt not take Goddis name in idil," and sithen the mervelous werkis of God *ben his name, as the gode werkis of a craftisman been his name*, than in the hest of God is forbeden

> to takun the mervelouse werkis of God in idil. [Wherefore that your half friendship may be turned to become whole, we pray you to behold first the second amendment of God that says, "Thou shall not take God's name in idle," and since the marvelous works of God are his name, as the good works of a craftsman are his name, then in the command of God is forbidden to take the marvelous works of God in vain.] (104-5, 390-6)

As we have seen before, here again, the author's goal is to keep God's marvelous works and miracles strictly in their appropriate context so that God's "name" or "reputation" will be carefully protected. Significantly, the simile that he thinks will best express this idea is taken directly from the field of craftsmanship. This theme could be regarded merely as another explanatory image from daily life (such as the teacher-student relations, the jealous husband, the servant-lord relations, and so on), if craftsmanship had not been such an essential factor in the production of the religious vernacular theatre and in civic life in general. Not only did the craft guilds produce the plays but they also figured their "name" into numerous details of the biblical plays themselves, as discussed above.[42] By using this simile, the *ToMP* quite explicitly marks its addressees, and associates "miraclis pleyinge" with urban productions. The fact that God's "werkis" are compared to those of a craftsman emphasizes the importance that was attributed to craftsmanship.

Although this metaphor could be applicable to both urban and rural communities, it still seems that "miraclis pleyinge" denotes a social activity that took place in towns because a significant reason that the *ToMP* opposes this activity has to do with money people spend on the plays rather than on charity or on paying their rent:

> So this miraclis pleyinge is verre witnesse of mennus averice and coveytise byfore—that is, maumetrie, as seith the apostle—for that that they shulden spendyn upon the nedis of ther negheboris, they spenden on the pleyis; and to peyen ther rente and ther dette they wolen grucche, and to spendyn two so myche upon ther pley they wolen nothinge grucchen. Also to gideren men togidere to bien the derre there vetailis, and to stiren men to glotonye and to pride and boost, they pleyn these miraclis, and also to han wherof to spenden on thes miraclis and to holden felawschipe of glotenye and lecherie in syche dayes of miraclis pleyinge, they bisien hem beforn to more gredily bygilen ther neghbors in byinge and in selling. [So this miraclis pleyinge is real evidence of men's avarice and greed—that is, idolatry, as the apostle said—for that which they should spend on the needs of their neighbors, they spend on the plays; and to pay their rent and their debts they will grumble, but to spend so much on their play they will not grumble. Also, to gather men together to purchase their vittles/food expensively and to stir men to gluttony and lechery in such days of miraclis pleyinge, they get busy before to more greedily beguile their neighbors in buying and in selling.] (110-11, 595-608)

The importance of this paragraph cannot be overlooked. It not only testifies that people—the community—were willing to spend a lot of money on the plays, and that the production of the plays was costly,[43] but also that this was money that they were happy to spend. There are two main reasons for this willingness. First, as the *ToMP* itself indicates, the festivities around the plays would include buying and selling, which means that the plays were an opportunity for the community to gain profit. Second, it indicates that the festivity itself was very important for the people, to such a degree that they were willing to spend their money on it. I think that John C. Coldewey is correct when he notes that

> it is no accident that the single most important source of records of the drama is accounts … . The sources themselves seem to argue that one consistent feature shared by virtually all vernacular medieval drama is an economic concern; that is, a more material interest than has ordinarily been ascribed to the playwrights and producers of these plays.[44]

From the perspective of actor/character dialectics the financial aspect that the *ToMP* emphasizes as a reason to criticize "miraclis pleyinge" highlights yet once again the idea that the performances were not only meant to be an extension of religious ritual but also an expression of the communal identity reflected in that of the actor. As Coldewey notes, "Although their interest always had a religious cast, the guilds acted as the foci of local craft endeavor and pride."[45] It shows that the festivity itself, the marketing, and all the additional happenings that were related to the performances were as important to the community as was the performance of biblical history. In other words, communality as a concept of performance refers not only to the use of anachronisms within the plays and performances[46] or to other forms of blending ritual with daily life—as a communal project on the holiday of Corpus Christi it obviously does that—but also to the social energies involved in producing the plays, the financial hierarchies of the various guilds, and the pragmatic aspects of the festival that included money-making from extra-theatrical activities. Perhaps one of the best ways to test the validity of the concepts of performance I suggest here is through their function in contemporary reconstructions and revivals of the mystery plays, a phenomenon that became central in the twentieth century. Regarding a recent performance of the cycle plays as part of the York festival, Margaret Rogerson specifically discusses the importance of communality,

which, apparently, continues to be as crucial to the success and power of the plays today as it was in the late medieval era:

> But this was not just a show for the tourists admiring a reenactment event; this was very much a show for the participants in the process of exercising their stewardship of the local heritage. For the first time in the half-century of the York revivals of the indigenous Mystery Plays, the seven "medieval" guilds currently active in the city took full charge of the event. Local people were used in every possible role, from Management Board to the students from Canon Lee School who adlibbed the part of the "medieval audience." In his Director's report, Tyler stresses the local component of this production as "perhaps one of the most positive developments in the modern history of the York plays.[47]

The involvement of the entire community (then and now) in putting together a performance on such a grand scale was motivated both by the communal desire to play, to create, and to perform as well as by the income and profit the city could and would earn. In this light I would like to analyze one of the often-quoted documents from the York records, the *ordo paginarum*, which lists the stations for the different episodes as it appears in the 1399 Memorandum Book.[48] Although the station list is highly significant for the reconstruction of the performance itself ever since 1399, the Memorandum Book elaborates on the reasons that made the regulation of the stations necessary. The reasons are strikingly concordant with the financial activity that the *ToMP* associates with the plays. (I quote the English translation):

> To the honorable men, the mayor and aldermen of the city of York, the commons of the same city beg that, inasmuch as they incur great expense and costs in connection with the pageants and plays of Corpus Christi day, the which cannot

> be played or performed on the same day as they ought to be, because the aforesaid pageants are played in so many places at considerable hardship and deprivation to the said commons and strangers who have traveled to the said city on the same day for the same purpose, that it please you to consider that the said pageants are maintained and supported by the commons and the craftsmen of the same city in honor and reverence of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the glory and benefit of the same city, that you decree that the aforesaid pageants be played in the places to which they were limited and assigned by you and by the aforesaid commons previously, the which places are annexed to this bill in a schedule, or in other places from year to year according to the disposition and will of the mayor and the council of the Chamber, and that anyone who acts in contravention of the aforesaid ordinances and regulations shall incur a fine of 40s to be paid to the Council Chamber of the said city, and that if any of the aforesaid pageants be delayed or held back through fault or negligence on the part of the players, that they shall incur a penalty of 6s 8d to the same Chamber. And they (the commons) beg that these aforesaid matters be performed, or otherwise the said play shall not be played by the aforesaid commons. And they (the commons) ask these things for the sake of God and as a work of charity for the benefit of the said commons and of the strangers who have traveled to the said city for the honor <of> God and the promotion of charity among the same commons.[49]

This paragraph, following which appears the famous station list, bursts with information closely related to the concept of urban communality and financing as implied by the *ToMP*. First, the voice expressed in this memorandum is that of the "commons." Second, they specifically state that they invest a large amount of money in the productions, but they will cease to do so if their demand is not met.[50] Third, the travelers who come to York especially for the plays—and obviously pay good money—are explicitly mentioned, twice, as a significant reason to regulate the stations of the plays. Fourth, profit is never mentioned as the reason for the need to regulate the space and length of the plays, but it is

rather requested "for the sake of God and as a work of charity"—which is exactly the kind of reasoning the *ToMP* criticizes. The official reason that the commons gives for the need for regulation is that having all the episodes scattered around prevents the travelers' ability to see them all. In between the lines, however, I think that the paragraph discloses tension that might be related to financial issues that could be resolved only by regulation. This memorandum is from 1399, but the Corpus Christi Play was being performed as early as 1376, which means that there was already experience of about two decades. Something went wrong, we can assume, in 1398 or the year before, if the stations had to become official. My speculation is that if the "strangers who traveled to the said city" were unhappy, because there was a feeling of chaos, it makes sense that the producers—who had invested a lot of money—would fear the failure of the entire project. This regulation also testifies to the fact of how and when the cycle play started to become such a central annual activity that it indeed might have overshadowed other communal performative practices, precisely because of the participants' interest in its success for financial and recreational reasons.

From my brief analysis of this document in relation to the *ToMP* I think that it is possible to gather that communality was a concept of performance that had many kinds of implications for the performances. Although the performances reflected the community in that they told its story via the biblical episodes, it was the communal effort to create a successful annual festival that would draw people from all over who would enrich the city. Financial considerations, however, sometimes tend to overshadow the original purpose of theatre itself.

# Conclusion

Analyzing the *ToMP* from the perspective of performance aesthetics adds a new dimension first of all to our understanding of the text itself. Scholars such as Barish have commented on its alleged inconstancy, but as I have tried to demonstrate its logic is clear and straightforward. More importantly, however, my analysis of the four concepts of performance that are discussed or implied in the text brings to life one perspective of a much larger discourse that deals with questions of performing religious subjects. This evidence of late medieval "performance theory" has significant implications for our understanding of how the performances of the vernacular mystery plays interacted with spectators and dealt with questions and problems that religious enactment inevitably evokes. Furthermore, beyond proving the existence of an aesthetic discourse, the conclusions I derive from the analysis of the text are that the religious theatre was based on a double appeal that is threaded throughout its performative mechanisms. The fact that the *ToMP* suggests to us the direct connection between liturgical and religious rituals as dominant sources that influenced the plays on the one hand and unruly games and pagan rituals on the other a-priori defines the mystery plays as performances that are based on a double appeal. They integrate devotional and didactic performative aims with communal and playful enjoyment, and this inherent duality finds echoes in each and every aspect of these performances. Thus acting, which in every theatre performance is based on the duality and co-presence of the actor and the character, becomes a site that most concisely and complexly brings together these two extremes of "high" and "low" culture.

Accordingly, the first concept I discussed, "Contrariety and Simultaneity" addresses exactly this concern. The *ToMP*'s emphasis on the distinction between the flesh and the spirit and its argument that the two should remain separated characterizes not only the general inclusiveness that typifies the vernacular religious theatre, but is mostly evident in the body of the performer. In other words, while the theatre performances were essentially based on a contrary and simultaneous inclusion of spirit (devotional themes, biblical stories, and holy characters) *and* flesh (earthly concerns such as profit and production, playful enjoyment, and human performers) the stance of the *ToMP* is clearly to object to this contrary situation. That the text is against contrariety is irrelevant to my point that it definitely articulates contrariety as a concept of performance. As we shall see in the next chapter, defining the religious theatre and the actor in the role of holy characters as contrary and simultaneous sites was not considered as an aesthetic problem but rather a performative situation that best served the double goals of the plays. By purposely emphasizing the distinction between the actor and the character (the spirit and the flesh or the "voice of Crist and the voice of the fleysh") the performers could maintain the remoteness and fixedness of the characters and at the same time perform themselves and create a link between the mythological past and the not-less-meaningful present. This aesthetic does not seek a theatrical individual that is based on the merger of actor and character into one and is therefore, I argue, reminiscent of modern theories of epic theatre.

The inherently contrary nature of these performances, which aim to include festive fun and devotional didacticism along with an aesthetic that highlights this duality by positioning the actor as a mediator between the two performative goals, is at the basis

of the second concept of performance the *ToMP* addresses. Because of the participants' interest not only in the biblical and sacred themes being enacted but also in their own enjoyment, the performances are not considered by the text to be "real." That is, they are not efficacious, as are preaching or other religious rituals that are designed only for devotional purposes. The text's emphasis on the idea that the performances are empty signs means that the author recognized the difference between the signifiers and the signifieds. In the case of religious theatre (as opposed, for example, to Brechtian theatre) the status of the "fictional world" (here considered as the more *real* world) is much higher than that of the performance itself. Thus the mediating function of the performance—the actor—is what causes spectators to take part in "false witnessing." Signification, or mimesis in the specific context of religious theatre, is indeed a complex issue to deal with, precisely because what is signified is considered to be real, but in performance it ceases to be so, whereas the (fleshly) performer is tangible and graspable.

The performer's materiality is what enables him to *really* endure pain in spectacles such as passion plays. This spectacular vision is what leads the *ToMP* to criticize the collective performance of emotions as an expression of enthusiasm for the plays. In so doing, the text makes it clear that audiences' display of strong emotions such as fear and sadness by means of weeping was firstly a coded cultural convention of piety. Moreover, it becomes apparent that such spectatorial behavior was related to the material experience of the performance (the signifier) and not to that of the image being conveyed (the signified). This discourse concerning the value of a spectator's tears indicates not only the producers' efforts to elicit tears and strong reactions from audiences by means of extreme violence and emotionalism but also an awareness of what we would now term

"reception theory." This concept, as well as the two first ones, indicates the performative distinction between the performer who physically endures and the character that, of course, is not really there. However, whereas the first two concepts indicate actor/character dialectics that have to do with epic acting conventions (which mark the difference between the earthly identity of the performer and the elevated one of the character), the concept of "performing emotions" is more relevant to liminal theatrical situations that fit into the category of "total theatre." As we shall see in the next chapter it is the tension between epic and total theatre that, I suggest, characterizes the acting concept and actor/character dialectics of the late medieval religious theatre and is also a central dynamic of twentieth-century post-realist avant-garde experimentation.

Finally, the *ToMP*'s concern with the financial interests and investment of the producers in them testifies once again to the communal effort that urban citizens put into the production of these plays. Once again this interest indicates the double appeal of these plays—devotional and social—an idea that is paradigmatically condensed in the very body of the performer who enacts the holy and mythological characters and yet is part of the trade guilds and as such performs his social identity no less that the role he takes upon himself. Identifying the medieval religious theatre as communal implies a performative aesthetic that is based on an artistic manipulation of anachronisms and that complexly brings together seemingly contradictory elements.

In conclusion, my reading and contextualizing of the *ToMP* not only demonstrates the existence of a late medieval discourse of performance theory, but also reveals an aesthetic theory that can explain the unique characteristics of this theatre and of its acting.

I strongly believe that this text should be studied by students of the medieval theatre and included in any book that discusses the history of theatrical theory.

**Notes**

[1] See in the next section of this chapter, "Performance and Signification," my discussion of the treatise *Images and Pilgrimages* that argues that even painted and sculpted images might draw attention because of their artfulness rather that the ideas they transmit.

[2] Marianne G. Briscoe writes that preaching and sermons were as enthusiastically received by audiences as the plays themselves, and could "enhance the recreational or festive motives, as well as the didactic goals, of late medieval dramatic entertainment." "Preaching and Medieval English Drama," 155.

[3] I expand on the idea of quotation as a performative tool in Chapter 4.

[4] Erick Kelemen, "Drama in Sermons: Quotation, Performativity, and Conversion in a Middle English Sermon on the Prodigal Son and in *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*," *ELH* 69 (2002): 9-10.

[5] Briscoe, "Preaching and Medieval English Drama," 156.

[6] See Ralph Blasting's "The Pageant Wagon as Iconic Site in the York Cycle," *Early Theatre* 3 (2000): 127-36, for a discussion of the pragmatic uses of the street as part of the performance; and Cami D. Agan's "The Platea in the York and Wakefield Cycles: Avenues for Liminality and Salvation," *Studies in Philology* 94 (1997): 344-67, for an analysis of how this spatial tension intensified the experience of audience participation. For a more general discussion of the socially complex use of performance space, see for example David Wiles's *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) especially Chapter 3, "Processional Space," 63-91.

[7] Clifford Davidson, "Nudity, the Body, and Early English Drama," in *History, Religion, and Violence: Cultural Contexts for Medieval and Renaissance English Drama* (Burlington: Ashgate, Variorum, 2002), 149.

[8] See for example Pamela Sheingorn's "Visual Language of Drama," 173-91, and Pamela Sheingorn and David Bevington's "'Alle This Was Token Domysday to Drede': Visual Signs of Last Judgment in the Corpus Christi Cycles and in Late Gothic Art," in *Homo, Memento Finis: The Iconography of Just Judgment in Medieval Art and Drama*, ed. David Bevington, (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1985), 121-46. They write:

> Recapitulation, organizing principles of symmetry and antithetical contrast, the use of symbolic stage structures and scaffolding, hieratic ordering of figures, the rhetorical pairing of virtue and vice and of the generic and the particular, contrastive imagery of the idealized and the particular—all these are carefully suited to the dramaturgic and theatrical needs of the cycle play as a whole, and yet they find their counterparts in sister art forms that do not operate through speech and action, and would seem at first glance to have no need for the closure that belongs to a dramatic action told through narrative in time and space" (122-3).

[9] See my discussion of this phenomenon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Chapter 1 and my analysis of the York plays in Chapter 4.

[10] Ellen M. Ross, *The Grief of God: Images of the Suffering Jesus in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 78.

[11] Sheingorn, "Visual Language of Drama," 183.

[12] See Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13: "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon."

[13] An example of a metaphorical use of "voice" can be given from the York *Cain and Abel* play. Paraphrasing the famous line from *Genesis* 4:10 the angel defies Cain:

> What has þou done? Beholde and heere,
> Þhe *voice* of his bloode cryeth vengeaunce
> Fro erthe to heuen, with voice entere
> Þis tyde. (77, 100-3)
>
> [What have you done? Behold and hear,
> The voice of his blood cries for vengeance
> From earth to heaven, enter with voice
> This time.]

[14] See Marvin Carlson, "Theater and Dialogism," in *Critical Theory and Performance*, ed., Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 313-23. Hę writes: "The theater, through the particularly open-ended process of performance reinterpretation and the heteroglossia provided by the multiple voices of enactment, provides an utterance, in Bakhtin's sense, of particular complexity" (321).

[15] Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture, and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 38, original emphasis.

[16] Kelemen writes: "Conversion duplicates and relies upon the logic of the performative, wherein the signifier seems to produce the signified by force of its utterance, while it simultaneously unmasks itself as a deferral of presence." "Drama in Sermons," 15.

[17] See Nicholas Davis, "The *tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*: On Milieu and Authorship, *METh* 12:2 (1990), 124-51 for a discussion of the Latin origins and meanings of "ludere" (playing) and its relation to the idea of "lying" and "illusio" as a practice "where the meaning is contrary to that suggested" (129). In this article Davis tries to establish the Wycliffite origin of the *ToMP*.

[18] Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 72.

[19] See Lynette R. Muir, "Playing God in Medieval Europe," in *The Stage as Mirror: Civic Theatre in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Alan E. Knight (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 25-50, for a detailed survey of costuming and conventional ways of performing Christ and God the Father, and see my analysis of "epic acting" in the next chapter.

[20] Herbert Blau, *Blooded Thought: Occasions of Theatre* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publication, 1982), 28, original emphasis.

[21] Ibid., 28.

[22] Thomas K. Lerud thinks it is:

> We may conclude that miracles, like painted and sculpted images, are viewed as signs. Thus defenders argue that they are presented in worship, but those who, like the author of the "tretise," in a rather unsophisticated version of the Augustinian, ultimately Platonian tradition, hold a fundamental distrust of signs of any kind must disagree.

"Quick Images," 219. Clopper disagrees with this view. I think that the Platonian idea that an imitated object is bad because it is further removed from the ideal is implied in the *ToMP* but that this is not the focus of the text.

[23] This corresponds to the stance of *Dives and Pauper* on the same subject:

> Dives: Steralics, pleyys and dauncis þat arn vsid in grete festis & in Sondayys, arn is nout leful? Pauper: Steralics, pleyys & dauncis þat arn don *principaly for deuocioun & honest merthe [to teche men to loue God þe more]* & for no rybaudye ne medelyd with no rebaudye [ne lesyngis] arn leful, so þat þe peple be nout lettyd þerby fro Godys seruyce ne fro Godis word herynge and þat þer be non errour medelyd in swyche steralics & pleyys aȝens þe feyth of holy chirche ne aȝenys þe statys of holy chirche ne aȝenys good lyuynge. [Dives: Steralics, plays, and dances that are used in great feasts and on Sundays, are not allowed? Pauper: Steralics, plays, and dances that are done principally for devotion and

> honest mirth (to teach men to love God more) and not for playfulness are allowed, so that the people are not taken by them away from servicing and hearing God's word and that there should be no error involved in such steralics and plays against the faith of the holy church or against the status of the holy church or against good living.]

*Dives and Pauper*, ed. Priscilla Heath Barnum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), Vol. 1, 293.

[24] Barish, *Antitheatrical Prejudice*, 74-5.

[25] The growing interest during the twentieth century in the connections between theatre, performance, and ritual are very relevant to this argument although I do not discuss this aspect in this dissertation. Briefly, the quest of the modern society for a transcendental experience through theatre in lack of a dominating religious system that can offer such experiences exactly corresponds (only the other way around) to the medieval fear that theatre per se is not "efficacious." For an analysis of affinities and differences between ritual and theatre see Eli Rozik, *The Roots of Theatre: Rethinking Ritual and Other Theories of Origin* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002).

[26] "The likeness of *miracles* we call *miraclis*" is, I think, the correct translation of this sentence whereas Clopper focuses only on the second appearance of the word "miraclis" as an indication that the text discusses a performance genre. He might be right in this assessment but clearly the genre of "miraclis" performs "miracles." See his "Is the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* a Lollard Tract Against devotional Drama?" 19.

[27] "Images and Pilgrimages," in Anne Hudson, ed., *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 83-8. All quotations from the text, henceforth *IaP*, are from this edition and are indicated by line numbers following page number.

[28] Clopper, "Is the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* a Lollard Tract about Devotional Drama?" 9-10; 21-30. Thomas K. Lerud considers both texts to be Lollard, but offers a position similar to mine regarding their relationship. He writes:

> What is significant here is the existence of a Lollard polemic against images, despite Wyclif's apparently moderate position on the matter, and the fact that a polemic against images is paired with one against miracles in the same manuscript. ("Quick Images," 216).

[29] On the public display of emotions as coded behavior, see for example Stephen D. White, "The Politics of Anger," in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 128-52, in which he points that "whether or not those whom medieval sources represented as weeping felt what we would understand as grief or sorrow, their displays of grief often

constituted political acts inextricably associated with the process of making a legitimated political claim" (146-7).

[30] Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Controlling Paradigms," *Anger's Past*, 238. See also Robert van Krieken, "Violence, Self-Discipline, and Modernity: Beyond the 'Civilizing Process,'" *Sociological Review* 37 (1989): 193-218.

[31] John R. Elliott Jr., "Medieval Acting," in *Contexts for Early English Drama*, 238-51.

[32] Ibid., 240-1, emphases added.

[33] Ibid., 243-4, original emphasis.

[34] Ibid., 242.

[35] For a detailed discussion on the perception of violence on the late medieval stage see Jody Enders, "Medieval Snuff Drama," *Exemplaria* 10.1 (1998): 171-206.

[36] See Carol M. Meale, "'This is a deed bok, the tother a quick': Theatre and the Drama of Salvation in the *Book* of Margery Kempe," in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain. Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 52-3; And see chapters I 11 and I 80 in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, trans. and ed. Lynn Staley (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2001), 18-20; 139-42.

[37] Meale, "'This is a deed bok,'" 53-5. The quotation within quotation from *The Book of Margery Kempe* at the end of the paragraph is from Lynn Staley's translation (140) whereas Meale quotes the following edition: *Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Stanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, EETS, os 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940 for 1939), 192, 17-21.

[38] *The Book of Margery Kempe*, I 80, 139-42.

[39] Meale, "'This is a deed bok,'" 61.

[40] One of the central reasons John Marshall suggests for the modern renewed interest in producing the medieval mystery plays is their communal nature. See his "Modern Productions of Medieval English Plays," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 290-311.

[41] See for example Anne Higgins, "Streets and Markets," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 77-92. In this essay Higgins discusses and analyzes the process and reasons for changing the route and dates of the Corpus Christi procession and play in relation to social and political events in York. She writes:

> After 1468, for reasons that are not clear in the surviving records, the procession was moved to the day after Corpus Christi, and the play, apparently, to Corpus Christi itself. The two shifts, in 1426 and 1468, are revealing. The first change avoided competition for the attention of the citizens of York's franchises, and, it would seem, allowed the religious procession to recover a bit from the loss of audience and worshipers to the play, while retaining the honor of owning the feast day itself. Brother Melton's proposal tacitly admits as much. But the 1468 change, in which the guilds took over Corpus Christi Day for their dramatic performances, probably marks an ascendancy of the guilds over the ecclesiastical foundations. The contestation between these official bodies for precedence in this matter was a long struggle—one, I think we must conclude, that the guilds won. (86)

[42] There is a good reason to identify the word "craftisman" as in the *ToMP* specifically with the craft guilds who produced the plays. R. B. Dobson writes:

> As readers of the two indispensable volumes of *REED: York* will rapidly observe, "guild" was not in fact a term at all current in the northern capital at the period of the mystery plays; and it is not perhaps too surprising that late medieval townsmen should have preferred to use a variety of other more specific names to express their inveterate habit of creating new social organizations. At York itself the terms almost invariably employed in early references to the Corpus Christi plays were "arte" or "artifice" (in French), "artificium" (in Latin) and "crafte" (in English).

See Dobson, "Craft Guilds and City: The Historical Origins of the York Mystery Plays Reassessed," in *The Stage as Mirror*, 95.

[43] This characteristic seems to be much more relevant to plays such as the mystery cycles than to unruly games produced by priests for themselves, and it forms yet another reason not to limit the *ToMP* merely to such games as Clopper does when he interprets "miracula."

[44] John C. Coldewey, "Some Economic Aspects of the Late Medieval Drama," in *Contexts for Early English Drama*, 77.

[45] Coldewey, "Some Economic Aspects," 83.

[46] See for example Martin Stevens's analysis of the York Skinners' *Jesus' Entry to Jerusalem* which

> by all odds is the most developed Entry into Jerusalem in the medieval drama, and more than any other pageant, it puts in the foreground York's obsession with civic ceremony and self-celebration, for nowhere else is the issue of any play so directly the processional pageant, the very mode of performance that the York cycle enacts for its audience, than in this pivotal dramatic episode. Indirectly, the

> play imitates a civic procession resembling the annual civic liturgical procession of Corpus Christi, in which the city officials as well as the parish clergy "entered" the city with the Host, the Body of Christ. This event was, of course, the core of the civic celebration of Corpus Christi, and it is thought by many to have been the germ of the Corpus Christi play itself. Directly it imitated the royal entry ceremony, which came to be a highly developed genre of civic procession in York. In both frames of reference, the Skinners' play served the *ultimate function of highlighting the corporate community of York.*

*Four Middle English Mystery Cycles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 50-1, emphasis added.

[47] Margaret Rogerson, "Living History: The Modern Mystery Plays in York," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 43 (2004): 21. Rogerson quotes Mike Tyler from his "Report by the Director," *RORD* 42 (2003): 158.

[48] *REED: York*, 11/698.

[49] Ibid., 10-11/697-8.

[50] See Coldewey's "Some Economic Aspects" for an explanation of the financial system that made it worthwhile for the guilds to invest money in the plays. *Contexts*, 77-101.

# Chapter 4

## Late Medieval Street Scenes: Performance between Epic and Total Acting

> *The street demonstrator's performance is essentially repetitive. The event has taken place; what you are seeing now is a repeat. If the scene in the theatre follows the street scene in this respect then the theatre will stop pretending not to be theatre, just as a street-corner demonstration admits it is a demonstration (and does not pretend to be the actual event).*
>
> Bertolt Brecht, "The Street Scene: A Basic Model for an Epic Theatre"[1]

> *The public, which mistakes the bogus for truth, has the sense of what is true and always reacts to it when in happens. Today, however, we must look for it in the street, not on stage.*
>
> Antonin Artaud, "No More Masterpieces"[2]

> *Jesus:*
> *Al men þat walkis by waye or strete,*
> *Takes tente ȝe schalle no trauayle tyne.* (321, 253-4)
>
> [*All men that walk by way or street*
> *Take heed that you miss none of my suffering.*]
>
> York Plays, *The Crucifixion*[3]

The four concepts of performance that I discussed in the previous chapter are not only alluded to in the *ToMP*, which suggests the existence of a late medieval theoretical discourse concerned with performance, but they also typify dominant characteristics of the religious vernacular theatre itself. In this chapter I focus my analysis mainly on examples from the York plays that demonstrate how these four concepts, "contrariety and

simultaneity," the tension between "performance and signification," "emotionality," and "communality," work in performance. From my analysis of the plays as performance texts I conclude that the idea of acting was based on an attempt to achieve a performative delineation between actor and character rather than, as Bertolt Brecht puts it, "some third, interdependent, uncontradictory entity."[4]

As I argued in the introductory chapter, dialectical situations where the co-presence of the actor and the character is *aesthetically* intentional and not meant to be denied largely fall into two categories that can be defined as "epic" and "total." Briefly, by "epic" acting I mean situations wherein the doubleness of the performer and the character is intentionally overt as, for example, when an actor not only wears a mask but attention is focused on the difference between the actor's face and the mask s/he wears. Total acting, or "theatre of presence" as it is sometimes termed, involves on the other hand situations in which the actor has to display such extreme physicality or emotionality in order to evoke a character that what happens in performance is not attributed solely to character but rather points back to the performer's self. By using the terminology of "epic" and "total" theatre I explicitly refer to modern (mostly avant-garde) theatre theories that negate acting concepts which prioritize as complete a merger as possible between actor and role. I turn to modern theatre theories for two main reasons. First, as I demonstrate below, I believe that there are indeed significant phenomenological similarities between the aesthetics of late medieval acting and contemporary ones. Second, from a methodological point of view, terms such as "epic" and "total" theatre are familiar enough to us and rooted in our discourse about theatre and performance so that we can use them in order to articulate other moments in theatre history than the ones that

bred them, while simultaneously bearing in mind their specific contexts. Using these concepts as tools in an attempt to define an aesthetic other than their own not only points to the ongoing dynamic exchanges of styles and conventions throughout theatre history but also makes it easier to contextualize late medieval theatre as a significant era that had sophisticated performance and performance theory. Finally, the aesthetic emphasis of epic and total theatre theories on the performative presence of the actor alongside or as opposed to that of the character (for different reasons in each case) makes these theories very relevant for my discussion of the medieval religious theatre.

In other words, although the difference between actor and character exists in *every* theatre *performance*, what Jean Alter terms the "performant function" as opposed to or in relation to the "referential function,"[5] there are certain moments in theatre history in which for social, cultural, and aesthetic reasons theatre creators deliberately sought their unconcealed co-existence, as in the late medieval theatre and in modern experimental theatre. In addition, consciously maintaining the distinction between the performing person and the role s/he enacts is at the basis of contemporary definitions of "performance" in relation to more traditional concepts of "theatre."[6] This basic concept evolved from the inclusion of cultural theory within theatre studies, generating exploration of performers' cultural identity and "questions of how bodies in space exemplify social relations."[7] However, I assume that the increasing emphasis on the "performant function" in the aesthetics of contemporary performance depends not only on the influence of cultural theory on theatre but also on theories of early twentieth-century avant-garde experimentation—including early notions of "epic" and "total" theatre.[8] I note this because my borrowing of the terms "epic" and "total" for the

discussion of medieval theatre (however appropriate I believe them to be) and my suggestion that there are phenomenological similarities between modern and medieval practices might be understood as an attempt to impose theories that are too strongly tied to specific contexts.[9] Therefore, although I discuss the phenomenological similarities between modern epic and total theatre and theory and the late medieval religious theatre, suggesting that the specific characteristic of such late medieval "performance" is its existence within the tension between epic and total acting conventions, my reading of late medieval acting can also be termed an examination of it as "performance."[10]

In the following pages I analyze examples from the York cycle that suggest epic and/or total acting methods and that demonstrate the actor/character differentiation as an underlying aesthetic principle of the late medieval religious theatre. In each case I will contextualize the given example in relation to twentieth-century theatre theory and practice. I often refer to Brecht's "epic theatre" and Antonin Artaud's ideas about the "theatre of cruelty" as two philosophical modernist anchors for examining notions of epic and total acting, although I do not limit myself to them or claim any kind of intentional relation between their ideologies and late medieval religious theatre. Although my analysis here focuses on some specific examples from the York cycle that seem to best demonstrate "epic" and "total" acting, I would add that the future potential of this project is the discussion of each and every episode of the cycle, analyzing its design of acting conventions according to these categories. I believe that these theatrical aesthetic lenses are very helpful in the analysis of medieval religious theatre, in that they illuminate the artistic thought and mechanisms that allowed the huge production of a mystery play to work on the very many levels that it did. I start my discussion of "epic acting" by looking

at the complex and interrelated use of four performative epic conventions: theatrical deixis, the wearing of masks, the episodic structure of the cycle that led to the casting of many actors for the same role, and the coded use of gesture. I draw my examples first from the opening sequence of the cycle (*The Fall of the Rebel Angels* to *The Expulsion*), and then from the episode of *Joseph's Trouble about Mary*. In the second part of this chapter I turn to the sequence of the Passion, in which I look at the use of methods of total acting such as extreme bodily physicality and emotionality, violence, and silence as presence.

The opening episode of the mystery plays, *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, is important not only because it is the very beginning of the cycle and because it sets the ideological division between good and bad, and high and low, but also because it determines the performative rhetoric of the entire event. Rosemary Woolf notes that "the opening play of the Fall of the Angels [is] on a subject never dramatized before and rarely since."[11] From the perspective of performance, I believe that the inclusion of this particular episode has significant meaning that is specific for the genre of the mystery play. The very ambitious attempt to *perform the Bible* in the vernacular and as a religious event yet not within a strictly religious sphere must have been thoughtfully structured and planned; as R. B. Dobson puts it, "it must have been discussed by the aldermen there."[12] I suggest that one of the ideological functions of this episode is to self-consciously problematize the question of enacting or becoming "like" God the Father. By metatheatrically raising this issue at the outset of the entire cycle, the performers emphasize and self-referentially mark the differences among a theatrical representation, a religious ritual, and above all, the "real thing," as I will now show.

The fallacy of Lucifer and the devils—setting in action the play and the entire cycle—is their desire to become godly themselves, thus figuring and foretelling Adam and Eve's sin. Lucifer provocatively declares: "I sall be *lyke vnto hym* þat es hyeste on heghte" (51, 91) [I shall be *like him* that is highest of height]. This very intention is the reason that God must punish the devils, explaining, "Those foles for þaire fayrehede in fantasyes fell" (53, 129) [those fools fell into fantasies because they felt so beautiful]. However, in the opening and performative monologue of this play the actor playing God the Father himself expresses the same kind of "fantasy." He addresses the audience directly telling it—paradoxically—that "*My body* in blys ay abydande, Vnendande, withouten any endyng" (49, 7-8) [*My body* in bliss is abiding, unending without any ending]. The whole opening monologue is immanently "contrary" from the viewpoint of the performing actor, and the theatrical technique that is therefore used is deixis as a means to negate any impression that the performer is trying to be "like unto him." As Ruth Evans writes about a different episode:

> In the York *Assumption* Mary tells doubting Thomas: "sesse of thy sorowe for I am sothly *þe same*" (159). Here "þe same" can mean not only "that one you talk of" but also "identical to myself," and perhaps even "unchanging." The expression also has a deictic function: it is a theatrical device to explain which characters are on stage, but one of course that also draws attention to the gap between the actor and the biblical figure he embodies. "Sameness," in other words, is paradoxically split, re-created in the text as a play of identification and difference, even as the pageant tries to maintain a defense against history.[13]

This inherent contrariety of a performer who uses the word "I" or "my" in the name of a character in order *not* to stand in for this character is typical of the epic-acting convention of the storyteller.

Beyond the thematic depiction of the idea of "becoming God" in the play as opposed to the deictic speech acts of the actors that reverse this desire, there are other metatheatrical moments in the play that indicate aesthetic awareness of this question. When Seraphim talks to God the Father, promising total obedience, he refers to God's voice and then twice to his "fair face":

> *Angelus Seraphyn*
> With all þe wytt þat we welde we woyrschip þi wylle,
> Þou gloryus God þat es grunde of all grace;
> Ay with stedefaste steuen lat vs stande styll,
> Lorde, to be fede with þe fode of thi fayre face.
> In lyfe that es lely ay-lastande,
> Thi dale, lorde, es ay daynetethly delande,
> And whoso þat fode may be felande –
> To se thi fayre face – es noght fastande. (51, 73-80)
>
> [With all the wit that we wield we worship your will,
> Thou glorious God that is ground of all grace;
> With your steadfast voice let us stand still,
> Lord, to be fed with the food of *thy fair face*.
> In life that is leally ay-lasting,
> The gift of grace, Lord, thou art for ever bountifully bestowing,
> And whoever may taste that food—
> To see *thy fair face*—is not fasting.]

In the first line of this paragraph Seraphim says that the good angels will use "all the wit" in order to worship God. Theatrically he points to the action of hearing God's voice and emphasizes the spectatorial experience of *seeing* God's "fair face"—so beautiful a face that whoever sees its beauty is fed by it and thus "is not fasting." I think that the word "face," especially in the context of "seeing it"—the angels are not the only ones who see God's face or hear his voice, the audience is there too—is used here in a double meaning that refers not only to the real or metaphorical "face" of God, but also to the very mask that the actor playing God is wearing.[14] When Seraphim says the words "to see thy fair face" attention is focused on the (masked) face of God, emphasizing the point that this is only a human representation of God the Father, who is *not* trying to be in *his* likeness. This metatheatrical reference might also be asking the spectators to notice the craftsmanship involved in producing such an impressive image as most likely the gilded mask was. We know that God the Father was presented by an actor wearing a gilded mask, but the York records also tell us that the word "face" literally meant a mask. The Mercers' Pageant Documents from 1433 include the following listing:

> While þe Pagent gere lastes ffirst a Pagent With iiij Wheles helle mouthe iij garmentes for iij deuels vj deuelles *faces* in iij Vesernes Array for ij euell saules þat is to say ij Sirkes ij pair*e* hoses ij vesenes & ij Chauelers Array for ij gode saules. [While the pageant there consists of first a pageant with four wheels, hell mouth, three garments for three devils, six devil faces (masks) in three face covers, dress for two evil souls that is to say two shirts/garments worn next to the skin, two pairs of pants, two vizor masks, and two wigs array for two good souls.][15]

Further indication of this metatheatrical awareness can be found in the cycle's second play, *The Creation*, in which God briefly repeats the happenings of the former episode and explains that "My hegh *Godhede* I will noght hyde, All-yf sume foles be fallyn me fro" (54, 7-8). [My high *godhead* I will not hide, although some fools fell from me because of it]. Whether God's recalling of the fallen angels' episode has to do with their fantasy to be in his *likeness* or not, I would again suggest that "godhead" might have been used in the double meaning of God's divinity as well as the mask the performer wears. In the 1526 Mercers' Pageant Accounts we find the listing of "ij dewell heddes" [two devil heads][16] in the sense of masks, and the *MED* lists three meanings to the word "godhead," the third of which is "a representation of God in carving, painting, or the like."[17] Although the references to masks (faces or God-heads) in the York records are linked with devils this does not mean that they could not be related to the enactment of good figures such as God the Father. In the Coventry records we find for example a listing from 1564 of "Item paid for payntyng of Iesus heade" [item paid for painting of Jesus' head] and in 1567 "Item ij marryes hedes the spyryt of godes cote, Item godes hede & hys cotte & the spyryts hede"[item two marryes heads the spirit of God's coat, item God's head and his coat and the spirit's head] are also listed.[18] And in Chester we have listings such as an "Item paid ffor geyldeng of godes ffase & ffor peyntynge of the geylers ffasses" [item paid for gilding of God's face and for painting of the geylers faces/masks] (1549-50), or a 1553-4 account of an "Item we gaue for gelldinge of Gods fase" [Item we gave for gilding of God's face], and so forth.[19] Finally, in Norwich, the Grocers' Guild Records from 1564 include a literal reference to a mask for God the Father titled "a face & heare for ye Father" [a face (mask) and hair for the Father].[20]

According to this interpretation the words "thy fair face" meant simultaneously *both* God's fair face *and* the actor's (impressive) mask. Further, by a very simple textual double meaning the performance creates a situation that evokes a *triple* referent: the actor who physically wears the mask and uses his own voice to talk as if he were God, the mask that signifies the *image* of God, and thirdly, the idea of God himself. By calling attention to the mask, to God's "fair face," the performance creates a dialectical situation that differentiates between the performer and God, making it clear to the audience that the mask is also not God, but rather a mediator within a mediator. Since establishing the remoteness and realness of the real God is the point of this opening episode, the performance itself deliberately uses the simplest and most straightforward means in order not to create any kind of an illusionist impression. From a theoretical point of view this is similar to Brecht's theatrical didacticism only the opposite way around. In Brecht's theatre the performer is the point of the performance and the character is a means for a dialectical process of performative criticism, which is supposed to make spectators aware of their social condition. In the medieval religious theatre, however, because of the holiness of the characters, *they* become the explicit ideological focus of the performance, and the actor who is differentiated from them is a means for a dialectical process of performative adoration, which is supposed to make spectators aware of a metaphysical reality that is other than their own.

Further indication that this kind of doubleness was part of the aesthetic intentionality comes from a late document from Chester which Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter quote and analyze. The 1608-9 Chester Banns describe the different episodes

that are about to be presented by the guilds and conclude with the following warning and explanation:

> The sume of this storye Lords & ladies all
> I haue breifelye repeated & how the muste be played
> Of one thinge warne you now I shall
> That not possible it is these matters to be contryued
> In such sorte and cunninge & by such players of price
> As at this daye good players & fine wittes. Coulde deuise
> ffor then shoulde all those p*er*sones that as godes do playe
> In Clowdes come downe w*i*th voice and not be seene
> ffor noe man can p*ro*portion that godhead I saye
> To the shape of man face. nose and eyne
> But sethence the face gilte doth disfigure the man y*a*t deme
> A Clowdye coueringe of the man. a Voyce onlye to heare
> And not god in shape or person to appeare.[21]

> [I have briefly repeated the sum of the story, Lords and Ladies all, and how it must be played; of one thing I shall now warn you, that it is not possible to contrive these matters in such a way so as to keep them moral and with such players that are paid, as nowadays good players and fine wits. Could devise for then should all those people that as gods do play, in clouds come down with voice and are not seen, for no man can proportion that godhead I say, to the shape of man's face, nose and eye. But since the gilded face disfigures the man yet think of it as a cloud covering the man. A voice only to hear and not God in shape or person to appear.]

This reference is of great importance in that it discloses not only theoretical awareness of the problematic contrariety of enacting God but also pragmatic solutions that were used. Twycross and Carpenter suggest that

> The terms of this passage are not wholly and easy to follow, since the exact significance and stress of "proportion," "shape of man," and "disfigure" are difficult to determine. *Disfigure* at this period does not appear to carry its later connotations of "deform," but a more neutral sense nearer to "un-figure" or "alter the shape of." The last three lines of the extract are perhaps the most potentially ambiguous. The sense seems to be: "since the gold face conceals the identity of the actor, think of it as if it were a cloud machine concealing the whole man, so that we only hear the voice of God coming from this cloud cover (or mask), and do not see God himself supposedly appearing physically on stage."[22]

According to Twycross and Carpenter the relevance of this reference to the texts and period I am examining is questionable because they explain that "in spite of obvious problems of performing divinity, a sense of impropriety in human actors playing God seems to be largely a post-Reformation development."[23] However, although concepts of enacting God prior to the Reformation were not based on any kind of an overriding objection to the phenomenon of a human actor playing God I suggest that the "obvious problems of performing divinity" as well as religious and ethical notions that are inevitably involved in this theatrical process were at the basis of the aesthetic self-awareness that led to concepts of performance that purposely differentiated between the actor and the signs of the character "God." The Chester Banns prove this in that the text apologetically warns its audience "not to expect the sophisticated techniques of the modern stage,"[24] in addition to explaining the ideological function of the earlier stage conventions. Even if this ideology belongs to a post-Reformation development, the Banns articulate the meaning and function that was attributed to the gilded mask that the actor enacting God wore during the centuries prior to the Reformation. In other words, the

Banns' reliance on the convention of the gilded mask seems to me to belong to a performance concept that originates in a long running tradition rather than a suggestion that these lines are evidence of casting new ideas into an old but supposedly "neutral" convention. Moreover, we have evidence from as early as 1415 that in certain episodes, such as the York Curriers' *Transfiguration*, the convention of performing only the voice of God who was hidden by a cloud was already in use. The character of God in the play is named "Pater in Nube" (God in a Cloud). In their translation of the *Ordo paginarum*, Johnston and Rogerson fill in some missing words of the description of the pageant (most probably based on the play), and in addition to the original appearance of "Peter, James, and John, Jesus ascending the mount and transfiguring" they list "*the voice speaking in a cloud.*"[25]

In addition, there is another significant element in the lines quoted from the Chester Banns that can possibly help to contextualize not only their content but also their theatre ideology with earlier enactments of God. The idea that the actor playing God should not be seen, but only have his voice heard, hence legitimizing the performative use of a voice, is mentioned twice.[26] Obviously vocality is the dominant means of communication of a masked actor with its audience since the mask freezes an expression whereas the voice can nuance the performance. Although an actor's voice discloses individuality—each person has a different voice—according to the Chester Banns even in post-Reformation ideology the situation of a person enacting God is not totally forbidden, suggesting, therefore, a certain affinity between the current performance and earlier mystery plays. Significantly, Margaret Rogerson in an illuminating essay points out that there is "substantial evidence that the concept of a 'medieval' play based on a Creation to

Doomsday structure survived well into the eighteenth century."[27] Although "the question of biblical drama performed by mere human actors was raised frequently in the published debate on the morality of the stage in both the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries,"[28] the solution that Rogerson documents is the "transformation of the 'medieval' tradition by the professional showmen of the *puppet theatre*."[29] Puppet theatre suggests a very different performative realm than that offered by the civic mystery cycles, one in which live actors enact God—even if only vocally. Moreover, even in the puppet shows, as Rogerson writes, there was great hesitation and even avoidance of having God enacted at all:

> Evidence that the puppeteers consistently avoided the blasphemy of "counterfeiting" God can be seen elsewhere in Crosfield's description of the Oxford puppet play. At the beginning of the show, Adam and Eve appear in a fully created world and, after their encounter with the serpent, they are expelled by an angel. Crosfield's description of the opening sequence acknowledges God's relationship to the events being presented but gives no indication that a puppet "God" was on the stage physically to witness Adam and Eve's transgression or personally to direct their expulsion.[30]

Similarly, the Chester Banns supply significant information about the late medieval aesthetic and ideological use of masks to conceal the "face" of God. As Twycross and Carpenter conclude their analysis of this document:

> The unease over the propriety of a human actor impersonating God, and the way the mask is justified, suggest a self-consciousness about masking itself. This is seen in the painstaking distinction that is made between the

> man who is the actor and the mask that is to conceal him. The words of the Banns, explaining the "proper" relation to this mask, imply that the audience, unless guided, are likely to look behind the mask and what it represents to the face beneath, and experience a tension between the two.[31]

The masked actor playing God the Father is, however, only one example of the reasons for and practices of epic and dialectical actor/character relations in the late medieval religious theatre. The episodic structure of the cycle and the fact that more than one actor plays the same role in different moments of the character's life lead to another significant aspect of this acting aesthetic. In the York Cycle no less than four distinct plays perform the story of Adam and Eve. The third episode of the cycle, the Cardmakers' *The Creation of Adam and Eve*, is separated from the Plasterers' *The Creation of the World*, although this episode could also include the creation of Adam and Eve.[32] Following their creation, however, the characters of Adam and Eve participate in three more episodes: the Fullers' *Adam and Eve in Eden*, the Coopers' *The Fall of Man*, and the Armourers' *Expulsion*.[33] This segmentation is very telling from the perspective of acting concepts and actor/character dialectics. The non-aesthetic explanations for splitting the Adam and Eve biblical episode into four plays can range from the need to have enough stories for all the guilds to perform to a pragmatic intention to keep the plays short and focused on one point.[34] However, the aesthetic consequences of such a division in terms of performance are illuminating. First, this textual evidence means that a spectator who watched the four episodes sequentially saw in a very short time four different actors playing Adam and four different *male actors* playing Eve. The conventionality that encompasses both many actors playing the same role and crossdressing already suggests an acting concept that is based on contrariety and on an

explicit tension between the actor and the role. Although this performative convention strengthens the fixedness of the image of Adam and Eve—which is conceived as a mold that can be filled and refilled by different human beings—it also implies that each and every member of the audience can be and already is a reflection of the original sinners. This idea is reinforced because the actors were not "professional" but rather familiar to the spectators and part of the bourgeois milieu of the guild members.

But the dramatic design of the plays suggests that there is more to it. The episodic structure and the acting concept it dictates are not mere technicalities but rather the outcome of a coherent philosophical and aesthetic worldview that demanded a specific acting concept. Each of the four episodes of Adam and Eve not only depicts a different event in their lives, but their moral behavior and personality also changes and develops (negatively) from one episode to the next.[35] In other words, each segment presents them in a different mental state that demands them to be enacted differently, thus creating a set of theatrical tableaux of four different stages in their lives that inevitably lead to the sin and the expulsion. The affinity with the pictorial arts and the Corpus Christi procession's tableaux is more than evident, but by "tableaux" I do not refer only to painting and sculpture that present still moments.[36] Rather, somewhat paradoxically, the separateness of the four situations in Adam and Eve's lives enables a dramatic and lively theatrical presentation of a *process*.[37] In a contemporary production of the York Plays (such as Tony Harrison and Bill Bryden's 1984 *The Mysteries* at the National Theatre) one couple of actors continuously performs all four episodes thus demonstrating a modern concept of psychology (and of acting) according to which a person is capable of undergoing and enacting a process of change by subtle nuances. The medieval theatre aesthetic works,

however, on a different concept of psychology, encompassing personality, flux, and change. This kind of psychology does not look at the "internal" and nuanced process but rather at the external and demonstrable *stations* of one's life. "Stations" in the theatrical context refers not only to the obvious theological connection with Christ's stations in the Passion but also to the stations ("loca" or "places")[38] of York's "street scenes," emphasizing the metatheatrical significance of such a performative convention.

In the Cardmakers' very short *Creation of Adam and Eve*, God the Father briefly summarizes the creation of the world and expresses a need for "a skylfull best" [a skilfull beast] that "sall worschipe to me take" (59, 22-4) [shall worship me]. Accordingly, once Adam and Eve are created they are depicted as extremely naïve and obedient creatures—skillful beasts. In this episode, in a childlike ritualistic manner, after Adam expresses adoration of God, Eve has exactly the same number of lines in which she expresses the same idea, to the extent that she literally repeats Adam's statements, thus lacking authorial personality of herself. In fact, both are designed more like puppets than like real human beings. For example, Adam says

> For now his here a ioyful syght,
> To se þis worlde so lange and wyde
> Many diverse things here now there is,
> Off bestis and foulis bathe wylde and tame; (60, 47-50)
>
> [For now here is a joyful sight,
> To see this world so long and wide
> Many diverse things are here now,
> Both wild and tamed beasts and fowls]

And only ten lines down Eve has almost exactly the same speech:

> And selcouth thyngis may we se here,
> Of þis ilke warld so lange and brade
> With bestis and fowlis so many and sere;
> Blessid be he þat hase us made. (60, 57-60)
>
> [And wondrous things may we see here
> In all this world so long and broad,
> Where beasts and fowls so many appear;
> Blessed be he that has made us]

This characterization slightly changes, however, in the following pageant with the next couple of actors—*Adam and Eve in Eden*—in which they are still naïve and obedient,[39] but less stiff and more lively and experienced and therefore more daring. The narrative significance of this episode is the insertion here of God's prohibition to eat from "this tree alone" (63, 66), but it also creates an opportunity to depict Adam and Eve at a different, more mature stage. Whereas in the former episode Adam and Eve each turn directly to God as they talk, suggesting a frontal and formal staging posture—both looking forward or in the direction of God and not at one another—in this play, although it once again features a trialogue between God and Adam and Eve, Adam turns and talks directly to Eve:

> Loo, Eve, nowe ar we brought
> Bothe vnto rest and rowe,
> We neyd to tayke no thought,
> But loke ay well to doo.
> (63, 37-40)
>
> [Look, Eve, now we are brought
> To both rest and comfort;
> We need to take no thought,
> But try only to do well.]

These lines imply a degree of intimacy between the two that is lacking in the previous episode. By talking to each other (Eve replies directly to Adam, talking about God in the third person "Lovyng be ay such a lord, to *vs hais* geven so great reward" (63, 41-2) [So loving is such a lord, to *us has* given such a great reward]) Adam and Eve convince each other that obeying God is the right thing to do, and in this sense they are in a different mental stage than they were in the previous play, as the speech act of convincing is more sophisticated than plainly adoring.

This process continues to evolve in next episode, *The Fall of Man*. The two actors that play Adam and Eve in this third episode are already at a behavioral stage that is clearly distinct from that of the couple the spectators saw in the play of their creation. Whereas in the first episode Eve's meekness was expressed by literally repeating Adam's words, in their third episode, tempted by Satan, her personality as a mature human being is not only fully developed—she grows to desire to "haue knowyng as wele as hee" (66, 51) [have knowledge as well as he has]—but also she leads the action. She talks with the worm, "For oure lord God forbeedis vs itt, the frute þerof, Adam nor *I*" (65, 36-7) [For our lord God forbids it to us, that fruit, Adam nor I], asks him questions, "Why, what-kynne thyng art þou, Þat telles þis tale to me?" (66, 52-3) [Why, what kind of thing are you, that tells this tale to me?], and asks him whether he is sure about what he promises, "Is þis soth þat þou sais?" (66, 74) [Is what you are saying surely true?]. Finally, on her own, she takes a decision: "Than wille *I* to thy techyng traste, and fange þis frute vnto *oure* foode" (66, 78-9) [Than I will trust your teaching, and take this fruit as our food]. This is obviously based on the biblical narrative, but having a third actor with a different kind of physical and vocal presence demonstrating this change in her suggests that in the

first episode "Eve" could not have behaved as she now can and does. Her behavioral development in this episode obviously peaks as she tempts Adam to eat the fruit: "Byte on boldely, for it is trewe, we shalle be goddis, and knawe al thyng" (67, 102-3) [Bite on strongly, for it is true, we shall be gods, and know everything]. This speech act now suggests a very close proximity between the two—maybe even physical touch—that is utterly different from the two postures in which they are positioned in the previous episodes. Adam's personality in this episode is also different than what we met before. Whereas in the first two episodes Adam and Eve constantly stand together as a unit, talking in the plural on behalf of them both, here for the first time they are separated—technically enabling the worm to address Eve. This physical separation at the beginning of this episode leads to an Adam who is no longer responsible and protective, now not only sharing the desire to "be as goddis" (67, 92) [be as gods] but also, having bitten from the fruit immediately—even comically—accusing Eve and denouncing her: "Allas! what haue I done, for shame! Ille counsaille! woo worthe thee! A, Eue, þou art to blame" (67, 106-8) [Alas! What have I done, what a shame! Evil adviser, a curse on you! Ah, Eve, you are to blame].

Although God confronts them and declares their punishment in this episode, a fourth couple of Adam and Eve is yet to appear in the Armourers' *Expulsion*. One of the significant developments in this episode is that God is absent here, represented only by an angel who leaves in the middle of the play. In other words, the more human and therefore the more faulty Adam and Eve become, the more distanced they are from God. In this episode Adam and Eve's separateness reaches a new degree, with Adam referring to her now in the third person, telling the angel that "my wiffe þat may I wite, for scho me red"

(70, 34-5) [my wife I there indict, for *she* led me]. The rest of the episode depicts their mutual accusations, very much like an ordinary unhappily married couple:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Adam*: | *Adam*: |
| Allas, what womans wiite was light! | [Alas! How stupid are women! |
| Þat was wele sene | That is evident |
| *Eve*: | Eve: |
| Sethyn it was so me knyth it sore | Since it was so, it worried me sorely |
| Bot sethyn that woman witteles ware | But because this woman was witless |
| Mans maistrie shulde haue bene more | Man's mastery should have been stronger |
| Aganys þe gilte. | Against the guilt. |
| *Adam*: | *Adam*: |
| Nay, at my speche wolde þou never spare, | Nay, you would never listen to me; |
| Þat has vs splite. | This is what has *split us*. |
| *Eve*: | *Eve*: |
| Iff I hadde spoken youe | When I spoke with you, |
| oughte to spill, | to tell you something |
| Ye shule haue taken gode tent þeretyll | You should have paid attention |
| And turnyd my þought | And turned my thought.] |
| (72-3, 133-43) | |

This kind of a dialogue could not have occurred in any of the former episodes, suggesting, in other words, that the fourth couple of actors enacts the most undignified and earthly behavior of Adam and Eve. Their post-lapsarian behavior can be thus characterized as more "realistic"—less formal and closer to the audience. However, although this episode combines more "realistic" depictions of a quarreling couple, it also has moments where they once again stand in a frontal posture, similar to the two first episodes, but now instead of talking with the protecting God, they directly address the

audience. Adam, once again speaking on behalf of both of them, says: "Nowe is shente both I and shoo" (71, 79) [Now we are ruined, I and she too] and "For putte we were to grete plenté at prime of þe day. Be tyme of none alle lost had wee" (71, 88-91) [For we had great plenty at the prime of the day. By the time of noon we lost all that we had]. Whereas behaviorally their development from the first to the fourth episode descends linearly, their theatrical postures develop ironically in a cyclical manner. They start as a united couple in a frontal posture, talking directly with God and enjoying his protection, then they are gradually separated (first talking to each other, then at the peak of the events almost or even really touching each other, after that accusing each other), and finally they end as they start, in frontal postures, only now addressing the audience and in a very different status.

I think that the fact that these four different episodes were enacted by four couples of actors and that the story of Adam and Eve was divided into four distinct moments is a very significant example of the epic kind of acting I am trying to articulate. Whether the convention of having more than one performer enact the same role existed prior to the dramatic and theatrical use of this convention or vice versa does not matter. The fact is that the combination of the two enables the creation of a complex theatrical message that is dependent on this particular aesthetic. Thus the effect is a complex one: it is didactic, devotionally respectable, and aesthetically enjoyable. The iconographic image of the characters of Adam and Eve stays fixed and cannot be associated with any particular individual (i.e., the practice of contrariety, simultaneity, and overt signification), and at the same time a theatrical presentation of process and development that accords with late medieval psychology is achieved.

I previously mentioned John Rouse's objection to reading Brecht from an aesthetic viewpoint only (see note 9 above), yet his articulation of one of Brecht's principles is extremely relevant to—although, obviously, not exactly the same as—the convention I have been discussing:

> Brecht's actors were not encouraged to structure the separate beats smoothly together. On the contrary, Brecht considered the transitions as significant as the beats themselves, and he demanded that these transitions occur dialectically. Each beat can be examined as a self-contained entity in which a particular interaction takes place or a particular situation arises. As Manfred Wekwerth points out, the personal and social forces that determine these relationships can change in respect to each other, bringing about an alteration in the situation; this change is marked by the evolving of one beat into another. On the other hand, each determining factor can suddenly pass over into its opposite, bringing about a completely new situation, marked by a sudden leap from one beat to the next. … There need be no more unity either of character or of action between the beats than there is between the self-contained scenes around which Brecht's dramaturgy is structured on a larger scale. Indeed, Brecht made extensive use of all the possibilities inherent in a disunity of action in order to present the "development of characters, conditions, and events as discontinuous (in leaps)."[40]

In the Lehrstücke (Learning Plays), for example in *The Measures Taken*, Brecht himself used the very same convention of having more than one actor play the same role. Here the character of the Young Comrade is played by each of the chorus members in turn. By using this technique Brecht does not emphasize a dynamic process of development as much as he is interested in the idea that everyone is in the place of young comrade, his social "type" being much more important than any trait of his individuality. This is similar to the medieval idea that each and every of the performance's participants are

sinners that are/have to be redeemed by Christ. Brecht also uses the same idea the other way around as in *The Good Soul of Szechwan*,[41] where attention is drawn to the doppelganger actor in the double role of Shen-Te and Shui-Ta. But the main point of the previous example is to show that in the late medieval religious theatre these were not "mere conventions." Rather, the inherently episodic nature of the plays was deeply related to theatrical aesthetic choices that were meant to achieve very specific goals: religious, didactic, and aesthetic.

Significantly, leading experimental directors in the second half of the twentieth century have frequently turned to the convention of freely multiplying actors who play the same role, often in order to achieve quite a similar effect to that in the medieval plays, i.e., to present the audience with a character at different places and mental stages of his/her life. For example, Peter Stein, who was regarded by "the leading Brechtian actress Therese Giehse … as Brecht's true successor,"[42] featured this very convention in his famous 1971 production of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*:

> At the initial casting discussions … it was proposed that Peer should be played by at least three different actors. The reasons were threefold: first, the demands on the virtuosity of a single actor who must move from youth to old age in the course of the play; secondly, the dividing up of the role would be much fairer and in accordance with the ensemble ideal of the Schaubühne; thirdly, this decision would reinforce the critique of the individual and demonstrate how the central figure was conditioned by the circumstances of his life. Eventually it was agreed that the eight stages of Peer's life should be played by *six* different actors.
>
> Initially it was thought that the different Peers would pass on some part of their costume – like the baton of the relay race – but this was not found to be necessary. Instead, the change was usually effected by adopting the physical

> position of the preceding Peer: so Peer no. 2 lifted Ingrid off Peer no. 1's shoulders and continued the abduction; when Peer no. 2 lay unconscious after ramming his head against a rock, Peer no. 3 lay down beside him, and the follow-spot which had been resting on the former Peer now swung across onto him to begin the next scene. The titles of the different episodes were announced over loudspeakers, thus emphasizing the epic quality of the material.[43]

From this description it becomes apparent that the reasons for casting many actors involved pragmatic considerations as well as aesthetic ones, just as was the case in the medieval theatre. In both cases the idea is to performatively isolate and emphasize distinct moments in a character's life. But whereas Stein's ideological statement had to do with a socialist agenda of how life conditions an individual, late medieval ideology was concerned with representing change while maintaining the image of the religious characters fixed and separated from the actors who enacted them. The performance of the Adam and Eve episodes were not about a particular individual undergoing change—although each member in the audience could relate herself to both characters not only on the narrative level but also because her peers were the ones acting—but rather about the paradigm of performing sin itself. Therefore theatrical emphasis had to be laid on the idea that any person could find herself at any one of the stages that lead to destruction and also on the idea that these stages belong to a larger (mythological) dimension than life itself.

Two other modern examples of this epic theatrical convention are Ariane Mnouchkine's 1970-71 *1789* and three productions of Israeli director Rina Yerushalmi. In Mnouchkine's political adaptation of the events of the French Revolution she cast different actors in the role of Louis XVI. This production utilized many other theatrical episodic (one could say medieval) characteristics, such as performing parallel scenes on

many platforms within the large space of the performance and having the audience activated, moving from one platform to another. In an interview conducted by Emile Copfermann, regarding the idea of multiplying the actors who played the role of Louis XVI Mnouchkine tellingly explains:

> M: We never show Louis XVI. The spectator sees Louis XVI as seen by a fairground player, then by someone else a few months later, in a different style.
> C: Don't you run the risk of dissipation in this way? There are no longer characters that are in some sense individuals, but rather one collective character: History, and from them on, a mythical history?
> M: A collective vision, rather than a collective character, which is normal in a production realised by a collective.[44]

Although this theatrical choice is only one out of many that Mnouchkine used in the performance where "there [was] virtually no 'realistic' acting,"[45] her emphasis, like Stein's, on the communal and collective production that justified dividing the same role among different performers, is interesting in that it is reminiscent of the collective effort involved in producing the mystery plays, and relevant therefore to the centrality of the concept of "communality" that I discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover, her insistence that they did not *show* Louis XVI, who is as real a figure as the biblical ones were to the medieval audience, embraces the same idea that it is impossible and irrelevant to have one actor enact *him*.

Rina Yerushalmi frequently uses this convention. In her 1994 *Romeo and Juliet*, in order to convey the feeling of timelessness that typifies being in love, she had three couples of Romeo and Juliet simultaneously playing on the stage depicting different moments in a

couple's day. In her recent *Mythos* (2002), an epic adaptation of nine Greek tragedies, in the scene in which Orestes kills his mother the audience watches three Clytemnestras, each actress depicting the character at a different stage of her life (mourning the death of Iphigenia; murdering Agamemnon; and being murdered by Orestes). Most relevant to my discussion here is, however, her Bible Project (1995-2000), in which she employed this convention in a very sophisticated manner, particularly in the scenes of Adam and Eve. Here, as in the medieval theatre, although without any explicit connection, she not only uses different actors for the same role, but also by splitting the scenes into separate episodes, she too creates a sense of development in the characters lives from naiveté to mutual destruction. In the scene of the creation of Adam and Eve she uses two actors according to conventional iconography. Barely looking at each other, a long-haired Eve and a masculine Adam are lying on the floor, addressing the audience and telling the story of their creation in the third person (Fig. 2). Later on in the performance Yerushalmi stages the temptation scene as a dance in which *six* couples of men and women dance simultaneously, each couple performing a different kind of marital relationship—in some the women are more dominant, in others the men. At the beginning of the scene all the women take out apples, and all the men hold knives and forks. By the end of the erotic scene all the apples are eaten (Fig. 3). Only one couple is then left on stage—different actors than the ones who enacted the episode of the creation of Adam and Eve—who now perform the scene of the expulsion. This mature and modernist couple, very different from conventional iconographic depictions, is a husband beating up his wife while they recite the biblical event, until pain and suffering become so extreme that the two actors leave/are expelled from the stage (Fig. 4).

Fig. 2. "In the day that the Lord God made the earth…" Genesis 2. *Va Yomer Va Yelech* (And He Said And He Was Walking). Directed by Rina Yerushalmi, ITIM Theatre Ensemble, Cameri Theatre,Tel Aviv, 1995-2000. Eve: Yael Gaathon. Adam: Emmanuel Hannon. Photo: Gadi Dagon.

In addition to the formal similarities and potential theatrical effects of this acting convention, it is hard not to notice that this technique seems to be used both in the medieval *and* modern cases of enacting historical, mythological, larger-than-life figures, but figures that are believed to have and/or really have existed. As Freddie Rokem defines the place and *role* of the actor who *performs* history and historical characters:

> [T]his does not imply that the actors performing history are transformed into historical characters or believe that they are such figures, because that would make it necessary to transfer them to the mental ward where the "Napoleons" are supposedly kept. Rather, the actors serve as a connecting link between the historical past and the "fictional" performed *here* and *now* of the theatrical event; they become a kind of historian, what I call a "hyper-historian," who makes it

> possible for us … to recognize that the actor is "redoing" or "reappearing" as something/somebody that has actually existed in the past.[46]

Enacting mythic characters such as the biblical ones or other historical personae that are always-already inscribed in cultural consciousness along with a typical "iconography" leads to another central Brechtian theatrical device—the recognizable, memorable, and quotable gesture. In this case, the cultural significance and performative dominance of Christian iconography and the plays' attempt to teach and re-inscribe Christian history and ideology function in performance similarly to the Brechtian concept of "gestus," i.e., the carefully designed body movement of the actor in relation to the character.

Fig. 3. "Male and Femal Created he them…" Genesis 1. *Va Yomer Va Yelech* (And He Said And He Was Walking). Directed by Rina Yerushalmi, ITIM Theatre Ensemble, Cameri Theatre, Tel Aviv, 1995-2000. Front row, left to right: Emmanuel Hannon, Noam Ben Azar, Netta Yashchin, Einat Gliksman. Back row, left to right: Yael Gaathon, Iyar Wolpe, Avi Cohen, Moisi Shmuel, Tzahala Kuras, Lior Ben Abraham, Asnat Zibil. Photo: Gerard Alon.

Fig. 4. "The Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden…" Genesis 3. *Va Yomer Va Yelech* (And He Said And He Was Walking). Directed by Rina Yerushalmi, ITIM Theatre Ensemble, Cameri Theatre, Tel Aviv, 1995-2000. Eve: Netta Yashchin. Adam: Noam Ben Azar. Photo: Gerard Alon.

Most discussions of the concept of "gestus" start by stating the term's complexity and the impossibility of clearly defining it. To my understanding, this concept first suggests a theatrical mechanism that combines the idea of performative leitmotifs that are built into a certain performance, with signs, images, or gestures that also acquire a new meaning, relevant to a real and larger socio-cultural context than the specific play depicts. Such gestures or performative moments are theatrically expressive and memorable.[47] As these gestures become part of the specific theatrical language of the play, and as they are repeated throughout, they gain *performative* meaning: not only do they function as part of the "story," but they also become influential and related to the pragmatic context of the extra-theatrical reality. Using the "gestus" is, therefore, a process of attributing performative meanings to the actor's body language in her/his interaction with the character and adding layers of significance to bodily gestures. Thus the image of the character does not need to be represented "realistically," but rather becomes a stylized combination of various expressive bodily sign systems. In Brecht, these gestures are designed in a way that interferes with the narrative flux of the performance, so that at certain key moments the audience's attention will be drawn to the need for social criticism and activism. This coded gestural interference theoretically creates an experience of alienation, so that one is not driven into the illusion of the story being told, as the actor who is "standing beside the role in performance, [is] at once demonstrating and commenting on the character's behavior."[48]

In addition to the idea of specific gestural leitmotifs, Carl Weber offers a wider definition of the concept of "gestus," which is also very useful for my further analysis of the bodily theatre language in the medieval theatre:

> Eventually, *Gestus* became to be understood by Brecht, as far as the actor is concerned, … as the total process, the "ensemble" of all physical behavior the actor displays when showing us a "character" on stage by way of his/her social interactions. It is an ensemble of the body and its movements and gestures, the face and its mimetic expressions, the voice and its sounds and inflections, speech with its patterns and rhythms, costume, makeup, props, and whatever else the actor employs to achieve the *complete image* of the role he/she is performing. It was important to Brecht that such *Gestus* was *memorable for an audience, and consequently, quotable*. Equally important was that *Gestus* defined a social position, the character's status and function in society, and that it yielded an image of a socially conditioned behavior that, in turn, conditions the functioning of society.[49]

Not only are "memorability" and "quotability" highly characteristic of medieval aesthetics, but also Weber's suggestion that "gestus" defines the socially conditioned behavior of a character is based on a performative social schema that favors constructing theatrical types that have clearly defined statuses. This concept, in spite of radically different ideological goals, can be seen as an inherent characteristic of actor/character dialectics in explicitly didactic theatre.

In late medieval religious culture a clearly defined coded sign-system and iconography dominated art, social behavior, and bodily movement. Therefore, its transference into the practice of religious theatre created a situation where a-priori narrative flux was performatively "interfered" with by visually coded gestures, quoted images, and signs that often created *mise-en-scénes* composed of images that simultaneously belong to different sign systems and ontological levels.[50] In a brief but effective analysis of acting in the mystery plays, Peter Happé describes "this [acting]

method as based upon iconic situation and diegetic presentation."[51] He quotes an example from Meredith and Tailby about the fourteenth-century Cividale *Planctus* and shows how the play's gestures are designed in close connection with musical notes:

> The nature of this performance must depend upon the music of course, but such directions as "Let her indicate the cross with open hands" followed by "Here let her strike her breast" suggest that the purpose of such actions is to point out a significant object (having iconic significance), and to represent identity externally.[52]

An analysis of the Pewterers' and Founders' *Joseph's Trouble about Mary* for example, demonstrates a similar use of this theatrical mechanism. The producers of the play had to solve a complex problem of how to stage Mary so that she simultaneously represented in the performance a normal woman—Joseph's wife whom he defies and calls "Þe bargayne I made þare" (118, 35) [the bargain I made there], referring to the young woman who in the previous, distinctively elevated episode of the Spicers' *Annunciation and Visitation* has just been miraculously impregnated, *and* the holy character of Mary as she was conceived in contemporary culture. In other words, over and above the fact that the character of Mary was enacted in the previous scene by a different actor than in this episode and that in both cases crossdressed male actors enact her, in this episode her character bears a triple referent. As Ruth Evans writes:

> Mary's body, then, is a thoroughly contradictory sign, one capable of affirming metonymically the enclosed and uncontaminated borders of a Christian society (for which the wholeness, whiteness, and roundness of the little Eucharistic cake is also a metonym), but one also dangerously capable, in so far as it is a signifier

of female sexuality, of disturbing those borders. The masquerade of purity hides the disturbance of the female body.[53]

*Joseph's Trouble about Mary* is an example, I suggest, where *quoting* and creating *quotable* gestures could evoke this complex image. An analysis of the play's text demonstrates this straightforwardly. After Joseph addresses the audience directly complaining about his new wife in a long monologue, he decides to go and see her:

| | |
|---|---|
| Neuere þe lees it is myne entente | Nevertheless it is my intent |
| To aske hir who gate hir þat barne, | To ask her who got her pregnant— |
| 3itt wolde I witte fayne or I wente. | I should still like to know that before I went. |
| All hayle, God be hereinne. | All hail! God be herein. |
| (119, 72-5) | |

Joseph's greeting as he enters ("All hail!") as well as the fact that the first maid welcomes him suggest two options for Mary's position. The first is that while he talked to the audience Mary was unseen—probably sitting behind a piece of cloth or a construction that signified their home. Alternatively, she was not hidden, just placed on a higher level than he was—perhaps Joseph stood on the street level and talked to the audience while Mary sat on the stage that signified home. The reason for the second assumption is that within the next few lines there is a dialogue between Joseph and Mary's first maid, in which the maid tells Joseph that "to telle hir will I ga of youre comyng" (119, 84-5) [I will go and tell her of your coming], and in the immediately following line the maid directly turns to Mary:

| | |
|---|---|
| Haue done and rise vppe, dame, | Stop what you are doing and get up, Lady, |

| | |
|---|---|
| And to me take gud hede— | And listen carefully to me— |
| Joseph, he is comen hame. | Joseph, he has come home. |
| (119, 86-8) | |

I prefer the second option because Mary's constant visibility enables the performative layering of her character's complex referent. After Joseph climbs up and "enters" the "house" he questions: "Whare is þat ȝonge virgine, Marie, my berde so bright?" (119, 77-8) [Where is that young virgin, Mary, my bride so bright?]. By asking this, Joseph deictically states Mary's virginity and accordingly her holiness even though he has just repeatedly complained about how she beguiled him, and that "Þe childe certis is nought myne" (118, 55) [the child surely is not mine]. (It seems possible to me that Joseph's speech act and intonation in asking this question could be ironic, but then the play would really be on the verge of blasphemy, if not literally crossing the borders, particularly if Mary is visible). The maid's answer to this question, however, is extremely significant: according to her description of Mary,

| | |
|---|---|
| *Sho sittis at hir boke full faste prayand* | *She sits at her book very intently praying* |
| For ȝou and vs, and for all þa | for you and us, and all those too |
| Þat oght has nede. | that are in need. |
| (119, 81-3) | |

This telling stage direction suggests a performative depiction of Mary that simultaneously enables her to be present on stage as Joseph's wife, but also performing the iconographically typical gesture that depicts her in the scene of the Annunciation. For example, in Melchior Broederlam's *The Annunciation* and *The Visitation* (Fig. 5) Mary not only typically sits with a book but also is located in small kind of booth that might be

similar to the concealing yet exposing construction that was perhaps used in performance.[54] This image almost surely echoes the position of Mary from the former pageant, thus re-inscribing in the audience's memory her holiness just before Joseph starts to interrogate her about the child's father. From the quoted/quotable image of sitting with a prayer book (that I suggest was visible to the spectators from the beginning, thus silently and majestically contrasting with Joseph's comic and pathetic monologue), the actor easily transfers into the domestic Mary whom the following lines depict and who demands a different set of gestures. Although Mary's speech is distinctly more elevated and shorter than Joseph's,[55] she greets him familiarly:

| | |
|---|---|
| Welcome, als God me spede. | Welcome, as God prospers me. |
| Dredles to me he is full dere; | Doubtless to me he is so dear. |
| Joseph my spouse, welcome er yhe. | Joseph, my spouse, you are welcome. |
| (119, 89-91) | |

It could be argued that this language still maintains the difference between the two characters, but clearly Mary switches her position, even if by the very act of putting her book down and breaking her silence. Moreover, Joseph bluntly and continuously points at her, drawing attention to her physicality:

| | |
|---|---|
| Telle me þe soth, how est with þe? | Tell me truly, how are you? |
| Wha has ben there? | Who has been *here*? |
| *Thy wombe is waxen grete*, thynke me. | *Your womb has grown large*, I think. |
| (119, 93-5) | |

Fig. 5. Melchior Broederlam, *The Annunciation* and *The Visitation*. From Henk van Os, et al., *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe: 1300-1500*, 137.

This transition from one gestural mode to another is reminiscent of the Brechtian "gestus" as described above, as it memorably calls attention to change in the character and to its social status (Mary's superiority as opposed to Joseph). By performing and transforming through the gestures that typify Mary both as a holy figure and as a "regular" wife, the actor in the role of Mary enables the point of the episode (Joseph's

recognition) to be unfolded on a more or less realistic level (he directly asks her who is the father at least four times). Thus the actor simultaneously demonstrates her character *and* rather than "commenting" on it, to use Rouse's terminology quoted above, I suggest that in this context more relevant is to characterize his performance as "adoring" it.

After Joseph questions Mary for the fourth time about the child's father—emphasizing (for doctrinal reasons as well as for comic effect) that they did not have sex,

| | |
|---|---|
| Þou art yonge and I am alde, | You are young and I am old; |
| Slike werkis yf I do walde, | Even if I were inclined, |
| Þase games fra me are gane. | These games from me are gone |
| (122, 194-6) | |

Mary overtly alters her bodily gesture once again. She deictically describes her posture, and, as if Joseph were absent, turns to God:

| | |
|---|---|
| Nowe grete God of his might | Now great God of his might, |
| Þat all may dresse and dight, | That may ordain and accomplish all, |
| *Mekely to þe I bowe.* | *Meekly I bow to you.* |
| Rewe on þis wery wight | Have pity on this weary living creature, |
| Þat in his herte myght light | That in his heart may alight |
| Þe soth to ken and trowe. | The truth to acknowledge and know. |
| (122, 201-6) | |

Mary is often depicted bowing in scenes of the Adoration of the Child, which might have influenced the stage design of these lines, thus achieving another gestural/visual effect, by already signifying the birth of Christ and connecting this pageant with the next one. Just as her former position (sitting with a book) created a link with the prior episode of

the Annunciation, now her bodily position indicates her true holiness and emphasizes Joseph's foolishness. Finally, in Joseph's and Mary's last interaction in the play, after he goes to the "wilderness" where he meets the angel who tells him that the child "is consayued of þe haly gast" (123, 267) [is conceived of the Holy Ghost] and humbly and apologetically returns home, Mary enacts once again the domestic, more realistic wife. Joseph asks "forgiveness now," and she answers humorously and sharply: "Forgiffnesse sir? Late be, for shame, Slike wordis suld *all gud women* lakke." (124, 296-7) [Forgiveness sir? Let it be, for shame. Such words should *all good women* lack]. If this is not enough, the final lines of the play are Joseph's, and although Mary's holiness has been reassured, he chauvinistically treats her one last time as an "ordinary" woman and encourages her to "start moving." This suggests, I think, that the actor in the role of Mary ends the play performing an ordinary posture/gesture:

| | |
|---|---|
| Yha, Marie, I am to blame | Yes, Mary. I am to blame |
| For wordis lang-are I to þe spak. | For words I to you spoke earlier. |
| *But gadir same nowe all oure gere* | *But gather up now all our possessions,* |
| Slike poure were as we were, | Such poor clothes as we wear, |
| And prike þam in a pak. | And fasten them in a pack. |
| Till Bedlem bus me it bere, | To Bethlehem I must carry it, |
| *For litill thyng will women dere;* | *For women are vexed by little things.* |
| Helpe vp nowe on my bak. | Help me up with it. |
| (124, 298-305) | |

Just as in Brecht's performances the "gestus" freezes or highlights a sign in order to emphasize it and make it a memorable social idea, the late medieval use of coded gesture functioned, although for different goals, as a theatrical means of isolating and

highlighting religiously significant moments or ideas. Whereas Brecht sought this theatrical tool in order to evoke a sense of alienation and thus lead to social criticism and activism against bourgeois ideology, in late medieval religious theatre the use of performative iconography was meant primarily to evoke a sense of identification and devotion, though not illusion. Moreover, the use of this theatrical technique as a central aesthetic device enabled the creators to easily yet complexly present the different ontological levels that each character bears and especially in relation to the identity of the actor that is not concealed, as for example, when Joseph characterizes himself and Mary as a poor couple toward the end of the play.

One more characteristic of the Brechtian "gestus," the idea of gestural leitmotifs, can be identified in the function of body posture and acting codes of the mystery cycle. Beyond Mary's own changing bodily gestures in this play, she is visually opposed to Joseph. She is physically placed higher than he is—both at the beginning of the play and after he returns from the "wilderness" where he had slept on the ground—and also she is much solemner and quieter, whereas he talks and moves a lot in the course of the play. This kind of presence will repeat itself in the Passion scenes and particularly in the *Crucifixion*, where Christ will be hung up high and the soldiers will stay below, and more importantly, he will endure quietly whereas the soldiers will act loudly and crudely. In other words, the *Joseph's Trouble about Mary* episode not only quotes gestures but also creates metatheatrical quotable ones.[56] This performative idea fits very well with the theological notion of pre-figuration and figuration.

Beyond this kind of devotional "gestus," there are instances in the plays where gesture and movement connect the sacred history with concrete reality, sociality, and

local agenda, suggesting a performative emphasis not only on the character but also on the bodies and identity of the performers. Two different examples demonstrate this. One of the performances that Pamela Sheingorn analyzes in her essay "The Bodily Embrace and Embracing the Body" is the *Parliament of Heaven* play from the N-town cycle. Here she shows how the performance of the reconciliation of the Four Daughters of God on "þe loveday" who are all played by men (Mercy and Truth embrace and Justice and Peace kiss), uses the convention of crossdressing to evoke a complex image that signified to the audience not only the heavenly four *women*, but also a contemporary masculine ritual. She quotes Lois Drewer who relates "loveday" to "an actual ritual for the achievement of private peace settlement" which was publicly performed "through a ritualistic exchange of the kiss of peace." Therefore, Sheingorn suggests:

> The loveday embrace thus usually took place between males reconciling a dispute that either had led or most probably would lead to violence. In the N-town play, only by seeing at once the males garbed as women and the women as daughters of God could audience members grasp the contemporary reference.[57]

Analyzing this example in terms of "gestus" as I have offered suggests not only the complex interpretation of the actors' ("quoted" / "quotable") bodily gesture, but it clarifies that this body language was not meant only to evoke devotional references but also meanings relevant to the very identity of the performers, and hence that of the spectators. In other words, this kind of metatheatricality significantly proves that demonstrative acting was used to adore the characters and simultaneously dialectically illuminate the performers themselves. Sheingorn's suggestion that the masculine gender of the performers was not invisible or meant to be invisible in this example implies an

aesthetic that was interested in dualistic stage personae, in this case simultaneously male and female; female as characters, male as actors. Furthermore, this duality proves that the actors were not regarded as functional "signposts," merely transmitting the characters, but rather they were present as true mediators who in performance exist on the threshold between the audience and the enacted characters.

Another example that demonstrates how the use of gesture and body language in performance signified not only the characters but also reflected the social identities of the actors and spectators has to do with the centrality of the theme of work and labor in the cycles. Once again the deictic convention of verbally describing an act as it visually unfolds indicates the highlighted and quotable gestures of the work involved in creating the products of the various guilds. Performatively demonstrating one's work and pride cannot be overlooked as naïve or ridiculously non-professional (as with Shakespeare's mechanicals) but rather as a complex use of performance as a "space to exemplify social relations."[58] As Sarah Beckwith writes:

> The careful attention of the York Plays to the world of making, and the world as made, is part and parcel of the cycle's elaboration of a politics of embodiment, its interest in the political regulation of the body, in a bodily epistemology, a theology of incarnation, and a community created through praxis and self-representation, not created ex nihilo.[59]

That an entire episode of the cycle is devoted to the building of the ark, separate from the episode of the flood, and produced by the Shipwrights' guild, famously and clearly demonstrates this performative interest. Since it is reasonable to assume that within the course of a ten to fifteen minute play an entire "ark" was not built from

scratch, the actor in the role of Noah has a triple referent. He verbally describes the work involved in building a real ship, thus emphasizing his own identity as a member of the Shipwrights' guild, he signifies the character of Noah, and his physical actions most likely reveal the theatrical mechanism as he probably "pulls the strings" and puts together the *image* of the ark, thus emphasizing his identity as a performer. Surely this scene, or the more grotesque connections between the Pinners and *The Crucifixion* and the Butchers and *The Death of Christ* can be explained as significantly relating life in the present with the mythological scheme of time and redemption. And yet limiting the performative analysis to this kind of idealistic attitude would entail overlooking what truly mattered to the producers of the plays, which was the very social identity of the *players*. As Kathleen Ashley explains the seemingly contradictory nature of the trade symbolism in these plays:

> Critics have noted the single-mindedness of the crucifiers about their job, but have not drawn the conclusion that the work ethic itself might be under scrutiny in the play. That is, the very skills claimed by the producing guilds are shown here in a negative light; theories of trade symbolism or guild propaganda alone seem irreconcilable with the theological potency of the dramatic moment of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Unlikely, even pervasive as it seems, I *am* arguing that we have an unstable discursive formation in this play, and the effect of this semiotic conflict is to force an exploration of the *idea* of work itself. When the skills specific to the pinners are taken out of the normal and everyday world, when a dedication to craft is taken out of the mundane and put into the perspective of sacred history, the skills and craft commitment can be examined in the abstract.[60]

The acting conventions I have analyzed so far are all closely related with epic theatre aesthetic, and all indicate a performative situation that is interested in the

*difference* between actor and character rather than in smoothly merging them into one. Although use of Brecht is not meant to claim an affinity between his theatre and ideology and the medieval religious theatre, I nonetheless turn to him for three main reasons. First, his own theoretical thought as well as scholarly engagement with it are tools useful for conceptualizing late medieval acting aesthetics, partially because his aesthetic view was conceived and written as a reaction to realistic conventions that sought a merging between actor and role that was as complete as possible. Second, our own ideas about theatre aesthetics are already conditioned by some of the concepts that he influentially coined. Third, I believe that the late medieval religious theatre *aesthetic* was indeed "epic" (as were its acting techniques) but in addition, one cannot overlook its didactic aims and interest in the social lives of its participants, and hence the effect this interest had on the concepts of acting and performance. For these three reasons and based on my analysis of "contrariety and simultaneity" in the stage design of actor/character dialectics, I suggest that we should regard late medieval acting aesthetic as based primarily on an epic principle.

Such epic acting is obviously closely related to the most significant and defining characteristics of the mystery play's epic nature, i.e., its *epi*sodic structure and its epic magnitude and scale. The plays' grand scale and multi-leveled appeal are, however, the exact link I suggest between the cycle's epic performative aesthetic and its total theatricality. Ambitiously performing the Bible from Creation to Doom (from sunrise to sunset as in York), in the streets of the city, and involving the entire community in the production of the play, while devotionally celebrating the body of Christ create a unique and total kind of theatrical experience that complexly encompasses every level of its

participants' existence. Martin Stevens compares late medieval maps of the world (*mappa mundi*) to the theatrical use of the city as a stage in the cycle plays:

> The *theatrum mundi* consequently stands as a living, cultural imprint of the *mappa mundi*. The latter, with its composite view of the earth and its accumulated history and mythology, is the imagined site of the newly emerging vernacular stage in England and on the Continent. As ludic space, it is especially appropriate to the holiday of Corpus Christi. Like Corpus Christi, the *mappa mundi* signifies the body of Christ, wherein Christ's head and shoulders appear at the top marking the east, his feet at the bottom or the west, and his two hands at the North and South Poles so that the globe and the body are indeed one. While Corpus Christi only gradually became the occasion for the midsummer holiday performance of religious cycles in England, it is clear that both the feast and the play are celebrations of the body of Christ. Indeed the body in all its significations lies at the heart and soul of the Christian drama. It is, after all, the drama of the incarnation, and it is also the drama of a social body, which bonds the community.[61]

This annual festivity—so deeply embedded in the cycle's raison d'être—and its direct connection with the body of Christ itself, is however, related to another significant characteristic of contemporary concepts of total theatre and total acting: performative focus on the suffering body of an actor. No matter from what perspective one looks at the mystery plays, this is an annual theatre performance that centers on and peaks with the event of "killing" a human being; celebrating Christ's body means executing it. As Martin Stevens puts it, "their [the mystery cycles'] central subject is the Incarnation, their mystery is Christ's Resurrection, and their climactic moment occurs when the community enacts the most formidable of all taboos, the killing of its god."[62] There is a huge

difference between the Corpus Christi procession in which the Host is carried through the streets, abstractly yet "really" representing Christ's body—whether believed to be the "real thing" or not—and what is explicitly declared to be an unreal representation of Christ's body and yet is achieved by means of real human bodies. This difference is also part of the basic rhetoric of the *ToMP* as I discussed in the previous chapter, according to which since the abstract is more real, people's interest in their bodily mirth is considered problematic and forbidden.

Thus the enactment of Christ's Passion interrelates two significant elements of total theatre both in its historical context and in its connections with contemporary notions of performance: the violent ritual of mocking (and killing) kings on the one hand, and the extreme or even brutal treatment and exposure of an actor's body in performance on the other. From the perspective of actor/character dialectics the concept of total theatre shifts our focus from gestural differentiation between the two to questions of a performer's willingness to sacrifice his own bodily safety and comfort in order to *really imitate*, i.e., *perform* Christ throughout the scenes of the Passion.[63] This is a shift from the semiotic to the phenomenological. In such scenes, many times the border between actor and character is not emphasized but rather blurred simply because the narrative dictates brutal treatment of the actor's body. Spectators, as the *ToMP* warns, might become emotionally involved in such scenes particularly because the signs of performance are not applied solely to the character, but rather literally mark the body of the actor and create a spectacle that Jody Enders refers to in certain cases as "snuff drama."[64]

The spectacular enjoyment or devotional admiration of physical harshness and suffering is however only one aspect of the total kind of theatricality that characterizes

these scenes. I argue that the examination of the acting aesthetic in these liminal situations shows that as in scenes where epic conventions dominate, not only is the actor theologically viewed as *different* from the "real"—absent[65]—Christ, but also the *real* infliction of pain creates a theatrical emphasis on the performer as distinct from the character. These theatrical moments, which fascinate spectators, draw attention not only to the image of the original suffering Christ being signified, but also, and perhaps even more so (as the *ToMP* implies), to the body of the performer. Thus the actor is functioning as a carrier of a complex reference: he is in the sacred place of Christ, enduring like Christ did, but he is also an aching—unholy—body, which as such is therefore viewed either as a kind of a martyr or as a social outcast or as both.

The theoretical differentiation between actor and character has significant meanings from the viewpoint of late medieval cultural conceptions of pain. In her essay "The Animated Pain of the Body" Esther Cohen explains that pain and suffering were regarded as meaningful and had a positive value in that culture, which indeed helps to explain the degree of violence used in the plays as well as the status an actor in the role of Christ might aspire to achieve due to his willingness to passively endure. Her theological and cultural explanation for this positive value is that conceptually "[b]y the thirteenth century, it was clear in all scholastic disciplines that pain resided in the soul and was closely tied to truth and knowledge; therefore, observers could learn a great deal from watching expressions of pain."[66] The idea that pain resides in the soul as opposed to the body surely helps to explain the performance of pain that "real" saints, martyrs, and other holy persona endured. It also justifies its theatrical use. However, in the theatre, these were not "aching souls" displayed on stage but rather hurting bodies. So while

theologically this explanation is compelling, from a theatrical viewpoint, especially from the perspective of actor/character dialectics, one must be aware of the tension and doubleness of the actor's bodily pain as opposed to the character's "soul" that was suffering. An actor's presence as opposed to that of the character is part of every performance. And yet the very lack of performative emphasis on the corporeal body and *suffering* of the actor in more conventional theatre than medieval religious performance evokes an experience that more smoothly relates a performer's bodily signs to the character.[67] Here, especially in light of the suggestion that pain was conceived of as residing in the soul, the performative awareness of the difference between the actor's body and the character must have been acknowledged and purposeful.[68]

Realizing the total theatricality of such scenes as the Crucifixion as made of *both* "sacramental theatre," as Sarah Beckwith defines it, and "snuff drama" according to Enders invites a reconsideration of the "somergame" exemplum that I discussed in Chapter 2. This text, about the "game" of the Passion, paradigmatically articulates the perspective of both the (suffering) player in the role of Christ and the violent role of his tormentors. Moreover, the fact that something really happens in this event—the torturers *eat and drink* and the player in the role of Christ is subjected to isolation, hunger, thirst, and potentially pain and danger—is what makes it interesting and fun for the participants. This kind of ritualistic performativity and mythic brutality combined with allowing the performer's physicality and emotionality to reach a degree of real pain corresponds with twentieth-century theories of total theatre, most significantly theorized by the prophetic Antonin Artaud, realized by Jerzy Grotowski, and retheorized by Richard Schechner. Artaud writes:

> There can be no spectacle without an element of cruelty at the basis of every show. In our present degenerative state, metaphysics must be made to enter the mind through the body.[69]

Grotowski, who literally educated his actors to sacrifice themselves and be willing to totally expose and exhaust themselves in order to create "a secular *sacrum* in the theatre,"[70] indeed made this happen. For example, in his 1962 *Akropolis*, he ironically and profanely quotes the Corpus Christi procession as the workers (workers, once again) laboriously build a crematorium during which they enact scenes from Greek mythology and the Bible. In one of the performance's climaxes, they carry a body of Christ, which here is no more than a helpless, headless doll. But if there is no salvation, what is the point of theatre? It is almost a cliché to talk about Grotowski's "holy theatre," and yet as in Christian doctrine and the mystery plays, his actors are requested to and are willing to endure and perform extreme emotional and physical effort in order to tantalize spectators and to create a shocking and subversive yet holy experience. Beyond extreme performative physicality, Beckwith argues that in the York Crucifixion "an actor stands in for a character who stands in for other characters" and like in Grotowski's theatre, she continues, "in this sacrificial closeness, the audience watches its delegate and its likeness, one who is there not just for the spectator but because of him."[71] Finally, Schechner combines the ideas of both Artaud and Growtowski:

> The kind of performer I am talking about – like the Shaman, Artaud's martyr, and Grotowski's Cieslak – discards the buffer of "character." Cieslak does not "play" the Constant Prince; MacIntosh does not "play" Dionysus. Neither "are" they the characters. … What results is a double structure. The first is the narrative and/or

> action structure of the *Constant Prince* or *Dionysus 69*. The second is the vulnerability and openness of the performer. In each performance he risks freshly not only his dignity and craft, but his life-in-process. Decisions made and actions done during performance may change the performer's life.[72]

Because of the significant amount of evidence that indicates use of real violence and torture on the stage along with tantalizing theatrical effects, more work has been done on this aspect of late medieval acting and performativity than on the epic aspect of acting theory and practice. For example, Jody Enders's *The Medieval Theatre of Cruelty* refers directly in its title to Artaud's theatrical vision.[73] In relation to the performance of violence as an integral part of the medieval religious theatre—some of it accidental and some of it purposeful—Enders writes:

> It is one thing when, in Metz in 1437 the colleague of Nicolle de Neufchastel en Loraine—one Father Jehan se Missey—was left hanging too long while playing the role of Judas and almost died during his performance. … It is quite another thing [again] to substitute condemned criminals for actors so that the criminals could be burned alive on stage, as happened during a performance of the *Laureolus*. If the avant-garde director Evreinov wrote that "the participant's blood must somehow come to circulate in what is represented on stage," medieval and Renaissance dramatists had already demonstrated that that principle could be taken literally. Few things are more avant-garde and even postmodern than the medieval theatre of cruelty.[74]

From this perspective I suggest that just as an actor who played the role of God the Father, deictically referring to himself as "I" and thus marking the difference between his own materiality and God's abstractness, Christ's role dictated a different kind of

performative tension. In the case of Christ, the deictic use of "I" refers to Christ's "character" but also to the presence and performance of the actor. A telling example from the York cycle that implies this performative mixture can be found toward the end of the Skinners' *Entry to Jerusalem*. At this transitional moment for Christ, just as he changes from an adored king (emphasized by the performative quotation of royal entrances in this episode) into a mock king on his way to die he refers to himself simultaneously in the first and the third persons:

| | |
|---|---|
| *My* dere discipulis, beholde and see, | *My* dear disciples, behold and see. |
| Vnto Jerusalem we schall assende, | Unto Jerusalem *we* shall ascend. |
| *Man son* schall þer betrayed be | *Man's son* shall be betrayed there, |
| And gevyn into his enmys hende | And given into his enemies' hand |
| With grete dispitte. | With great hatred. |
| Ther spitting on *hym* þer, | Their spitting on *him* |
| schall þei spende | shall they discharge, |
| And smertly smyte. | And smartly smite. |
| … | … |
| *I* murne, *I* sigh, *I* wepe also | *I* mourn, *I* sigh, *I* weep also, |
| Jerusalem on þe to loke. | Jerusalem, on you to look |
| And so may þou rewe | And so may you |
| Þat euere þou þi kyng forsuke | That ever your king forsook |
| And was vntrewe | And were untrue. |
| (461-74) | |

This text might be referring to the fact that in the following scenes a different performer will literally be "spat on," but it also might indicate an attempt to differentiate the *real* Christ from the *real* brutality that characterizes the following scenes. In these scenes, according to the plays, Christ is mostly passive, brutally passed on from one tormentor to

another. In *Christ before Annas and Caiaphas* he is untied, as Caiaphas sarcastically says, "itt is no burde to bete bestis þat are bune" (249, 243) [it is no jest to beat beasts that are bound], and although exhausted he is continuously tormented, as the fourth soldier inventively suggests, "dose noddill on hym with neffes that he nought nappe" (252, 367) [come, hit on him with knuckles, so that he won't nap], he is positioned in "a foles state" (253, 376) [a fool's state], and is throughout rudely mocked. This enactment of violence is immediately renewed, now performed on the body of a different actor, as the following pageant, *Christ before Pilate*, arrives at the station. Here, as Beadle and King write, "meditative tradition required that Christ's torture be dragged out as long and inventively as possible, and also that he remain passively silent."[75] Next the audience views a new actor enduring torture in *Christ before Herod*, and so on until the visual and emotional climax of the Crucifixion itself. In all these episodes, as mentioned, Christ's central characteristic is his silence. This preserves Christ's solemn image, but from the viewpoint of an actor's physical and emotional effort, maintaining this facade while being beaten, thrown, pulled, lifted, tied, and beaten again is an almost impossible task. Phenomenologically it is no less fascinating than brutality itself. Similarly, the audience's engagement and identification with the mimetic ritual of tormenting and buffeting suggests immersion into performance that goes beyond a devotional meditating on Christ's suffering. Thus beyond the social and cultural aspects of performing real violence or extreme physicality, I suggest that the theatrical totality that characterizes acting in the scenes of the Passion is the complementary part of the epic acting and theatre aesthetic that characterizes the late medieval religious theatre.

What might seem at first glance to be a contradictory collusion of epic and total theatre aesthetics is, I argue, not only the kind of tension that characterizes a significant aspect of twentieth-century post-realist *performance*, but also the tension that best typifies concepts of acting and performance in the late medieval religious theatre. A theatre—in fact a *theatrum mundi*—that easily contained low and high culture, comedy and seriousness, local and communal references along with devotional and eternal ones, just as easily combined epic and total theatricality. I opened this chapter with three epigraphs from Brecht, Artaud, and the York cycle, all of which connect theatre and the street, all of which talk about "street scenes." In Jesus' final lines before he dies toward the end of the *Crucifixion* play, standing on a York street corner, and using the most minimalist theatrical means of the "basic model of an epic theatre" (a cart, a piece of wood, and an actor) as well as those of the total theatre (a suffering human body on display) he turns directly to the spectators, and includes them in the performance, as he asks them to carefully watch *him* (as Christ, as a mock king, and as an actor at work) suffering:

> Al men þat walkis by waye or strete,
> Takes tente ȝe schalle no trauayle tyne.
> Byholdes myn heede, myn handis, and my feete,
> And fully feele nowe, or ȝe fyne.
> (321, 253-4)

> [All men that walk by way or street,
> Take heed that you miss none of my suffering.
> Behold my head, my hands, and my feet,
> And fully feel now, ere you pass.

Finally, to recall the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* yet once again, this very performing body is a complex and contrary sign that simultaneously voices "Christ and the Flesh," it signifies and it *performs*, it is emotional and it stirs emotions, and most of all, it is the ultimate *product* of a communal ritual.

**Notes**

[1] Bertolt Brecht, "The Street Scene: A Basic Model for an Epic Theatre," in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett ([1964] New York: Methuen, 1994), 122.

[2] Antonin Artaud, "No More Masterpieces," in *The Theatre and its Double*, trans. Victor Corti (New York: Calder, 1993), 57.

[3] "The Crucifixion," *The York Plays*, ed. Richard Beadle (London: Edward Arnold, 1982). All quotations from the York plays are from this edition. Page and line numbers are noted parenthetically and separated by a comma, first are page numbers and second line numbers. Translations are meant to make the medieval lines as readable as possible and I therefore use and combine the following sources: J. S. Purvis, *The York Cycle of Mystery Plays: A Complete Version* (London: S.P.C.K., 1957); Richard Beadle and Pamela M. King's translations as they appear in *York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); and my own translations.

[4] Brecht, "Street Scene," 125.

[5] Jean Alter, *A Sociosemiotic Theory of Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990). See especially Chapter 3, "Performant Function in Action," 52-90; and specifically pages 61-4, "Interaction between referential and *performant* functions."

[6] My definition of "performance" in relation to conventional theatre, focusing on the deliberate "performative" simultaneity of actor and role, does not deny or contradict the many other meanings, uses, and contexts that are currently attributed to "performance." Rather, such social examinations of the term are complementary to my understanding of this category, as my analysis of the medieval concept of "game" in the previous chapter shows. See more on the connections and differences between "theatre" and "performance" in Tracy Davis and Thomas Postlewait's "Theatricality: an Introduction," in *Theatricality*, especially 16-34.

[7] Jill Dolan, *Geographies of Learning: Theory and Practice, Activism and Performance* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 72. Dolan's understanding

of "performance" as a preferred mode of theatrical engagement is based among other perspectives on contradicting the traditional place of the actor "who is supposed to ... laminate him- or herself so thoroughly to the experiences of the character that the audience never questions their conjuncture to his or her body" (78).

[8] See Marvin Carlson's *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), especially Chapter 4, "Performance in its Historical Context," 83-109.

[9] One cannot use "epic theatre" without evoking Brecht, and I am well aware of criticism of reading Brecht without contextualizing his aesthetic theory with his "theatre's most fundamental principle [that] is its commitment to social change," as John Rouse writes. "Brecht and the Contradictory Actor," in *Acting (Re)considered: Theories and Practices*, ed. Phillip B. Zarrilli (New York: Routledge, 1995), 230. However, as I show below, not only are there affinities on the ideological level between Brecht's didacticism and that of the medieval theatre (but for achieving opposite goals), but also I think that there *is* room to look into his aesthetics at different stages of his career as philosophical articulations that are useful and applicable to theatrical forms other than his own. In this context, for example, when Rouse writes that "the *Short Organon* (1948) ... is not Brecht's ultimate statement either about theatre in general or acting in particular," because "during the remaining nine years of his life, Brecht constantly modified this thinking ... as the many varied amendments, clarifications, and counter statements to the *Organon* ... make perfectly clear" (228), does this mean that we are not supposed to attribute significance to the *Organon* any longer? Is there an "ultimate" Brecht at all? And what about the enormous influence the (perhaps incorrect) general understanding of Brecht's ideas had on directors during the second half of the twentieth century? I suggest that if one's attempt is to read and study Brecht within his specific context then his ideology and political aesthetics cannot be overlooked, but, this should not prevent us from reading his theories in a wider context. The term "Brechtian" has been for a long time known and used to denote the influence his theatrical ideas had on future theatre practice and it is in this sense that I turn to his writings in relation to late medieval acting concepts. Interestingly, in the case of Artaud, to whom I turn as one source for contemporary theory of "total theatre," I have not come across such objections, although his theories can and should also be discussed in his immediate historical context. Moreover, Jody Enders's *The Medieval Theatre of Cruelty* to which I refer below is an example of a book that uses a methodology similar to mine.

[10] However, it seems very important that the tension between epic and total theatre that so dominantly characterizes twentieth-century post-realistic theatre also characterizes the aesthetic of late medieval religious performance. I do not enlarge on the philosophical implications of this phenomenon is this dissertation, although this clearly is one of the central questions that grow out of my work. To give a brief answer at this stage, I would suggest that what the two eras have in common and what might lead to similar theatre and performance is their relation to religion. I would argue that the theatre aesthetics of a very religious culture are not as distinct as one would think from those of a culture that is primarily defined by secularism. However "secular" modernism claims itself to be, one of the clearest quests of the modern theatre is for the creation of an experience that is as

strong as the religious one, even a transcendental experience, even if this does not mean "religious" in the devotional sense. Such experiences are unlikely to happen in the bourgeois theatre that is based on the convention of the fourth wall.

[11] Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 105.

[12] R. B. Dobson, "Craft Guilds and the City: The Historical Origins of the York Mystery Plays Reassessed," in *The Stage as Mirror*, 101.

[13] Ruth Evans, "When a Body Meets a Body: Fergus and Mary in the York Cycle," in *New Medieval Literatures* 1, ed. Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland, and David Lawton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 207.

[14] See Richard Beadle's "Verbal Texture and Wordplay in the York Cycle," *Early Theatre* 3 (2000): 167-84, for an analysis of wordplays and double meanings in the cycle. Based on the idea that in the plays the role of the spectators was not only to view the performance but often mainly to "audiate" (170), i.e., "hear the plays," he gives different kinds of examples of the function of language in performance. Among them are dramatic irony, didacticism, and also deictic self-referential uses of language. Beadle does not explicitly mention any metatheatrical wordplays like my analysis of the use of "face" or "head" as follows, but his essay surely points in this direction. Significantly, he characterizes York's "lexically restricted style" and tendency to repeat words as a "deliberate narrowness and simplicity of vocabulary that directs our attention, by insistent repetition, to key words and concepts in the narrative" (172). Accordingly, words had performative power, and it is fair to assume therefore that they were grasped in their complexity and double meanings.

[15] *REED: York*, 55.

[16] Ibid., 241.

[17] *MED*, 210.

[18] R. W. Ingram, ed., *REED: Coventry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 226; 240.

[19] Lawrence M. Clopper, ed., *REED: Chester* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 50; 53. See also 68; 73; 78; 88.

[20] David Galloway, ed. *REED: Norwich 1540-1642* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 53. And see more information on the terminology and etymology of the word "mask" in Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter's *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 327-44.

[21] *REED: Chester*, 247.

[22] Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks and Masking*, 194-5. Note also that the meaning they suggest for "disfigure" in the quoted passage might very well agree with Shakespeare's

use of it in the very similar context of the mechanicals' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. When Quince has to come up with a solution as to how to represent moonshine he suggests:

> QUINCE. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and say he comes to *disfigure or to present* the person of Moonshine. (3.1.50-55)

[23] Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks and Masking*, 195.

[24] Ibid., 194.

[25] *REED: York*, 19/705.

[26] Note that in the rhetoric of the *ToMP*, especially in the lines that I discussed in the previous chapter as indicative of the contrariety between actor and role, there is no mention of the sight of God/Christ, only of his voice: "And sithen miraclis pleyinge is of the lustis of the fleyssh and mirthe of the body, no man may efectuely *heeren* hem and the *voice of Crist at onys*, as the *voice of Crist and the voice of the fleysh ben of two contrarious lordis*" (96, 112-15; emphasis added).

[27] Margaret Rogerson, "English Puppets and the Survival of Religious Theatre," *Theatre Notebook* 52: 2 (1998): 91.

[28] Ibid., 91.

[29] Ibid., 92, emphasis added.

[30] Ibid., 100.

[31] Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks and Masking*, 196.

[32] Notably, *The Creation of the World* features a performative yet theatrically deictic and to some extent ironic monologue of God about the creation of the first five days: "Begynnyng, mydes and ende *I* with *my worde* hase wrothe" (58, 159-60) [Beginning, middle and end *I* with *my word* have wrought]. The complexity and theatrical sophistication of this sentence lies in the fact that God literally created the world with his word, just as the actor both created and obviously did not create the world with his word.

[33] This is not the case in the other extant cycles—York is the most fragmented one. And yet the concepts of acting I develop below can be demonstrated in regard to the other cycles as well by discussing other episodic sequences, most notably those that depict the life of Christ; in general the episodic structure that does not seek a unified "plot" characterizes all the cycle plays.

[34] Martin Stevens suggests that "York consistently divides its material into short episodes, probably to accommodate its diverse crafts." *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles*, 28.

[35] Notably this is the situation with human characters as opposed to God (who was also enacted by many actors) but is conceptually fixed and unchanging—another reason for masking his face.

[36] That the theatrical aesthetic is related or even based on the aesthetics of the *tableau vivant* or royal entries is probably the case, although as Donal Perret puts it "even though the first entry spectacles antedate the great religious drama, it seems rash to suggest that we could not have one without the other. The two forms of theatre coexisted throughout the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. And although no one can overlook the enormous contributions of the entry to its sister form, we must admit that this is in the nature of theatrical experience. There is always begging, borrowing, and stealing between different forms; adaptations occur (for better or for worse), their success in new contexts being proof of their viability. "The Meaning of the Mystery: From *Tableaux* to Theatre in the French Royal Entry," in *Moving Subjects*, 189.

[37] See another manifestation of this aesthetic, for example, in a depiction of the *process* of cloth making, as it appears in a fifteenth-century manuscript reproduced in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 158. Here the different stages of cloth making are simultaneously present within the same frame. Christopher Dyer explains that the "woollen cloth making is shown in its early stages: combining and carding the wool to separate the fibers (right and center) and spinning with a distaff (left). Above the yarn is prepared for weaving." "The Economy and Society," 158.

[38] "Ordo Paginarum," *REED: York* 11/697.

[39] For a detailed analysis of a reconstruction of this episode that maintained gestural decorum, see Natalie Crohn Schmitt's "The Body in Motion in the York *Adam and Eve in Eden*," in *Gesture in Medieval Art and Drama*, ed. Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Press, 2001), 158-77.

[40] Rouse, "Brecht and the Contradictory Actor," 232. Rouse quotes from the following: Manfred Wekwerth, *Schriften: Arbeit mit Brecht* (Berlin [East]: Henschel, 1975), 199; Bretolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke in 20 Banden*, ed. Werner Hecht (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), 16: 724.

[41] Peter Thompson discusses the medieval sources and significance of the theatrical use of doubling as an aesthetic acting convention in the Elizabethan theatre, and argues that "the old assumption that doubling was a necessary but unwelcome chore has been effectively contradicted. ... Doubling, in drama that relies on bold oppositions and instantly recognizable distinctions, is not a defect but a source of delight to the audience." "Rogues and Rhetoricians: Acting Styles in Early English Drama," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, 328.

[42] Michael Patterson, *Peter Stein: Germany's Leading Theatre Director* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 8.

[43] Ibid., 71.

[44] "The Search for a Language," from an Interview with Ariane Mnouchkine by Emile Copfermann, in David Williams, ed., *Collaborative Theatre: The Théâtre du Soleil Sourcebook*, trans. Eric Prenowitz and David Williams (New York: Routledge, 1999), 18.

[45] Victoria Nes Kirby, "*1789* at the Cartoucherie," in *Collaborative Theatre*, 4.

[46] Freddie Rokem, *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 12-3.

[47] Rouse gives two typical examples of Brecht's use of "gestus." The first is Hans Gaugler's enactment of Läuffer's repetitive stylized bow in Brecht's adaptation of Lenz's *The Private Tutor*, which differed from the body language typical of the eighteenth century and "was used as a 'quotable' gestural leitmotiv for Läuffer throughout the production" (234). And the second, very famous example, is Helene Weigel in the role of Mother Courage and her treatment of money: "Every time she received payment in the course of her play's performance, Weigel's Courage would 'mistrustfully' bite the coin to make sure it was real" (237).

[48] Ibid., 235.

[49] Carl Weber, "Brecht's Concept of *Gestus* and the American Performance Tradition," *Brecht Sourcebook*, ed. Carol Martin and Henry Bial (New York: Routledge, 2000), 43, emphasis added.

[50] For an in-depth analysis of the use and coded meanings of gesture in performance, see Pamela Sheingorn's "The Bodily Embrace or Embracing the Body: Gesture and Gender in Late Medieval Culture," in *Stage as Mirror*, 51-89; and Clifford Davidson's "Gesture in Medieval British Drama," in *Gesture in Medieval Art and Drama*, 66-127.

[51] Peter Happé, "Acting the York Mystery Plays: A Consideration of Modes," *METh* 10.2 (1988): 113.

[52] Ibid., 113. See also Meredith and Tailby, *Staging of Religious Drama*, 179.

[53] Evans, "When a Body Meets a Body," 208.

[54] Henk van Os, et al., *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe: 1300-1500*, trans. Michael Hoyle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 137. See also the "Annunciation with Crucifix on Lily," Painted Glass in York Minster Choir, in Clifford Davidson, *From Creation to Doom: The York Cycle of Mystery Plays* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1984), Fig. 5, following page 116. For other examples see Bruce Bernard, *The Queen of Heaven: A Selection of Paintings of the Virgin Mary from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Macdonald Orbis, 1987), 37-9.

[55] On this aspect of the plays' use of epic conventions, see Garrett P. J. Epp's "Visible Words: The York Plays, Brecht, and Gestic Writing," *Comparative Drama* 24:4 (1990-91): 292-5. Epp's attitude to the medieval plays in relation to Brecht is relevant to and

supportive of my own arguments. In this essay, however, he focuses primarily on the dramatic—rather than performative—aspects of Brecht's theory.

[56] Peter Happé adds another aspect that is worth considering in relation to the theatrical effect of such coded use of quotable gestures: "Though we know of some changes, the Guilds stuck to the same plays for many years, and in the life of one guildsman there might have been many similar performances. The actors would learn from one another—just as modern actors do in such things as pace, style, gesture and movement—and it could well be that, as in operatic gesture, the medieval actor would learn and transmit a code of dramatic signs which the audience would expect and accept as part of the diegesis of these plays." "Acting the York Mystery Plays," 115.

[57] Sheingorn, "The Bodily Embrace," 85-6. See also Lois Drewer, "Margaret of Antioch the Demon-Slayer, East and West: The Iconography of the Predella of the Boston *Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine*," *Gesta*, 32:1 (1993): 11-20.

[58] Dolan, *Geographies of Learning*, 72.

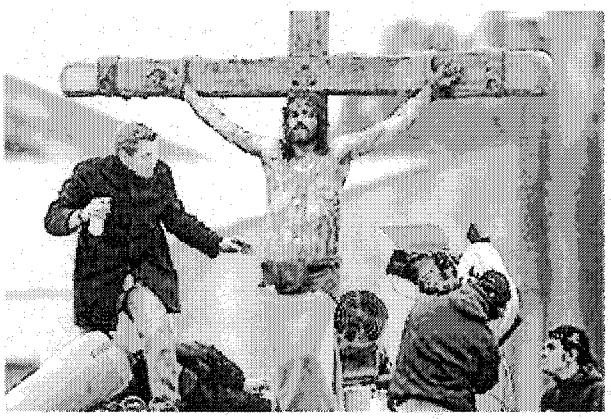
[59] Sarah Beckwith, "Work, Markets, Civic Structure: Organizing the York Corpus Christi Plays," *Signifying God*, 45-6.

[60] Kathleen Ashley, "Sponsorship, Reflexivity and Resistance: Cultural Readings of the York Cycle Plays," in *The Performance of Middle English Culture: Essays on Chaucer and the Drama*, ed. James J. Paxon, Lawrence M. Clopper, and Sylvia Tomasch (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998) 20-1, original emphases.

[61] Martin Stevens, "From *Mappa Mundi* to *Theatrum Mundi*: The World as Stage in Early English Drama," in *From Page to Performance: Essays in Early English Drama*, ed. John A. Alford (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995), 38-9. Stevens bases this description of the *mappa mundi* on the German Ebstorf map, (Figure 2 in this essay, p. 30).

[62] Martin Stevens, "From *Mappa Mundi*," 27.

[63] One of the images from the filming of Mel Gibson's *The Passion* shows the actor (James Caviezel) in the role of Christ tied to the cross, his legs covered with a blanket simply because it is cold. This can be deduced by the fact that all the members of the filming crew around the actor are warmly dressed (Fig. 6) (See Http://www.muslimwakeup.com/mainarchive/images/passion300.jpg ):



[64] Jody Enders, "Medieval Snuff Drama," *Exemplaria* 10:1 (1998): 171-206. And see also her *Death by Drama and Other Medieval Urban Legends* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002). For a cultural analysis of the medieval body in pain from the perspective of the one suffering as a masochistic kind of pleasure, see Robert Mills's "A Man is Being Beaten," *New Medieval Literatures* 5, eds. Rita Copeland, David Lawton, and Wendy Scase (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 115-53.

[65] As Sarah Beckwith writes, "in the late medieval understanding of the Trinity, it is precisely the embodiedness of Christ that allows God still to figure as absent." *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture, and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 131 n. 3.

[66] Esther Cohen, "The Animated Pain of the Body," *The American Historical Review*, February 2000, par. 34. http://historycooperative.press.uiuc.edu/journals/ahr/105.1/ah000036.html (3 Sep. 2004).

[67] This can be demonstrated by a brief analysis of Ivo van Hove's interpretation of Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (New York Theatre Workshop, 1999). What van Hove did to the realistic play was to turn its realistic conventions "inside-out." All the scenes that in the play and according to realistic conventions are only referred to as off-stage happenings—most significantly Blanche's numerous baths—here are fully staged, even though the entire mise-en-scéne was not conventionally realistic. In other words, van Hove's attempt was not to stage her bathing in order to achieve a naturalistic effect, but rather so that the spectators could gaze at her bodily and emotional state when she "really" is "herself." Only by having the actress undress and *really* bathe from start to finish several times during the performance, could the spectators experience Blanche's torture. These moments, which shift the theatricality from the semiotic to the phenomenological, are unique in that the spectator becomes aware that s/he is simultaneously interested in the character and in the actress. This is a theatrical aesthetic that takes the basic doubleness inherent in any character enactment and highlights it in order to achieve an effective and intensified performative moment.

[68] From the perspective of the actor's suffering body Jody Enders's *The Medieval Theatre of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* is very poignant. She expands on the social, juridical, and rhetorical sources and uses of violence and torture in the theatre as

manifestations of sheerly *bodily* inflictions of pain and punishment that were part of society's disciplinary norms and agenda. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[69] Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty, First Manifesto," *The Theatre and its Double*, 77.

[70] Jerzy Grotowski, "The Theatre's New Testament," an interview with Eugenio Barba, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugenio Barba ([1968] New York: Routledge, 2002), 49.

[71] Beckwith, *Signifying God*, 70.

[72] Richard Schechner, "Actuals," *Performance Theory*, revised and expanded edition (New York: Routledge, 2003), 54.

[73] For a detailed documentation and analysis of violence in late medieval French religious drama and its relation to the medieval juridical system and rhetoric of violence, see Enders's *Medieval Theatre of Cruelty*, especially Chapter 3, "The Performance of Violence," 160-229, as well as her *Death by Drama*. See also John Spalding Gatton's "'There Must Be Blood': Mutilation and Martyrdom on the Medieval Stage," in *Violence in Drama*, Themes in Drama 13, ed. James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 79-92. For other cultural and theatrical analyses of the body in performance, see for example Miri Rubin, "The Body, Whole and Vulnerable, in Fifteenth-Century England," in *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*, eds., Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 19-28; and Seth Lerer's "'Representyd now in yower syght': The Culture of Spectatorship in Late Fifteenth-Century England," 29-64 in the same volume.

[74] Enders, *Medieval Theatre of Cruelty*, 201.

[75] Beadle and King, *York Mystery Plays*, 155.

# Conclusion

At the center of this dissertation are the acting, theatre, and performance aesthetics of late medieval mystery cycles, particularly the York cycle. One would think that by the year 2004 there should be no need to justify arguing for the existence of a late medieval theatre aesthetic and theory. However, as I have shown, not only is there such a need, but also there is a theory. Moreover, I have demonstrated that the aesthetics and theory of the mystery play performance genre are sophisticated, complex, and phenomeologically similar to twentieth-century post-realist theatre theories in that they purposefully emphasize the doubleness and duality inherent to any theatrical situation—the performing and the performed. Since the most concise and meaningful site that locates and best exemplifies both sides of this duality is the performing human being, the actor, I examined throughout the work a central theoretical category for theatre analysis in general—actor/character dialectics. Within the performing body of an actor who enacts a character are located *both* the social and cultural identity of the performer and his/her relation to the spectators as well as the identity and ideological significance of the character and the world a theatre performance depicts. Although this observation is true about any theatre performance, late medieval theatre has two unique characteristics that make it a significant era in theatre history that brings out and purposefully uses this performative tension in complex ways.

First, as I have shown, the theatre's *religiosity* creates a unique status for the dramatic characters. In more "conventional" theatre, characters are usually fictional and individual human beings which can more or less undergo anything, whereas in religious biblical theatre the characters not only have fixed mythological identities and narratives

but more importantly they are believed to be or have been *real*. *Their* status as "real" is imperative for people to believe in them, and this belief in turn necessitates a representational system that maintains their fixedness and remoteness. This, then, leads to an aesthetic that purposely differentiates between these characters as "ideas" and the process of enacting them. On the other hand, however, the performing actors, as in any theatre performance, are also *real* but in a very different way than the reality that is attributed to the characters: they are corporeal, they live in the present, and through or within the biblical and civic *theatrum mundi* that they produce they seek to find themselves. In other words, although common notions regarding the mystery plays stress the plays' devotional function as their most central characteristic, as I have shown, it could be said that the producers and participants of these plays in a way "use" the religious themes and context in order to explore their own questions of identity. By the term "using" I do not mean any kind of manipulative or negative engagement with the biblical texts—because the plays definitely were devotional and surely evoked a religious experience—but rather that the Christian myth itself as such a culturally strong and defining narrative could bear the secular and mundane performative deviations from it, and yet still continue to hold its significance, holiness, and mythic dimensions. It easily lends itself to anachronistic theatrical uses of it. Therefore, the second characteristic that is typical of the medieval theatre and that is unique to it has to do with the social identities of the actors and producers of the plays and the ways that their local and mundane concerns are revealed through the performance of the biblical episodes.

Whereas almost any discussion of the medieval theatre emphasizes the fact that the producers and actors were "unprofessional"—a judgmental and condescending

characterization—that they were not "professional" according to later paradigms of theatre professionalism created performative space for explicit expression, validation, and negotiation of their own social identities. In other words, *unlike* a preacher who demonstrates all sorts of characters but can always return to his "professional" identity as a respectable preacher, these performers explicitly displayed *themselves* on stage. On top of this kind of straightforward presence that emphasized their own reality they wore the identities of the holy and mythological characters that form the essence of the performers' and the audience's belief system. Again, any theatre performance uses dramatic mechanisms in order to talk about contemporary questions of identity, and yet the aesthetics of late medieval theatre enabled this to be exposed, revealed, and explicit simultaneously with the presentation of the Christian narrative.

There is another common misconception about late medieval performance aesthetics that this work tries to undercut. Depicting the acting style as "presentational" or even "naïve" still holds on to now discredited ideas of an evolutionary process that started with the "rebirth" of Western theatre in the Christian liturgical drama and gradually grew into the sophisticated forms of Renaissance drama and theatre. By arguing for the specific religious, cultural, social, and aesthetic discourses that determined the kind of acting that typifies late medieval religious theatre I tried in this dissertation to deconstruct binaries such as "professional/unprofessional"; medieval/Renaissance; "presentational/representational"; and realistic/non-realistic acting methods and ideologies. By demonstrating the similarities between late medieval and twentieth-century post-realist theatre theories and practices I hope to have emphasized

the sophistication of medieval theatre on the one hand but also to have historicized the idea of the modern theatre as predominantly innovative on the other.

Debunking common ideas about medieval theatre's relation to later historical developments of theatre is only one goal of my work. By analyzing the medieval discourse of theatre aesthetics itself, I have also demonstrated that the ideas that belie the evolutionary model of medieval theatre studies are problematic at the least. The general notion that the mystery plays are a matured version of liturgical drama written in the vernacular for merely didactically devotional reasons is only one side of the coin. Lawrence Clopper's historical reading of the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* as a tract against unruly games and pagan rituals rather than a general criticism of any kind of theatre that is about religious subjects leads the way to recognizing how central such games and rituals are as sources of the vernacular mystery plays, perhaps more central than liturgical drama itself. Although religious ritual can be defined as a kind of "performance," and can use "theatre" or theatrical devices (just as it can use art, sculpture, and so on)[1] its primary goal is the religious ritual: the "real" presence of God in a religious ritual can be assumed, whereas in the theatre this is clearly not the case, and accordingly the goals of religious *theatre* include not only devotionality or didacticism but also mirth, playfulness, exploration of contemporary identities, and even temporary subversion of cultural notions. Therefore, what the mystery plays share with games and other festive events is not limited to the sense of fun, recreation, and social gathering, but extends to an interest in the *present* and contemporary lives and identities of the participants. This is why the theatrical use of mixture and anachronisms is so central to both the mystery plays and to unruly games. The relationship between the two

performative forms also explains the high degree of violence in the plays as a remnant of its excessive presence in such games. In that sense Clopper's contextualization of the text of the *ToMP* is invaluable. My disagreement with Clopper's strong conviction that if the *ToMP* is related more to unruly games than to authorized drama it has nothing to do with such drama is, however, based on my refusal to understand these two performative phenomena as dichotomous. In fact, as I argued in Chapter 2, I see it just the other way around. It makes perfect sense to me that the plays were devotional *and* playful, religious and secular at the same time, interested in evoking a transcendental experience via performance along with an experience that was local, down to earth, and closely relevant to the contemporary lives of its producers.

By establishing the connections between the *ToMP* and plays such as the civic cycle drama I not only demonstrated the significance of realizing the influences that games and pagan rituals had on the development of the plays, but I also aimed to pave the way to argue for evidence of late medieval performance and aesthetic theory. Even though there have been quite a few discussions of this text, mine is the first to offer a detailed aesthetic analysis of it. The four concepts of performance that I articulated and discussed in Chapter 3 are either implied or specifically mentioned by the *ToMP*. All four are highly relevant to the characterization of late medieval religious theatre practices and they also all attest to a performative, explicit, and dialectical actor/character relationship. "Contrariety and Simultaneity" and "Performance and Signification" emphasize the distance between the performer and the religious character because of the sacredness of the characters as opposed to the earthliness of the performers. They also point to the centrality of the medieval aesthetic that posits an object along with its unhidden other.

"Emotionality" and "Communality" on the other hand tend to focus on the performative significance of the performers' agency and their direct relation to the spectators during performance. Combined together all four concepts of performance suggest to me that the idea of the actor in this religious vernacular theatre was to put him in the position of a mediator. The performative function of a mediator allows a person to remain her/himself during performance while also enacting someone or something else.

This philosophical vision of acting, which obviously cannot be pinned down in regard to each and every episode in the cycles—since many of the characters are quite conventional human beings that demand a straightforward enacting technique—can however be demonstrated and analyzed in many instances, especially those that involve the enactment of mythic figures such as God the Father, Jesus Christ, Mary, and so on. Their enactment, as I discussed in Chapter 4, took place between "epic" and "total" theatre and performance conventions. These two seemingly polar theatrical attitudes, the first emphasizing performative self-consciousness and the second denoting a theatre of presence, in fact typify the dominant modes of this religious theatre. Significantly both share the explicit performative simultaneity of the actor and the character. The epic theatre aesthetic stresses the purposeful exposing of theatrical mechanisms at work (i.e., the actor) and the actor's difference from the character. Theatrical concepts such as performative deixis, "gestus," wearing masks, and casting many actors for the same role all create a visible doubleness that maintains the distance between the actor and the character. Using these conventions enables the creators to evoke a fixed idea of the holy characters and at the same time to offer space for the exploration of the social identities of the actors themselves. Total theatre, on the other hand, resting on the phenomenology

of performance, especially in scenes that involve extreme violence or bodily effort, draws spectators' attention to the performer's self and body as opposed to or in addition to that of the character. Scenes that include real pain that is inflicted on the actor's body blur the boundaries between actor and character even as they stress the duality of the two performing functions. This tension, between epic and total theatricality, which is best manifested in the epic scale and magnitude of the performance and production of the mystery plays, indeed evokes a kind of a total theatrical experience that is simultaneously religious and secular, transcendental and local.

In sum, this dissertation offers four different contributions to theatre studies. First, my analysis of the *ToMP* demonstrates the existence of a late medieval aesthetic discourse about performance—something that has been overlooked and dismissed as non-existent. Given its significance, the *ToMP* should be studied and included in any historical account of theatre theory, even though the text itself is quite dense. My goal was to unpack its complexity and demonstrate its structural and ideological consistency. Second, working with Clopper's historical contextualization of the *ToMP* I have shown how central games, performances, pagan ritualistic survivals, and social gatherings are as sources of influence on the religious vernacular mystery plays. I am convinced that the mystery plays should be viewed primarily as *theatre* that depends both on religious practice and on other social performative phenomena, but that as such its main interest is the present lives of its participants who seek a collective experience in which they can each find themselves. Third, because the actor's body is the most condensed locus of performance and because as I have shown there was an explicit performative emphasis on the actor/character dialectical doubleness, I suggest this theatrical element as a theoretical

paradigm that should be applied to the analysis of any performance. Such a paradigm grows out of performance studies that highlight the identities of the human agents of any social activity; however, as an aesthetic category actor/character relations are designed differently at different moments. Therefore, this category is particularly applicable to the specific cultural context of late medieval religious theatre just as it is to twentieth-century experimental theatre. Finally, I have tried to articulate the specific manifestation of these acting dialectics in the cycle plays, suggesting that in this theatre they evoke a performative tension between epic and total theatricality. In this sense, I have argued that the notion of "unprofessional" acting in the production of the mystery plays should be discarded. The negative terms that often characterize studies of medieval theatre should be replaced by the positive terminology that this dissertation offers and that demonstrates late medieval theatre's sophistication and complexity. The fact that concepts such as "epic" and "total" are familiar to contemporary theatre researchers and already understood with historical perspective makes them applicable and useful for discussing medieval practices.

Beyond these four points, there are future projects that come out of this work. First, I believe that it is necessary to offer an English "translation" of the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* so that theatre students can read it easily. But in addition to working on such an edition and to publishing the ideas that compose this dissertation, there is another direction in which it leads. The comparative methodology that I employed here basically looked through the lens of modern theatre and performance theory at the theatre of the medieval era. But I believe that there are reasons for the connections between these two moments in theatre history that go beyond stylistic similarities, and I therefore suggest

looking at the similarities from the other way around. As I noted in Chapter 1, in the twentieth century not only were there many revivals and reconstructions of medieval plays and performances, but there was also a renewed interest in theatre's redemptive potential, in its ability to offer sacred experiences, in its communal appeal, and also in the Bible itself as a performance text—in mainly ironic, profane, and subversive adaptations. Therefore, researching contemporary epic-scale performances of the Bible is a significant direction that this dissertation leads in, not only to demonstrate the existence of a modern genre of "avant-garde mysteries," but also to examine their theatricality in light of the medieval theatre aesthetics that this dissertation argues for. Examining questions such as how performances as diverse as Mayakovsky's *Mystery Bouffe* or Paul Rudnick's *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told* choose to enact and perform supernatural figures and deities, for example, can be addressed by comparing them with medieval conventions.

As I implied in different places in the dissertation, the quest for a "holy" kind of theatricality in the modern secular age and the renewed turn to Holy Scriptures as performance texts suggest to me connections between the pre-humanist and ultimately religious culture and the post-humanist and explicitly secular one that go beyond phenomenology. Why does *secular*, avant-garde, and revolutionary or reactionary theatre insist on (re)connecting to the Bible? The answer to this question is much more complex than the quite obvious idea of exposing contemporary society's fragmentation, uncertainty, secularism, and lack of authority by *confronting* (to use Grotowski's phrasing)[2] the ancient text and its status as *the* signifier of meaning and *the* authorial representative of *the* canon. Most "modern mysteries," as I would title such contemporary performances employ a deconstructionist method in order to turn the Bible into theatre.

That is, they not only freely alter, parody, mock, and radically change biblical order, narratives, and agenda in order to examine contemporary ideas and identities through the biblical text, but these performances also open up the Bible in ways that truly expose its own contradictions, lack of truth, and inability to offer redemption. However, whereas this easily conforms to secular, modernist, and postmodern thought and aesthetics, I would argue that such modern reworkings of the Bible strive for and evoke a dualistic kind of effect that is simultaneously both deconstructive and, in a way, religious.

The very performative act of theatrically deconstructing and problematizing the Bible and exposing its internal contradictions, hierarchies, and textual constructedness creates new intangible moments that share something with the sacred. In his essay "Derrida and the Secret of the Non-Secret: On Respiritualizing the Profane" Ian Almond articulates what seems to me to be at the very heart of modern theatrical negotiations with the Bible. He suggests that

> [D]econstruction is simultaneously a work of both demystification and remystification—it locates and dissolves the moments of self-presence in a text only to leave in their place a semantic void, one which liberates the text from its single destination and allows it to drift, rudderless, in an infinite number of directions.[3]

Whereas one would think that a comparison on the ideological level between medieval mystery plays and modern ones would lead mainly if not only to differences, my work in this dissertation on the theatricality of the medieval mystery plays once again demonstrates that more similarities than are expected might arise. Just as I have shown how significant contemporary questions of identity were for the participants of the

medieval vernacular religious theatre, how they "used" religious narratives as performance texts in order to theatrically examine themselves, so do modern theatre creators and audiences. The fact that the Bible continues to hold such cultural significance, maintains this text's power against which and through which theatre can explore questions of identity. This idea can be demonstrated in regard to performances such as Vladimir Mayakovsky's *Mystery Bouffe* (1918-21), Grotowski's *Akropolis* (1962), Rina Yerushalmi's "Bible Project" (1995), Paul Rudnick's *Most Fabulous Story* (1998), and there are many more. In conclusion I will briefly look at *Mystery Bouffe*, which explicitly refers to the medieval mystery plays and yet presents itself as an avant-garde futurist theatre piece that negates the past.

In Mayakovsky's utopian play the biblical flood is an event so powerful that it carries on its wave the energetic revolutionary force of the "unclean" on their way to the futurist version of the Promised Land—a modernist electrified city. In order to create a tantalizing spectacle that begins on the very top of earth as the flood is about to immerse everything, Mayakovsky's characters build an ark on which the unclean—the workers—struggle with the clean—the world leaders—and eventually victoriously throw them off. Then their journey takes them back in time through hell and then heaven only to discover that life on earth is much worse than anything the images and iconography of hell could ever come near to, that paradise is an extremely boring place, useful only so that the "unclean" can rob the helpless God the Father of his thunderbolts as additional electricity for their Promised Land, and that a man who walks on water is not Christ but *the* "new man." A major part of the play's appeal has to do with its comic blasphemous profanity, but Mayakovsky's design of dramatic time and space make this more complex. Although

the play moves forward into the future—in the final lines the unclean call the "whole universe to sing" as "mankind beholds a new spring"[4]—it in fact also goes back in time. Whereas the biblical flood comes as a disastrous punishment after *the* creation of the world and of paradise and hell, certainly after the primeval chaos ("tohu va vohu"), here the flood's destructiveness is seen as positive and as the founding event of a new world. The workers' progression, however, is not only linear, from the present to future but rather they must look at what was there before. They cannot arrive at the Promised Land until they go back in time and space through the celestial spheres, and ultimately through—in the fifth act—the land of chaos itself, in order to restart the world. Thus, the dramatic structure of the play demands total nullification of the world, not only as it is in the present but also as it ever existed. In other words, this revolutionary energy uses the biblical flood and the biblical narrative as its point of departure and finds in it a religious and mythological reassurance of Marxist ideology and historical determinism. The communists are not the first to erase the world and restart anew. This is exactly what God did, and therefore this linear and yet simultaneously cyclical kind of progression out of the ashes of total destruction is already built into the Bible's DNA.

Similarly, Rina Yerushalmi uses the biblical narrative of the Exodus and the conquering of the Land of Israel in order to create a subversive and political statement about the twentieth-century travails and ideological questions Israeli society is grappling with. By doing so, however, she in fact demonstrates how the biblical/mythological narrative is basically repeating itself, as her eight-hour long Bible project culminates with the tantalizing ending scene that suggests that exile is awating once again, and that the State of Israel is but a temporary phase in the history of the Jewish nation. These kinds of

analyses raise questions that have to with religious studies as well as with concepts of modernism and secularism and are therefore only the beginning of a much wider research project about performing the Bible in contemporary theatre. Although I only briefly touched upon potential questions that such productions evoke, I would like to conclude by pointing to one more aspect that "modern mysteries" share with medieval mystery plays. Like the final episode of the medieval cycle, (the Last Judgment), most "modern mysteries" have the same kind of an ending—they either literally happen in or anticipate the future. Moreover, these endings fall into two strict categories—total catastrophe (Grotowski's crematorium, and Yerushalmi's exile) or sheer utopia, Mayakovsky's electrified city (of God?) and Rudnick's free society for example. The ultimativity of catastrophe and utopia belong to the theatrical language of a mystery play, a genre that by performing the Bible—in whatever order and on whatever agenda—enables the spectators to find themselves in it.

**Notes**

[1] See Eli Rozik's *The Roots of Theatre: Rethinking Ritual and Other Theories of Origin* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2002), for a detailed analysis of the question of the origins of theatre in religious ritual. Rozik persuasively demonstrates that despite of the similarities between the two social phenomena and although the theory is appealing it is basically impossible to prove that religious ritual "gave birth" to theatre, just as no one claims that painting or sculpture originate in ritual. He defines "theatre" as a medium that can either be used or not and that has social goals that are different from those of religious ritual.

[2] Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugenio Barba ([1968] New York: Routledge, 2002) 22-3.

[3] Ian Almond, "Derrida and the Secret of the Non-Secret: On Respiritualising the Profane," *Literature and Theology* 17.4 (2003): 464.

[4] Vladimir Mayakovsky, *Mayakovsky: Plays*, trans. Guy Daniels (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 139.

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